

SOLID MAN

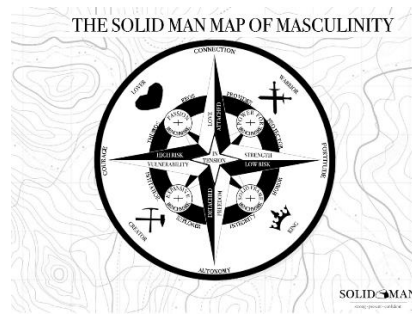
strong · present · confident

Solid Man Integrity Group Lesson 17

Pillar Four

Mastering Your Masculinity - Part One

17



Welcome to the Solid Man Process. Presently our world is experiencing a significant loss. Something vital is missing for the health and structure of our world. Even though you may not recognize what it is, you have felt this loss on a personal level. It's probably why you're reading this.

For decades now, what we believe about men and the role of men in family and society has been questioned. While initially this scrutiny was necessary because some things needed to be questioned, it has resulted in enormous changes in the narrative about what we believe about the value and worth of men. Because of this, you may have wondered about your own value or questioned whether it is even good to be a man.

How men interact with and influence the world has been under the microscope. The result has been confusion and uncertainty about the role of men. Because of this turmoil, many men have lost (or discarded) the good, strong core of their manhood.

The Solid Man Process is designed to help men reclaim that center, so the entire world can experience good, positive Masculinity.

Usually men's "work" tries to fix what's wrong with you. With this process, we will release what is right about you. Some men think something in our essence is our enemy that needs to be reined in. So, we fight ourselves as though we are our own enemy. In this process, we will let go of that fight, eliminating self-attack and listening to the real challenges that being a man presents to us every day.

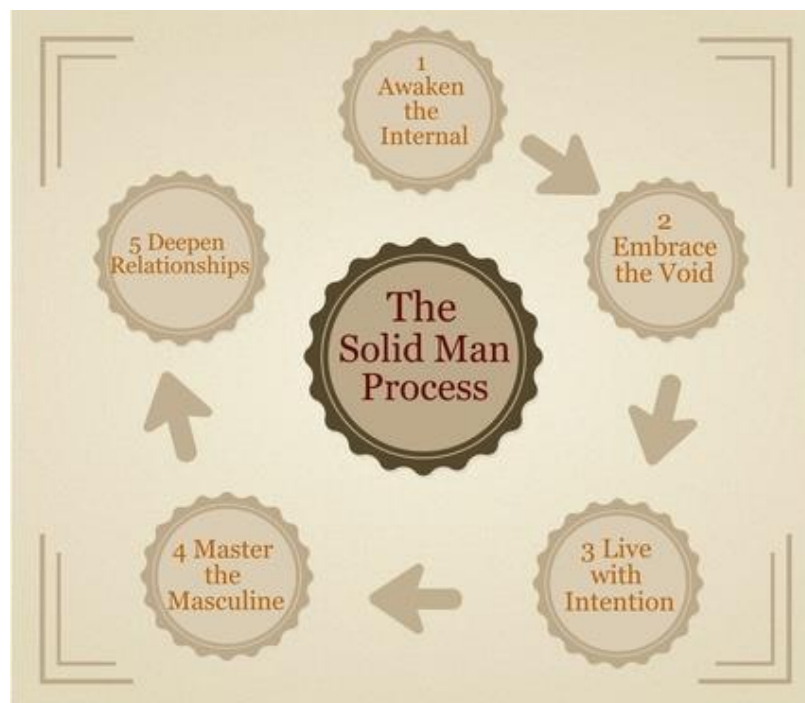
This process will uncover a deeper framework within you and help you develop a set of skills and practices designed for change. It is a holistic approach which respects the integration of body, heart, spirit and community. The Solid Man process establishes the foundation that nothing is wrong with you, you are in good working order and you have a tremendous amount of internal resources on hand.

The first book in this series, Pillar One has been designed to help you develop an internally referenced life to become awake, strong, and alive in your life. This is essential work in order for you to live in freedom and mastery in your life.

Pillar Two: Embracing the Void, was the second book that helped you to get your heart back, along with your courage and confidence. It challenged you to learn how to engage in a part of life that most people avoid like the plague, the Void. You found that embracing the Void is the pathway to being initiated toward becoming a man.

Pillar Three was about building a core of integrity. We all struggle with the same core issue, even if the symptoms are different on the outside, lack of a solid core. Having a strong internal sense of integrity is essential to becoming the man you want to be and creating the life you want.

Pillar Four will explore the often-mysterious concept of Masculinity. We will look into how to take what you have learned thus far and apply the internally referenced life toward becoming good at being a man. You will learn how to master your Masculinity.



The Solid Man Process is about empowering every man. The more a man becomes personally empowered the more likely he will reach his potential and make a powerful and positive impact on the world.

What goes on in a man's heart, mind and spirit has a powerful influence on all aspects of life. When he becomes who he is meant to be, his life begins to become the greatest version of what it was meant to be.

This journey is most effective when done with other men. Invite and gather a few men to go through this journey with you. Since this is a lifetime process, you'll need to be ready to learn, listen and interact with other men.

Move forward with strength and courage.

Review of Pillar One

Pillar One outlined the problem that we are and have been externally referenced. This pillar challenged us to shift from being externally defined and driven to being internally defined and driven. If there is one thing that we need to continue building strength in, it is this to become internally defined and driven!

This is the most significant shift a man must make in his life to become a Solid Man, to develop an internal identity and internal motivation in your life so that you live out who you really are. You will never become fully free until you are able to unplug from the motherboard of externals. External validation has been our drug of choice – you've been smoking the validation crackpipe! It's time for that to change.

As you move toward freedom in your life you will experience more peace and have a more settled or centered life experience. Our journey has been to develop a solid core of integrity and to develop an integrated life, pulling all the categories of your internal life together in good working order.

You've made some significant gains in your life, relationships, work and family. It is imperative to keep this going. You must continue to be aware, conscious and observe what is going on internally and around you. Your emotions, intuition, body, spirit and mind will lead you well.

You will do just fine if you listen to yourself and trust your internal processes. You have all the tools within you to live a solid life. Remember where you've come from, all the steps you've made and where you want to be. You can do this!

Review of Pillar Two

Pillar Two challenged you to Embrace the Void. We outlined what the Void is and how it has been designed to bring about growth, maturity and strength in your life. The Void is the pathway into the sacred and holy aspects of life that can only be experienced if we intentionally enter into our Void experiences.

