

NATE PYLE

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAN ENOUGH

HOW JESUS REDEFINES MANHOOD

NATE PYLE

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAN ENOUGH

HOW JESUS REDEFINES MANHOOD

 **ZONDERVAN®**

CHAPTER 1

OUT OF THE WILDERNESS

IN QUIET

Nate begins *Man Enough* by saying he didn't feel like a man until he was thirty-one years old and that the feeling came from doing something that seemed very unmanly to him. Do you remember a time when you felt like a man? What brought about that feeling in you?

All of us come to Scripture with cultural biases and preconceived ideas. This impacts how and what we see and hear when we read the text. What preconceived ideas about being a man are you bringing to the text? Where did these come from?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time "In Quiet" would you like to share with the group?

Read Genesis 25:19–28. Be as honest with the group as possible. Who fits the typical American stereotype of a man better—Jacob or Esau? Which man would you feel most comfortable spending time with? Why?

Nate stated that there isn't one type of masculinity but that there are masculinities. What do you think about the idea of multiple masculinities?

Take time to reflect on how you treat men who don't seem man enough to you. Do you look down on them? Judge them? Avoid them? Befriend them? Get as clear as possible about how you treat them, and spend some time reflecting on why you respond like that? How does what you believe about what it means to be a man influence how you treat other guys?

INTO THE WORLD

As you read Nate's story, maybe it stirred up something in your story that you haven't shared with anyone—some feeling, frustration, experience, or secret you need to share. You're invited to take time to write it down and hold it before the Lord. If you can, share it this week with someone you trust.

CHAPTER 2

MAN MADE

IN QUIET

Every man feels the need to prove himself to those around them. Describe a time when you remember feeling that need to prove yourself as a man. What happened? What did you do? What did you feel?

Is there a time when you remember being emasculated or humiliated in front of others? What happened? What did you do? What did you feel?

Read Galatians 3:26–4:7. Rather than proving ourselves as men, we need to recognize that, in Christ, God has adopted us as sons. Take some time to journal about the implications of being an adopted son. What does this mean for how God thinks of you? What does this mean for how you should live? What does this mean for your relationships with others?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time “In Quiet” would you like to share with the group?

The gospel of Jesus is that long before we proved ourselves worthy, God sent his Son so we might become his sons. If this is the gospel, do you live gospel truth (no need to prove yourself) or anti-gospel (always trying to prove yourself)?

INTO THE WORLD

How do you see those around you trying to prove themselves to others? To you? How can you extend grace to them in the manner you have received?

Spend some time in reflection and prayer about those people in your life who need to know that God doesn't require them to prove themselves any longer. Pray for them. Pray that you would be given an opportunity to demonstrate God's acceptance of them.

CHAPTER 3

SHIFTING SANDS

IN QUIET

How have you noticed masculine ideals shifting? How have expectations shifted? As you notice these shifts, what has been the impact on you? How have you responded?

Read Titus 1:6–9. This passage describes the qualifications of an elder in the church. Since elders are people worth imitating, these characteristics are good for all disciples of Christ to consider and strive toward. Try reading these verses with fresh eyes. What are they saying about what men should be like? What is this passage not saying about what men should be like? What is it saying about how you should live?

In this chapter, Nate writes, “If the wilderness was cruel, the market was crueler. Men were pitted against other men, and rather than experiencing intimacy and camaraderie with other men, they found themselves in constant competition with men. Rather than working together to make the kill, men began killing each other. The drive for economic success was so high that, for most men, the fear of failure nearly drove them mad.” Have you experienced this competition against other men? What is the impact of that competition on your relationship with others? On you? Finally, where do you think this comes from? Is there some event you can remember that has shaped how you act in the world and in relationship that relates to this drive to compete?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time “In Quiet” would you like to share with the group?

As a group, come up with a way to describe the quintessential American

man. What does he look like? What does he do? How do movies and television reinforce these ideals? How have you seen them changing over the years? Finally, how do these cultural ideals affect how we interpret Scripture?

