

Don't Let Your Boys Grow up to Be Guys (#76)

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Boys, Little boys are like puppies. Most of the time they are easy going, and they spend a lot of time playing and sleeping. For the most part, they are very cute. They are inquisitive, adventurous, free spirited and seem to grow every day. Just like puppies, boys slop their food around, get dirty a lot, tear up the furniture, whiz on the carpet and then look at you like, “was that wrong?” They have very few important responsibilities. Childhood is meant to be like that and it is always good to have a little “boy” in you. Adolescents, Adolescence brings changes and challenges and moves at an unpredictable pace. These years are filled with paths to choose, temptations we wish they didn't have to face, peer pressure and vulnerability. They know very little about life but will never admit it. In today's world they are constantly bombarded with social media, mixed messages, expectations and choices. Everything is in the present with few thoughts or concerns about the future. It can be dangerous, crazy, mature, immature, fun and depressing all at the same time. Some of the choices that they made as boys now come with more serious consequences. From the book *Stepping Up – A Call to Courageous Manhood*, by Dennis Raley: “With each new generation we have lowered our expectations for teenagers. Today most people in our culture believe that adolescence is a time when young men should have all kinds of freedom and fun. They are expected to rebel, experiment with risky choices, play games, look at pornography, have sex and generally get into trouble. “ When working with adolescents we almost always get what we expect. If we expect and accept immaturity and irresponsibility, that is what we will see. As coaches and mentors we need to always remember that young people will rise to our level of expectations and standards or fall to our level of tolerance. Parents... this is the age when they start to push away from you. Two thoughts.... 1) Give them their space but stay close, 2) Be happy if they have a coach walking along side of them who cares. Coaches... this is where you will have your biggest impact. Embrace this time, challenge and encourage and model manhood. Guys Guys are still part adolescent, part boy – just bigger and older. Some males head quickly from adolescence to manhood; but in recent years it seems that more and more “young men” are staying in this extended adolescence for a long time. Sociologist Dr. Michael Kimmell, in his book *Guyland*, says “Guyland is both a stage of life, a liminal undefined span of time between adolescence and adulthood that can often stretch for a decade or more... It is a bunch of places where guys gather to be guys with each other, unhassled by the demands of parents, girlfriends, jobs, kids and other nuisances of adult life.” “Guys” in this extended period can be fun and

harmless but often their decisions are still based upon immature boyhood and adolescent needs and desires. Life is still a game but the stakes are higher and can sometimes be harmful to them and others. For some “guys”, this stage can become a life style that stays longer than it belongs. Their behaviors stay in the immature stage and they are no longer cute but rather obnoxious and dumb. In many ways you look at people who are old enough to be men but the longer they stay in this stage the more evident it is that they are really irresponsible, selfish, and unreliable. These behaviors that were harmless before now hurt the people around them. Mature friends laugh at them, women looking for strong partners and families wisely avoid them and credit card companies love these “guys”. They have no solid foundation, no core values, no character based belief system to operate under. Men are people of integrity. Their beliefs are evident in their actions. Being a mature man doesn't mean that you don't have fun. It allows you to have more fun and fun that is not at the expense of others or damaging to yourself. They are respectful, especially toward women and families because they have learned to put others before themselves. Their confidence is carried quietly. They embrace commitment. They are accountable, reliable and responsible in all aspects of their life. We need men who are character based, principle centered who provide the rock solid foundation for the future of our families and country. In his book, *Lifetime Guarantee*, Preston Gillham says, “Boys become men by standing close to men. Manhood is a ritual passed from generation to generation with precious few spoken words. Passing the torch of manhood is a fragile, tedious task. If the rite of passage is successfully completed, the boy become man is like an oak of hardwood character. His shade and influence will bless all those who are fortunate enough to lean on him and rest under his canopy.”