We learned that most of us do everything we can to avoid the Void, using many different avenues of avoidance like addictions, control, and passivity. We learned that the Void is a normal and vital part of human existence. Our initiation into manhood is brought about by facing and engaging with the uncertainty of the Void. The Void creates competent and confident men.

Review of Pillar Three

In Pillar Three helped you answer five significant Core questions so you could move with intention and purpose in your life. Most men live with an externally referenced motivation and drive. The work of Pillar Three opened up your awareness to deeper inner realities to assist you in becoming more intentionally referenced with your internal core.

The journey of Pillar Three moved you deeply into more Solid Manhood. You discovered five movements into deeper connection with Source and Self. Each of these movements has one question to be answered and one practice in which to become proficient.

Where does life come from?	Anchoring
Who am I?	Remembering
What do I need?	Self-care
What do I want?	Living from your heart
Where am I going?	Creating

Overview of Pillar Four

The purpose of Pillar Four is to create a map that will outline some significant aspects of manhood and Masculinity. Within the cultural context in which we now find ourselves, there are many opinions, expectations and representations of what Masculinity is or ought to be.

The Solid Man Process is designed to set men free to be who they are as individuals, to make a positive impact on the world around them and to give each man a solid sense of identity and integrity. Pillar Four will break through some of the confusion that men have been experiencing as they walk through life. I provide a clear path.

This Pillar is about becoming a good man and about becoming good at being a man.

Being a good man is about being the best masculine human being you possibly could be. It is taking all the tools you have been given, developing wisdom and doing the right thing as often as possible. It is about keeping your own personal house in order so that you can thrive while also having a positive influence on the world around you.

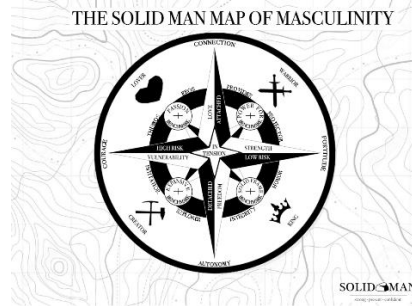
Becoming good at being a man is about understanding the depth and calling of your Masculinity and manhood. You will develop a clear understanding of what Masculinity is, what it is designed for and then begin practicing building proficiency, even mastery, as you move through life as a masculine being.

From the previous Pillars you know you have the goods and the internal tools to master life and relationships already within you. Here, we will take all those tools and incorporate with one of the most profound internal realities, your Masculinity.

What is the most important thing you want to accomplish by reading this book?

What have you heard about Masculinity?

In what ways have you been confused about or distracted from Masculinity?



What Is Masculinity?

Factors of Masculinity

For some reason you have this book in your hands. We all are on a journey through life, some to just survive or get by, some to thrive. This is for men who want to thrive and get the most out of life.

This book is for men who want to master their Masculinity. There are many views on what Masculinity is, and I am throwing my ideas into the conversation. This is for men who see themselves as men, who want to be men and who want to become the best man they can be. It doesn't matter if you are Christian or atheist, from whatever cultural heritage or even straight or gay, this is for men who want to master being good at being a man.

Whereas I am a very observant person watching what is unfolding in our culture today, I come from a fairly old-school mind-set, I am a Christian man and I have my opinions (as you will see). The most important opinion as you begin reading this is that your life is best lived from an internal rather than external reference. I taught this in Pillar One, but it needs reinforcing. Building your internal frame is essential to live with integrity. You have powerful internal resources that guide every moment of your life in real time. One of your most profound internal resources is your Masculinity.

As men who are building an internal frame of reference, your challenge as you read this is to consider how you will build Masculinity the way you want to build it. It is your choice how to build every concept into your life as you see fit. I will be laying out a significant framework, a map which will outline important characteristics of manhood, your job is to take those concepts and make them your own.

I will show you a map, but the map is not the territory. The territory is you. Where all this interacts with the world, with real relationships and in real time is in your body, heart and soul, in you. You are the real deal, so make it so.

This book is an exploration to answer the question, “What is Masculinity?” First, I will give a lay of the land with some concepts in which describe where we are as a country with the discussion about manhood. I’ll lay out some other thoughts I have and then we will jump into what I believe are the central aspects that create a strong view of Masculinity and how it is best developed. Let’s start with the context in which we find ourselves having this conversation.

Idea or Fact

The degree to which you believe Masculinity is an idea constructed through cultural agreements and interactions or if it is a “brute” fact that exists apart from culture or language will determine the foundation upon which you will build your perception of Masculinity as a personal internal or external reality.

An “idea” is a concept that has been developed over time within a certain culture and now has been defined with certain characteristics and value. The idea could be something like the presidency of the United States, an academic institution or a dollar bill. As an idea, the dollar is just a piece of paper backed up by a promise that it actually has value. An idea is a concept, not necessarily a reality.

An example of a brute fact would be gravity; gravity is gravity in any language or even in no language, it simply is what it is. The same is with the ocean, breathing or anything else that just “is”. No matter what it is, it still has substance, a construct and essence; it does not matter what it is called, how it is described or even who describes it, it is what it is and does what it does.

Think of these concepts as a spectrum, with nurture on one side and nature on the other. One side of the spectrum that is nurture is the side of those who believe Masculinity is a culturally constructed idea, not a hard fact. As well, those who believe this are loathe to consider any idea of Masculinity that transcends any of the various cultures in our world. It is though each culture has developed their certain “idea” or version of Masculinity unique to that culture.

Idea ————— Fact

Considering Masculinity as an “idea” places Masculinity in the position of being an “ought”. Masculinity “ought” to be this way or that way depending on any one perception. “Ought” thinking opens the discussion to any and every concept of what a man who is masculine may or may not be. Therefore, anyone with influence can potentially determine not just what Masculinity is but can also determine its value.

☞ **If Masculinity is an “ought”, anyone can define it.**

The cultural trends that exist at that particular moment in history are able to designate how and why the masculine is expressed as acceptable or not. At that point, present fads or pop culture determine the value of the masculine.

Many who profess the idea, nurture or culture side of the spectrum, believe in the concept of *Tabula Rasa*, which means that every human being is born with no on-board or inherent gender. You are a blank slate upon which your parents and culture determine how you move and exist with whatever gender they decide you will have. In this line of thinking, most everything with how Masculinity is lived out or how Masculinity is defined by how people taught what was acceptable behavior, how a man or boy was supposed to act or be.