At the end of the chapter, Nate talks about different kinds of courage—the “run into a burning building” kind and the “share who you are” kind. Which is more often associated with being a man? How is being fully authentic about who you are a sign of courage? What fears do you have about being authentic?

INTO THE WORLD

If in the first few chapters of this study you have become aware of how much effort you exert trying to fit a particular picture of what it means to be a man, be honest about that. Write down what you have been doing to conform to that image. Write down ideas of how you would like to be different as you move forward. Finally, courageously share with a trusted individual what you are learning about masculinity and about yourself.

CHAPTER 4

MUSCULAR CHRISTIANITY

IN QUIET

Muscular Christianity is summarized by novelist Thomas Hughes as the belief that it's "a good thing to have strong and well-exercised bodies ... The least of the muscular Christians has hold of the old chivalrous and Christian belief, that a man's body is given to him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men." What resonates in this statement with you? What comes natural to you? Where would be a place of growth surrounding these ideas?

How do you picture Jesus? What is he like? What draws you to him? What is there about Jesus that challenges your thinking about what it means to be a man?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time "In Quiet" would you like to share with the group?

Talk about how the ideal American man and Jesus are different. What images capture the American ideal? How does Jesus challenge our American ideal? How have we shaped Jesus into our image? How does Jesus challenge your ideal?

How does the gospel conflict with cultural messages we hear about being men?

INTO THE WORLD

What is the impact of a hypermasculine portrayal of Jesus on men? On women? On you?

At the end of the chapter, Nate challenges us to think about masculinity in terms of taking action in the world. Where do you see a place where you can take action? In your church? In your neighborhood? In your city?

CHAPTER 5

JESUS

IN QUIET

Nate tells a story from his childhood about the time he wondered if he was Jesus. While it's a fun story—and the thought of being Jesus is quite fanciful—pretending to be Jesus can be helpful. Dallas Willard writes, “I am learning from him how to lead my life in the Kingdom of the Heavens as he would lead my life if he were I.”¹ If Jesus were living your life, how would it look different?

Take some time to reflect on the portraits of Jesus that Nate shares in the chapter. The humble servant. The fiery-eyed table flipper in the temple. The glorified conqueror on a white stallion. What does each of these portraits tell us about Jesus? About being a Christ follower? About being a man? Which one of these portraits do you gravitate toward? Why? What characteristics of the other portraits make it hard for you to connect with them?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time “In Quiet” would you like to share with the group?

Jesus' disciples got caught up in a conversation most of us have had, either out loud or in our heads. Where do you see men competing to be the greatest? How do you get caught up in this type of comparison? How does sizing each other up impact our relationships?

How does Jesus expand our definitions and understanding of what it means to be a man?

¹ Dallas Willard, “How Does the Disciple Live?”
www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=103 (accessed July 7, 2015).

INTO THE WORLD

In one of the humblest acts of service, Jesus got down on his knees and washed the feet of his disciples? Who in your life do you need to serve? What stands in the way of you doing this? (Use your group to hold you accountable if you need to.)

CHAPTER 6

DELIGHTING IN WEAKNESS

IN QUIET

What do you believe about weakness? Is it acceptable? Do you embrace your weakness, or do you hide it?

Describe a time when you felt weak. What happened? What did you do? How did it impact you beyond the experience?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time “In Quiet” would you like to share with the group?

What are men taught by the world about being weak? Where do these messages come from? How does what we’ve taught about weakness hurt us as humans?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9–11. How can we embrace our weakness like Paul did? What do you think Paul means when he writes, “When I am weak, then I am strong”?

Where are you allowed to be weak? At home? At work? At church? What would it look like if you could be weak?

INTO THE WORLD

At the end of the chapter, Nate writes, “Weakness and vulnerability are, in fact, the very human act of courageously admitting there are things in the world we cannot fix, leaving us to the one thing we can do: cry out for God to step in and do that which we cannot do.” What have you been trying to do that you need to admit you cannot do? Confess your weakness to God and to one other person, and make space for God to do that which only he can do.