Generally, this is the worldview of many social constructionists, social justice warriors, and post-modernists. This mindset usually is centered around externals that have to do with behaviors and “do’s”. Often, they will use lists called “man rules” which are often just a list of random external expectations of what they think men think another man is; such as a “real” man has sex with many women, never shows emotion or always wins.

☞ **The Man Rules are just external expectations.**

These generated lists of external behaviors seem to be used to show the reality of how men really are, but usually just reveal how inept men are in life and relationship or some other negative view. These stereotypes and lists of normal rules never actually speak reality to what is or even what ought to be, just what is envisioned as an idea in someone’s mind designed to shift behavior toward what is socially acceptable to this group. It’s a kind of social engineering using shame and misandry to compel men to behave “properly” and not in a “toxic” fashion.

In August 2018, the American Psychological Association (APA) came out with guidelines for therapy with boys and men. Here’s the first guideline; “Psychologists strive to recognize that masculinities are constructed based on social, cultural, and contextual norms.” This sets forth a very clear opinion upon which the APA suggests or recommends as specific professional behavior, endeavor, or conduct for psychologists. They have announced very clearly upon which side of the equation they sit, that Masculinity is a social construction.

The APA suggests that “Traditionally Masculine Traits” like stoicism, aggression, competitiveness and dominance hinder a man from being a healthy human being. That’s why it is thought of as “toxic” because obviously these four traits are really bad. However, these traits are just things any human can express in healthy or unhealthy ways, just like any other trait.

Being stoic is necessary when taking a test or doing surgery, but at a funeral, it would not be as fitting. Physical aggression is necessary when standing up against a bully or for justice, but not so much with my toddler. We have all seen that guy who is overly competitive, it's an unhealthy expression of his lack of identity, but pursuing victory in a sport or in business is very healthy.

Dominance is the same, humanity has dominance hierarchies, it is healthy to lead and influence. But it is unhealthy when someone takes the power they have and forces another to submit. By trying to shame these traits out of men the APA and other influences in our society are attempting to gain power over men by defining what is ok and not ok with a masculine person. This behavior by the APA just seems like the toxic or controlling behavior they despise.

Whether the list of expectations is an old set of rules or a new set of rules, what you need to see is this; for some Masculinity is determined by an external set of rules built by people who see Masculinity as an "idea". Even though they say it is undefined or even undefinable, ironically, this is where these folks then do their best to then determine the definition of Masculinity on their terms. They have given themselves the high position of creating the narrative of what Masculinity is or is not. Very clever.

Nurture	Nature
(Idea)	(Fact)

The other side of the spectrum is the idea that Masculinity is a "brute fact". That is, Masculinity is imbedded within men's biology and physical DNA or there is a significant imprint of something that determines Masculinity from a deep internal place within a man's soul, whether it is from a spiritual or archetypal source or from neurologic firmware within.

Within this mindset is the belief that either Masculinity has been developed purposefully over eons for the advancement and survival of the species (evolutionists and evolutionary psychologists), the grand narrative of heroic myths embedded within men (Mytho-poetics like Robert Bly and Sam Keen and Archetypists like Carl Jung) or it is by design, as men were created by God (creationists or intelligent design).

☞ **So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27**

It is interesting to think that "masculine as nature" is one place that evolutionists and creationists are strange bedfellows! Whether it is intelligent design or genetic mutations over time it is nature, within a man, Kum-ba-yah.

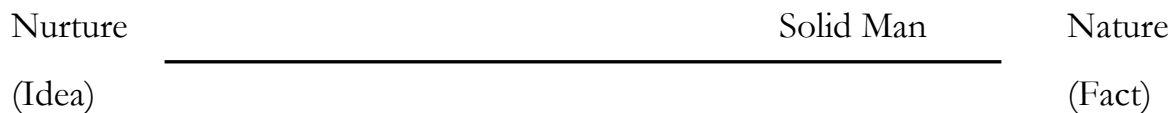
Eastern Religions also seem to sit on this side of the spectrum. The concept of Yin and Yang indicates that there is a polarity between the masculine and the feminine. They exist in two different energies, Yin with feminine and Yang with the masculine. There is a distinct energy with the masculine and with the feminine. I personally do not know much about this, except that Eastern religions notice this fairly obvious distinction between masculine and feminine.

As you do any reading or listening to any commentary on news or podcasts, consider what position that person is making with their ideas about men and Masculinity. Usually these two sides of the spectrum become obvious. These differences have created confusion, I want to reduce the confusion so that men can move forward with strength as masculine men.

☞ **Masculinity is a deep internal construct within each man.**

If you have read any Solid Man material, you can easily guess which side of the spectrum I rest; the nature side. I believe Masculinity is found in our nature, deep with the core of every man. As you read this material you will see there is also a strong aspect of nurture, this is done by other men taking the natural, internal structure that exists within all men and “nurturing” the masculine soul toward maturity.

Here’s where I rest on this line. It is because other men must be involved by teaching and guiding young men and boys toward maturity. They will mentor the inherent internal structure toward its natural position of strength, confidence and presence.



You may have heard of the so-called “crisis” in Masculinity. I don’t believe there is any crisis with Masculinity, Masculinity is doing just fine. The crisis is in maturity, there just are not many good pathways toward mature Masculinity or good models of how to live out Masculinity in our present culture. We are in a world of confusion and lack of clarity.

It is true that men need to guide men into and toward strong, mature Masculinity, that is where nurture is required. We just don’t have good avenues for that to happen much in our world today. Most men are kind of left to themselves to try to figure it out. The Solid Man work hopes to create new paths of good mentorship into strong, mature Masculinity.

☞ **Young men need other men to guide them into mature Masculinity.**

The narrative that Masculinity is just an idea, and femininity or any gender for that matter is just a social construct, seems to be prevailing in the world of academia. Fortunately for most people, the academics influential reach is very limited. The “man on the street” just sees that he has masculine body parts and that common sense says something is kind of natural. When the academics say Masculinity is a concept made up by culture, our man somehow “knows” something else is true. Therefore, to him, this whole discussion we are having right now is an absurd waste of his time.

Consider what is out there; on one side we have the beta nice guy, the white knight or the SNAG (sensitive new-age guy); the Ray Romano’s or Jerry Seinfeld’s. These men have good hearts, but not much spine. On the other side we have the hyper-masculine alpha jerk that looks like any Swarzenegger or Stallone character; men with tons of spine, but not much heart.

There are a few models that show a good strong man with a beautiful measure of both heart and spine. You’ll find many if you consider regular men in your world, there are many good men out there, men who are everyday heroes, hard workers, dads and men just doing their best to make life work.

☞ **Heart and Spine are two primary characteristics of Solid men.**

As I lay out the defining characteristics of Masculinity, I’ll be comparing a few men who have a good balance of heart and spine like Jesus, Maximus from *Gladiator*, *Braveheart*’s William Wallace, and Aragorn from *The Lord of the Rings*. We’ll fit in a few others who don’t have a great balance as well, just so you have an idea of what this looks like. You’ll be deciding what it will look like for you.

We don’t have enough pathways present in our culture for developing good strong Masculinity. We have those who are pragmatically trying to find what works in life or the social constructionists who seem to have an agenda to influence culture in a certain direction.

Oddly, this pragmatism comes in the form of either the PUA (Pick Up Artist) world, trying to find what works to get a man laid, or the Christian world, what works to get men to be obedient to whatever the expectation of that particular tradition requires. These two have plenty to say about being a man, but sadly both usually miss the mark dramatically.

It is as though our society has become uncomfortable with masculine strength. It seems that there is a desire to remove Masculinity from the man while still mandating that they be strong. C. S. Lewis observed this long ago.

☞ **“In a sort of ghastly simplicity, we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”** — C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*

“We castrate and bid the geldings, be fruitful.” Is a strong statement and it fits our world today like nothing I have ever read. The desire to remove Masculinity from men and then demand that they hold the same expectation is absurd and potentially evil.

The Solid Man Process is doing everything it can do to create good models and pathways for developing good solid masculine men. This is an endeavor to bring maturity back to the world of Masculinity.

Even if you lean over to the side that Masculinity is a social construct, I welcome you to join the journey of developing a strong, empowered masculine self. The Solid Man process is all about empowering each man to develop and master his own internally referenced person from his own internal resources. It doesn't matter where you think it all comes from, becoming the man you were meant to be, is our goal.

Masculinity is simply how a man interacts with the world. The world is a tough place to navigate, it is full of rules/limitations/boundaries and potential harm or death. Nature has brute realities that rule how you move through life. Those brute forces push against our being and at the same time are present within our being.

A masculine being moves with those forces as a masculine being would. A feminine being moves with those forces as a feminine person would. This is where the masculine or feminine is played out – in response to the brute world, which is what nature is.

However, it seems an underlying assumption in some worldviews exists that humans are above nature, that we have attained separation from the natural world through evolution or that we exist as beings that are inherently distanced from nature. I think this is why the concept of Masculinity as nature is a problem, or more precisely seeing humanity as part of nature is the problem.

It might be said, “Since humanity is above the natural world and gender is part of that natural world, to be fully human a human must be separate from the natural world by removing any sense of masculine or feminine.” Therefore, for those who hold this worldview, the next move as humans in the evolutionary process is the removal of all gender, masculine or feminine. This is especially true if the masculine and feminine are considered natural.

If humans were above or beyond nature, we would not be beholden to natural laws and humans would then be free to express themselves with whatever behavior is appealing at the time, there are no restrictions or limitations, you can do (or be) whatever you want and do whatever you please, but only if it fits with the “correct” trend of the moment. Here I am talking about breaking free from the restrictions of nature. It would be absurd if it was breaking free from gravity. It is also a desire to break free from any spiritual restriction as well. It is the teenage cry, “I can do what I want!”

This again reminds me of some of the aliens in Star Trek or other movies where the aliens are supposedly advanced in their development with giant heads (a nod to intellectualism) and quite androgynous (a nod to social constructionists). The end goal is the removal of all gender, since gender is a prime limitation for us physically, intellectually and spiritually.

You may have heard the statement, “The future is feminine.” As feminine primacy will run the show soon. However, even that sentiment is beginning to change to “The future is non-binary.” This means what will be running the show in the future is without gender distinctives, no masculinity or femininity.

Essentially, these statements are about what people believe about power. It is a style or perception of power that is “power-over” and “zero-sum”. This is where my ideas are very different as I perceive that mature and healthy use of power is “power for” and “abundant”. Zero-sum is the battle for that elusive 51%, which is only a worthy goal in sports or business, not in life or relationships.

It seems that our options are these;

- 1) We see Masculinity as an idea constructed by society, therefore we can and must socially construct it to become more befitting of our gentler, more feminine culture. As in the future is feminine.
- 2) We see any gender as a lower or less valued category (regardless whether it is natural or socially constructed) therefore if humans are to advance progressively, we must create a genderless society. As in the future is non-binary.
- 3) We recognize Masculinity as a natural given, therefore we pursue avenues of building healthy and mature men who have a strong and positive influence in our world. I would say this means the future is human. (This is the approach of Solid Man.)

The prevalent modern perspective is that nature is something to be either transcended or dominated. It is not something to be embraced, as though it is essentially defective or too primitive, even disease ridden (toxic). This mindset seems to think to embrace our nature seems to be embracing “de-evolution”, becoming less human, not more. I don’t believe this is true for a second, the natural world is who we really are. We become more human by embracing nature, within us and without, not by casting it aside or castrating it.

Things seem to be kind of nutsy in our politically correct world, tree-huggers demand we attend to nature, but in other categories we throw it out. We would never tell someone transitioning from one gender to the other that their (xer) journey is not a natural and substantive part of their (xer) natural internal structure, but have no problem telling a “cis” gender man that his Masculinity is not nature, but socially constructed. Like I said, we are in a nutsy time.

☞ **We exist in a very confusing time when it comes to gender.**

The two schools of thought here are “Social Constructionists” who believe that gender is determined and built into a person through culture or nurture, and “Essentialists” who believe that each person has an “essence” intrinsic within them which is how their gender exists and interacts with the natural world.

The natural world is where we really fit. It is our essence. We are made of the same stuff as dirt, horses, worms or trees. Yes, we have developed culture and cities, but we are part of nature in our being or essence. We must breathe, we must eat, we must have sex and we must shit to survive, just like any other creature of nature.

☞ **Do we need to transcend nature, as though nature is something to overcome? Or do we need to embrace it and guide it into the maturity as it was designed?**

The truth is this, if Masculinity is a thing of nature, it does not matter what you believe, that thing deep within you is there and will come to life when you allow it to. Nature is something you cannot avoid.