CHAPTER 7

THE FALL OF A MAN

IN QUIET

Read 2 Samuel 11–12:25. This is David's story of descent. What stands out to you in this story? Now read Psalm 51, which is written in response to this story. What happened in David because of his descent? What occurred in the realm of David and God's relationship?

We live in a culture of ascent. A culture that celebrates success and encourages us to always climb higher. But sometimes we need to descend. Nate writes, "Descent is a form of death, a stripping away of all that is not true to the man God intends us to be. There, in that vulnerable place, in the valley, we find grace." Describe a time of descent for you. What happened? How did you feel? How did you experience God's grace?

Read John 12:23–26. How is Jesus calling you to die to yourself? What role does embracing vulnerability and weakness play in our ability to die to ourselves?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time "In Quiet" would you like to share with the group?

Together, recall the story of Joseph being sold into slavery. What happened? What events from the story can you remember? What wrongdoing did Joseph do? How did all those experiences change Joseph? What can we learn from his story?

Oftentimes, what we say we believe about something and what we actually believe are two different things. What do you do when you fail? What do you do when others fail? What does this reveal about what you believe

about failing?

We recognize that in order for children to learn, they have to fail. They fall when learning to ride a bike. They write their letters backward. They strike out in T-ball. Somewhere along the way, it becomes no longer okay for us to learn through failure. Unfortunately, we can't learn without failing. Can you share a time when you learned something important through failure? What are you doing to ensure you learn from every failure that happens in your life?

INTO THE WORLD

Nate introduces the idea of retelling our story to find the more empowering meaning. Try this out on a story from your life. Take some time to reflect on a story of descent, perhaps an incident that has always made you feel like a failure or less of a man. Bring that story to the Lord and ask him to help you see it in a new light. Write down that story, but this time, tell it in a way that helps you to clearly see the more empowering meaning.

CHAPTER 8

**YOUR NAME
SHALL BE**

IN QUIET

Read Genesis 32:22–32. God could have easily defeated Jacob, but he didn't. Why do you suppose God allowed Jacob to wrestle with him for so long? In what ways have you wrestled with God? Has it been about theology? Circumstances? Frustrations? Identity? What do you think God wanted you to learn in the wrestling?

Have you ever wrestled with who God made you to be? What was that experience like? What did you feel? What was the outcome of the wrestling?

If you could hear God speak over you, what do you think you would hear him say? What will it take for you to believe that?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time “In Quiet” would you like to share with the group?

Nate writes that Jacob's wrestling with God was an initiation into a new life. Initiation can be an important experience—something that solidifies our belonging. What are we initiating men to? How has the church done this for you? How can the church initiate men into the life of Jesus in deeper and more intentional ways?

Read Matthew 3:13–17. The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of his public ministry. It is an initiation of sorts, a precursor to being sent into the world. What does our baptism signify? How does it define who we are? How does it define how we are to live? How can it root our identity?

INTO THE WORLD

Mentors, coaches, and elders are important in our life. The story of Erik emphasizes this point. Take some time to reflect on the important men in your life who have helped initiate you into the new life Jesus calls you to. Is there someone who is currently helping you? If not, pray that God will reveal a person who can do this for you. As the Lord reveals someone, be courageous and ask him if he is willing to be this person for you. Likewise, is there someone in your life whom you can initiate into the life of Christ?

CHAPTER 9

FULLY HUMAN

IN QUIET

In this chapter, Nate explores the difficult words of Jesus found in Matthew 5:48: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Nate challenges us to think about perfection in terms of “wholeness.” What is the difference between perfection and wholeness? How does thinking about wholeness change how you experience this verse?

Based on what Nate writes about wholeness, what would wholeness look like for you? In you as a person? In your relationships?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time “In Quiet” would you like to share with the group?