☞ **Mother Nature bats last.**

Man Rules

Most of what is communicated in our culture about what a “real” man is, has to do with external behaviors or movements. The idea of “man-up” is just that, in certain situations a “real” man will “man-up” and do what needs to be done to fulfill the expectations of what a man is expected to do. If he is unwilling or incapable of achieving whatever desired expectation, he is looked down upon and not considered a “real” man.

The Man Rules are social constructions.

These categories or rules are socially constructed aspects of Masculinity or manhood. These external expectations are what guides men to navigate life in the present culture. Men are expected to be a utility to keep society driving forward, if you do not work you are not a man. Tim Allen jokes that men have two options in life, work or prison.

Men are the ones in conscription, ready for literal disposal in war. I signed my card when I turned 18 and even though I have never been drafted it has been an expectation in my life. The tension and strain of this reality is part of our socially constructed experience. Even though I may have been ready and even desired to fight for my country, remember that the socially constructed aspects of life are just external expectations, not the reality of our core of natural masculine soul.

These external expectations are very common and are what most men think defines them as valuable or worthy. Notice who it is that determines the value of that man. Once he achieves the desired behavior or outcome, the culture (often a specific woman) confers onto him his value. It is as though she “knights” him with worthiness when he does whatever “man-up” thing that is expected. “Man up” just means conform to expectations.

The man rules are a list of externally referenced expectations that have been developed by society to direct men to become what the prevailing ideas about what a man is or what is expected of a man.

The Man Rules are externally referenced expectations.

Whatever the culture says at that point in history about what is needed from men, it creates that expectation. It may be the need for 17-year-old men blindly going into war for the Civil War or World War II, or for long-haired beatniks in the 60’s and 70’s being cool and open to the times, or the post-WWII dads having 2.5 kids, working hard and getting a house with the white picket fence in the suburbs or for today’s nice guy lumbersexual with his beard, glasses, flannel and skinny jeans. These are all social expectations of men at various times in history.

☞ **For society to run smoothly, men must be a Utility.**

At any given point in history the cultural expectations of what a man is, determines what utility the man will have to keep it all going. The utility of men has been the determining factor of what is expected, and the expectations are called the “Man-Rules”. This is how the externally referenced man finds his value.

The “Man Rules” or the “Man Box” are lists of things that determine whether a man is a real man or not. Here’s just a few common ideas floating around in the Man Box. Notice how externally referenced these expectations are.

Here are a few of the rules;

Do what needs done to make sure your woman (or women in general) is/are happy.

A real man has high status, everyone looks up to the real man.

Be a “White Knight”, protect any woman who is in trouble, especially from her abusive boyfriend or husband, because you would never be like “that guy”.

Don’t express emotion; there’s only two emotions; Angry or Not Angry.

Men are providers, not caregivers or nurturers.

Be self-sufficient, you don’t need help or directions.

Men are alphas, natural leaders. Don’t be the Schmuck or the orbiting Beta.

Have an authoritative posture; make all the final decisions and demand respect.

Be and act physically tough and sexually dominant.

Suck it up and Get ‘r Done.

Pay for the meal, every time.

Get married, have kids and provide for them.

Be the breadwinner, it’s a problem if your wife makes more than you.

Restrain your masculine tendencies, because Masculinity is toxic.

Hold rigid gender roles; heterosexuality, hypersexuality, homophobia, etc.

You must have a level of high physical attractiveness; fat, bald guys need not apply.

Your posture must be aggressive and in control.

There is also the ideas that the size of your dick, or the size of your wallet, or the size of your truck, or whether you ever sit to pee (only women do that!), or whether you use a straw (because real men would not suck like a baby), if you cry at movies, the quality of your beard, or if you are always in control; all these determine the degree to which you are a real man.

☞ **With the Man Rules we perform what we do rather than be who we are.**

Take the idea that a real man gets married and provides for kids. Often this comes from the Christian community. It is interesting that the two most important figures in the Christian faith were very real men, but neither were married or had kids, Jesus and the Apostle Paul. If neither of those men were real men, then where would a Christian man discover what it means to be a man?

Notice that almost every one of these factors is externally referenced, about what a man does, not what or who he is. These externals have nothing to do with the core of a man. The man can have all the externals; big beard, big muscles, bedding multiple women, big bank account, etc., but he probably is still just a boy in a man's body.

The "boy" has not built a strong internal point of reference, he has not been initiated through the Void and he has not adequately answered the five intentional questions every man needs to answer. Essentially, he has not taken his raw masculine material and developed maturity with his masculine soul.

Every man who has developed these externals and plays by the "rules" know deeply that there is something about himself that feels like a poser or a fraud. We know that there is still something missing. That "something" is not his Masculinity, what is missing is maturity.

Maturity is when someone has moved into a next stage of life properly. As in developing from a boy (child) into a man (adult). The proper stage is what is seen as normal growth process. A two-year old would not be expected to work for a living, as a thirty-year old would not still be in Mom's basement. Our goal with this work right now is to find what "mature" Masculinity looks like, from natural and mentoring stages, then make that happen with millions of men.

There are hundreds of other external things that have been used throughout time to determine a man's value as a man. Most of these rules are just "stereotypes" by which people create a single or shallow narrative of the masculine.

☞ **"A stereotype is an unreflective, self-serving generalization made by someone who is too lazy or too stupid to think carefully." Harvey C. Mansfield**

The man rules are not our model or pathway into mature masculine living. The rules seem to come from some bizarre space of stereotype and caricature which creates a very limited and convoluted narrative. It seems odd to me when men repeat these rules as though they are their own rules, when obviously the rules are not theirs.

Whether it is Odysseus or Achilles on a glorious quest or a regular guy doing what the culture expects by procreating, providing and protecting, the measure of a man still is an external judgment, the rules. What you will be reading here is not about creating another external expectation, this process is designed so you can find your internal masculine soul, not pursuing what others expect or demand. Even though a glorious quest or procreating and providing may be what is in store from that internal place, it will be without the need to prove anything.

☞ **You must find your internal masculine soul.**

To get to a place of confidence in our own Masculinity, we must look deeper and consider what is rumbling around in our core. Then take that natural part of us and then nurture that into strength and maturity.

☞ **Masculinity is intrinsically expressed in biology, instinct and spirit.**

The rules have led us through what seems like becoming a man. If we do these “things” or follow these “rules”, only then are we a man and are manly. It is as though being a man requires doing rather than being. We must “do” the rules not just be who we are.

This is a concept called “Precarious Manhood” where our sense of our manhood is on the edge and we can lose it with one event or even one criticism. When someone says “man-up” they are saying that your manhood is something you must earn or do. You never hear “woman up” because a woman’s womanhood in our culture is based in her natural being, a woman can just be a woman. However, it is true that more women are beginning to question their femininity and if they are “enough”. It’s not just men who wrestle with being. But that is a different story.

If Masculinity is something that is based in the world of external rules that we must continually earn, then Masculinity will continuously be at the whim and expectation of whatever notion the present culture has at that time and Masculinity will indeed be precarious. Your sense of self, as a man, will be precarious or fragile.

☞ **If Masculinity is based on “externals” it will always be precarious.**

When it is based in externals, manhood or Masculinity is something to be won or achieved and not something that is the essence of a man. For all of history there have been tribes and cultures which believed manhood was something to be grasped or

achieved; a “quest” for male validation. If you hear words that sound like, “a real man does...” or “a man should do...” you are listening to voices from the outside trying to dictate an external version of manhood.

Here are a couple voices which speak this fragile idea. Norman Mailer said it this way, “Nobody was born a man; you earned manhood provided you were good enough, bold enough.” Or the poet Leonard Kriegel, “In every age, not just our own, manhood was something that had to be won.”

☞ **The ‘Man Rules’ actually are social constructs.**

Prekarious manhood exists because of pressures to be a certain way or do certain things that are seen as acceptable or were seen as acceptable in years gone by. The idea of “do this or do that” and you will be a man is a socially constructed pathway to keep men doing what needs to be done.

Ideas like “Gender Role Strain” or “Gender Role Conflict” exist because men have been told what is expected of them. Rather than moving from inner integrity of who they really are, they must live up to a certain code or expectation. What creates the strain within are those expectations to be a certain kind of man that fits the ideas of society, which often is in conflict with inner realities.

☞ **Masculinity is not precarious.**

If we have to prove our Masculinity or earn it, it was never ours to begin with. I am saying it is ours from the start. It is already in there. Masculinity is something inherent in a man, not a rule to be followed, not as a utility to keep things going, not a thing to be proven, it is a solid part of a man’s being, it is anti-fragile.

☞ **Masculinity is anti-fragile.**

The concept of anti-fragile means that something is not easily broken or disintegrated. The thing can withstand just about any storm or disaster. It is not fragile. It’s not going to break under pressure. Masculinity is anti-fragile therefore it is Solid.

Masculinity is not precarious, it does not crumble under “gender role strain” nor does it falter if the culture calls it toxic. Since it is “of nature” it will prevail long after whatever whim or fad of culture “warriors” claim. Masculinity will remain long after this cultural season of disdain.

☞ **Masculinity will remain. It will not go silently into the night.**

The challenge within this Pillar is to begin to know, experience and develop a strong sense of being; that you are a man, that your manhood already exists deep within you. It is not something you win, earn or prove. It is not something the culture says to do or not to do at their whim. Masculinity is something you already have within you that you develop into deep strength and maturity with mastery.

As your Masculinity begins to solidify within you, it becomes something you are, something that is far from precarious. It IS you, in your being, not what you do but who you are. From this true narrative, you can begin to master the art of becoming good at being a man.

There is the big question, why be masculine, why even try? If I am just going to be shamed for being part of the Patriarchy, an oppressor or tyrant just for being strong and confident, why would I even want to become empowered? This is a question we need to answer. I think the answer is simply, "Because I am a man, I will be a man, I will do what a man does." Men are strong, men are powerful, men are forces for good. To hell with whatever accusations or pressures that may be thrown at you, become the strongest man you can be.

👉 **Maybe there is no incentive to grow up anymore. It used to be that being a grown-up, responsible man was rewarded with respect, power and deference. Now, not so much. - Dr. Helen Smith**

The less masculine a man is, the less mature he is. In this world that calls Masculinity toxic, what we need is not less Masculinity, but more. When a man moves from external references, living as others expect rather than from his core, then what he presents to the world is unhealthy, maybe even toxic. But when a man is empowered to live from the truths within, from his internal frame of reference, he will give powerful gifts to his family and community.

The Solid Man process is a project to increase masculine power in our world, to empower men. To some this seems scary because their narrative is that masculine power has been and is the problem. Or they live in a zero-sum power game which believes that if men have power then women have no power.

This comes from a very limited view of power where there is a struggle to fight and scratch for the little bit of scraps on the table. It is time to empower all humans with abundance power.

A Definition of Masculinity

Here is Merriam-Webster's dictionary definition;

1 a : [MALE](#) - *masculine* members of the choir

b : having qualities appropriate to or usually associated with a man - a *masculine* voice

2: of, relating to, or constituting the gender that ordinarily includes most words or grammatical forms referring to males - *masculine* nouns

Essentially Masculinity is just qualities usually associated with a man. That's not really helpful for our endeavor because we need something more substantive or descriptive that gets to the heart of the fullness of a man.

Masculinity is defined by physical, behavioral and spiritual aspects of being. Masculinity is different than femininity in many significant ways. It is true both are human, both are of equal value or worth, both are made in the image of God and have that divine spark. In essence, Masculinity is significantly different physically, behaviorally and spiritually. Simply stated, yet interesting that it is controversial, men and women are different.

Men and Women are different on many levels.

Some people believe that the idea that men and women are different means that they are or will never be equal or have the same worth and value. Each are designed with the particular gifts each brings to the table, for example, men are physically stronger, and women can grow a child in their womb. Totally different gifts, but each are equally valuable as humans designed and full of dignity.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 (NIV)

One is not better or above the other, but we are different. This simple, yet complex idea is not an easy thing to put to words, especially since there is much energy and pain that many have felt over the centuries. We are different and equal.

Human complexity is a significant consideration. Who we are and how we move as humans is a mysterious thing. As soon as you define something, something else is revealed. We are physical beings, but also spiritual. We are relational beings, but also individual. There is mystery and humans cannot be fully categorized or explained.

My work here is effectually undo-able. Masculinity has tons of mystery, many things about it that are unknown or unknowable. This is especially true as each man seeks to make it real for himself. Some men carry Masculinity different than others. My work here is to create a map that will help define clear aspects of Masculinity. Your work is to make this real in your life, however you see fit.