Read Galatians 5:22–23 together. Take some time to discuss the fruit of the Spirit. If helpful, make a chart similar to the one found in this chapter. Be honest and reflect on each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, identifying it as a characteristic more often thought of as masculine or feminine. What does this reveal about how we think about being men and women? What does this reveal about how we value the different aspects of the fruit of the Spirit? What does it mean that all Christians—men and women alike—are called to embody the fruit of the Spirit?

What has to change in you to help you to become more fully human with those around you? What posture do you need to adopt? What beliefs about what it means to be a man will have to change?

INTO THE WORLD

Most of us do not know the impact we have on others. We may think we are confident, but others experience us as arrogant. We may think we are helpful, but others find us to be a know-it-all or intrusive. Getting in tune with the impact we have on others may be one of the hardest, yet most transformative things we can do. Ask God for courage and then ask three people what they can always count on you for, as well as what they can never count of you for. Try not to get defensive as they share with you. Don't make excuses about why you can't do those things. Just listen so you can gain understanding of your impact on others. After listening, you might even ask, "Is there anything else you want to say about how you experience me?" Take what you learn and journal about it. Hold it in the space between you and God in prayer. Ask God to begin to transform you as you seek to respond to what you've learned.

CHAPTER 10

SHARING SPACE

IN QUIET

Read Genesis 1:27–31. This is the cultural mandate. What are the two parts to this mandate? To whom are they given? How have we divided it into men's responsibilities and women's responsibilities? How should men and women work together to fulfill this mandate?

What is your relationship to sex? What feelings do you associate with sex? What actions do you see in your life surrounding sex (trying to get it, avoiding a woman who isn't your wife, pornography)?

How do we men blame women for our lustful thoughts? What would it look like to, like Job, make a covenant with our eyes not to look lustfully at a woman (Job 31:1)? How can you take responsibility for your thoughts and your gaze?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time "In Quiet" would you like to share with the group?

Using the story of dads and daughters dancing, Nate challenges us with the idea that women may not want to be saved or protected, but to be danced with. How does this image change the typical portrayal of relationships between men and women? Let each man talk about how this challenges his relationships with women.

Read Proverbs 31 together. What is the woman doing in this passage that, in our cultural understanding of gender roles, is doing things more typical of men than women? What does this say about how we understand gender roles?

INTO THE WORLD

Finding our identity in Christ is central for a Christian. In Christ, we find acceptance, worth, validation, and courage. This security frees us to be more vulnerable in our relationships. Begin to imagine how the security of being fully accepted by Christ plays into the key relationships you have with women. With your wife? Your mother? Your daughter? Your friends?

How can men and women working together positively impact our families? Our neighborhoods? Our churches?

CHAPTER 11

BEYOND BATTLES

IN QUIET

Read Genesis 12:1–5. When Abraham followed God's call to leave his father's family and go to a land he knew nothing about, it was an amazing act of faith. Describe a time when you, in faith, followed God when it didn't make sense to do so. What happened? What were you feeling? How did it turn out? What did you learn about faith and about being able to trust God?

Ask yourself the same question that Jim asked Nate: "Where do you take risks?" Be honest with yourself. Just because something seems risky to others doesn't mean it is a risk for you. Where do you truly risk? How do you avoid risk?

IN TRUST

What thoughts from your time "In Quiet" would you like to share with the group?

Men have long been exhorted to be warriors. Yet God's original design for man, as revealed in Genesis 1 and 2, is one where the man is a steward. What is the difference between a warrior and a steward? What are the similarities? What does it mean for you to be a steward in the world? Think about where you live, work, and enjoy recreation. What would a steward who was responsible for the condition of the land do in those places?

What has God give you to steward? What have you stewarded well and can celebrate? What have you not stewarded well that you need to confess?

INTO THE WORLD

As you close out the book and the study, take some time to reflect on being a son of God. God has adopted you as a son. You are enough. He has chosen you. How does that truth free you up from having to prove yourself? How does it influence how you function in your relationships? Does your identity in Christ give you the courage to be vulnerable? What does that vulnerability look like? Finally, what does it look like to use the energy you once used to prove your manhood to take responsibility for the condition of the world around you?