This effort to define and categorize Masculinity is difficult, if even impossible because of our complexity. But at this time, we need to at least make the effort, since so many narratives are trying to tell a story about men.

There are a million ways to define Masculinity. Here's my attempt as insufficient as it might be. Actually, this whole book is the definition, but here is a sentence and a paragraph to describe Masculinity as simply as I can.

“Masculinity is a man being a man.”

Or, with more words, following the Solid Man Map of Masculinity;

“Masculinity is a deep reality present within the core being of every man.

Mature Masculinity is revealed in a drive to be a generous and powerful force for good,

founded upon a solid internal integrity and identity,

expressed through purposeful and creative movement into the world,

and lived out with passion for life and relationship.”

Each part of this definition reflects what you are about to read. To have a short paragraph to define the concept of Masculinity will be deficient since there is so much to it. However, this definition is what we will work with if we are going to get the words out to describe this thing called Masculinity.

If I have consistency in my thinking, that Masculinity is a natural, deep reality within every man, then it doesn't matter how I define it here, it will rise up on its own and let itself be known. My work here is just to open a conversation about what it might be and how a man will carry it with maturity.

Four Foundational Thoughts

1. Masculinity is good and designed to be a force for good in our world.

Masculinity is not toxic, instead it is and has been a force for good on the planet for millennia. Read that line again. What does it feel like to read that? What reactions do you feel? To consider that Masculinity is not only good but a force for good seems completely counter to what men have been heard for decades.

It is true that men are quite aware that they have the capacity to move in immature and foolish ways, but it is those foolish decisions and not masculinity that is unhealthy. Masculinity is good, but some of our choices, not so much.

It seems that sometimes Masculinity is perceived as a scourge in our world. You know the line, “If women ran the world then...” But the opposite is actually true, men have created, developed and maintained amazing structures, infrastructures and inventions that provide amazing luxury, safety and well-being. Men have literally given their lives for the well-being of others in our amazing culture.

There are always a few evil exceptions to the rule; Hitler, Jeffrey Dahmer, Judas, but the vast majority of regular, ordinary men get up every morning to make the world a better place.

It is those regular men who keep the lights on, keeps homes heated, gets food to the grocery stores, keeps your cars running, everything we take for granted in our culture is primarily kept going by men. That’s just basic infrastructure stuff men do every day.

Many boys growing up today are receiving the message that they are just defective girls. Their boyishness is frowned upon and often drugged in order to keep them attentive or within certain behavioral norms in contexts that don’t come naturally. The message continues to haunt us that something is wrong with boys and men. That’s just not true, Masculinity is good.

2. The definition of Masculinity must come from the inside of a man, and from the world of men.

The voices out there ready and willing to say what a man “ought” to be are countless. The world of women endlessly talks about what they expect a man to be and do. Many men try to hear what that expectation is, only to find it is just another moving target, wavering around in pop culture. It’s just another external expectation.

☞ **Men have given “Woman” the position of Judge. She has our approval in her hands, dispensing it or withholding it at will. We are at her disposal.**

Over the years somehow men have allowed women to determine our value. In doing so we have subjugated ourselves to their opinions of what is good or bad in a man. The outcome has become generations of men trying to figure out the formula; what does she want? Trying to figure it out is like trying to hit a moving target in the dark. Like the proverbial blind squirrel who might get the nut, once in a blue moon we hit the target and get the pat on the head, good boy. This is not how our value, nor the definition of Masculinity is found. We've been chasing our tail too long, or other tail we're chasing?

Men have Masculinity in their being, we know it's there. We must unapologetically discern it for ourselves and then live it out like we want to, not like what is expected. The definition must be from us. Not from "oughts" or expectations.

☞ **Live out Masculinity like you want to.**

It is important for each man to determine his own pathway to becoming the man he is. Your own personal variables will guide you to mastering YOUR own personal Masculinity. There are many consistencies within the definition and make up of what Masculinity is, but it will be your journey to take these core aspects and make it your own.

☞ **Be unapologetic about being a man.**

It is surprising to me how many men are ashamed or apologetic about being men, or being a masculine being. The idea that women are the pinnacle of creation with beauty and grace, and men are lower beings; ugly, earthy and clumsy is wrong. It's like a comparison between elves and orcs. It is true that women carry beauty and grace, but men carry significant attributes as well. We equally bring goodness and beauty, just in completely different ways.

This volume will give my perspective from one man to another. Take what I bring, consider what resonates with you and create your unapologetic unique version of good, healthy Masculinity. It will come from within you. Let it come alive.

Defining Masculinity is the work of men and must be developed from the hearts of men. Feminism has had her say, it is time for men to speak.

3. In order to become what it has been designed to be, Masculinity must be released, not restrained.

Most of what is taught about Masculinity is that in order for it to be lived out in healthy ways, it must be restrained. We must keep our sexuality at bay, it is like a wolf

we cannot feed, or we will at once become uncontrollable in our appetite unfettered like Mr. Hyde. As if we must restrain our deep selfishness because it will cause us to become unreliable as we pursue pleasure and forget our responsibilities to care for our family.

There are many ways that we are taught that restraint is our primary movement toward maturity. Restrain your intensity, your anger, or your aggression. Pay attention and restrain your attention to this or that. Restrain your desires, your passions, your wants and emotion.

Don't get in "trouble", don't be in the way, get the job done, don't make waves, keep the world turning. Any of your desires are a pathway to sin and evil, so because it is crouched and knocking at the door, keep it restrained and in it's cage where it belongs.

You've gotten messages like this from all the contexts in which you have lived; Family of Origin, school, workplace, church, and from our culture. Everything screams "Restraint!", "You can't do that!", "Get in line and fly right!". This is where men set aside their emotional process, whether that is deep feelings of grief, loss, sadness, pain or excitement, passion, or happiness, you mask or restrain your emotion, since emotion gets in the way of efficiency.

The rule is, don't express emotion, there's a job to do!

A proposition I will posit here is that most of the problems men face exist because we are trying to restrain powerful and significant aspects of our soul, which only results in increased anxiety, more anger and unleashed compulsive behavior.

We must release these significant parts of who we are as men. This sounds counter-intuitive because of all the messages we've been taught, but this is the way of freedom. The more freedom a man has, the greater strength and power he has, and the less he gets caught up in the things that entangle and enslave him.

Many men are aware that they are indeed capable of powerful actions that can be dangerous and even violent. We are dangerous beings. We have the capacity to destroy, harm and even kill. Even though we hear of killings in our 24/7 news cycle media, it rarely happens, and the vast majority of people do not commit murder or violence.

In the Narnia story, Lucy asks Mrs. Beaver if Aslan is a "safe" lion, she answers, "Oh no, he is not safe, but he is good." We are capable of violence and we are dangerous, **and** we are safe. Sounds like a crazy statement, but it is true, since men are good.

I know I have these truths within me; I am sexual, I am strong, I am passionate, I am dangerous. I also know it is not the job of culture or anyone else to restrain me, except myself. I will choose my own time to express and release, I will choose when I restrain and hold myself back. I will move with wisdom and self-control.

☞ I am the only one who will restrain me, I will choose.

When a man lives from an externally referenced position of others restraining his person and his power, he experiences feeling tied down and cornered. For an unobserving man, this results in counter reactions of anger, intensity and disruption. Consider how you have felt when you were restrained, rather than free. Your goal here is to take back your own personal control choosing your own restraint.

This endeavor is not about restraining Masculinity, but about releasing Masculinity in all its fullness and glory! As you hear that Masculinity has glory, that probably gives you some reaction, “Really? Masculinity has glory? That’s not what I’ve heard.”

We haven’t heard much good because the definitions/expectations of Masculinity that have been developed in the past half century are reactions to things like the “evil” patriarchy, men/boys are thrust into contexts in which Masculinity does not thrive, and the expectations of what women want in a man change constantly. It is time for men to be released into freedom.

4. I do not have a feminine side. No man does.

The idea that a man has a feminine side, or a woman has a masculine side is an idea that has been conjured up. I do not believe it is truth. It does have some deep roots in Eastern religion (consider the Yin/Yang symbol) and in Jungian thought about animus and anima, but it is just an idea.

I think in our culture today this idea has taken on greater energy because it lays out a strong comparison between the masculine and feminine, building upon the idea that men and women are the same. But it is usually convoluted into the idea that good characteristics are feminine (nurture, verbal communication, care), and bad characteristics are masculine (aggression, intensity, sexuality). Like so many ideas that are coming out of our culture these days, this is BS.

Rethink the idea that the masculine is only aggressive, promiscuous, hard, assertive, risk seeking, frank, leader, not emotional, aloof, distant, boastful, forceful, loud, laconic, stoic, rational or abstract and that the feminine is; caring, faithful, soft, sensitive, security seeking, indirect, seeking company, warm, emotional, sympathetic, modest, persuasive, quiet, loquacious, complaining.

What if all these things are just things and they are things that a man or a woman would just do like a man or a woman would do them? Or things any human does at a particular time. A woman leads like a woman leads. When she leads, she is not being like a man, she is a woman leading. A man nurtures like a man nurtures. When he nurtures he is not being like a woman, he is nurturing like a man nurtures.

Usually when a woman is trying to do something like a man does anything (or a man trying to do something like a woman does anything) it becomes this strange caricature of reality. When a woman tries to be competitive like a man it is strange looking, like she is trying to live up to some contrived expectation, but to watch women compete like women in any sport, its beautiful and works just fine.

👉 **These behaviors are just things, not particularly masculine or feminine.**

I am a very nurturing man, ask my kids, and I have done it like a man would do it, with muscles; big hugs, wrestling and with a compassionate voice. It is good nurture and it's been a huge part of my masculine presence with my family.

So, when I am doing certain things that have been connected to the feminine, I am not acting from my inner feminine or feminine side, I am just doing that particular thing as a man would do it because I have no feminine side.

Let's look at these behaviors; competitive, stoic, dominance, and aggression. Both men and women can do these things and be this way. There are important times in life when you are required to call these forth in your life no matter who you are. Competing for a job? Go for it. Need to get a job done? Be stoic, suck it up and get it done. Need to set good boundaries with your family of origin? Get dominant and tell them what is right. Need to stand up for someone? Open up a can of aggressive whoop-ass. Who the hell cares if you are a man or a woman, all these previous situations are not about gender or sex, it's about what needs to be done by whoever is there to do it.

I would imagine this idea may have some reaction within you. Consider what that might be and why it feels that way. What idea have you been believing? The idea may resonate with you. Consider what life looks like if you move in ways that have been thought to be feminine in a masculine way.

It is interesting that some will say no one has any feminine or masculine side, because there is no such thing as masculine or feminine, these binary ideas are just "social" constructs. Eliminating Masculinity and Femininity is what is called a non-binary opinion or narrative describing sexuality and people. As you have read, I don't agree with this, because I think Masculinity and Femininity are nature in essence, not socially constructed. So, I do have a Masculine side.

**What reactions do you have? How have these ideas been formed in your head?
What if it is true that you have no feminine side?**

What is Masculinity? Is it a concept or idea created, developed and therefore able to be changed or modified at the whim of any fad or politically correct movement? Is it a natural state of being within a man that has inherent qualities that needs to be mastered in maturity?

👉 Competence is Power, Mastery is Great Power, Creation is True Power.

What you will be reading from here may give you a sense of incompetence, that you are not good at this, yet. This is a reasonable feeling, since most men have not seen or been given a good model of Masculinity. In a sense we are all beginners. So, to begin to gain competence and eventually mastery, it is important to start with humility and the “beginner’s mind”.

As with learning anything (a musical instrument, a martial art, an academic pursuit, etc.) you begin with incompetence and inexperience. You are a rookie. Be ok with that. You won’t get far without it. Even though your Masculinity is natural and deep within you, it will still take the 10,000 hours (or more) to gain competence. Like walking, it took a while to get that down.

Now let’s get into the details of the deeper and full definition of Masculinity as it is described in the world of Solid Man. In this work you will learn concepts you’ve never probably attached to Masculinity, so open your eyes and enjoy the journey. We’ll start with a few unavoidable contexts and then draw out for you the Heart of Masculinity with the two significant paradoxes that define our journey as men. We will discuss more about this when we talk about mastery.

Here are five things I say are true about Masculinity;

Masculinity is a thing. It has substance, it has definition and it is real.

Masculinity is a mystery. It has aspects that are unknowable or undefinable.

Masculinity is nature. It has biological, spiritual and behavioral form.

Masculinity is good. It is a force for good in this world.

Masculinity is yours. You define how it will be carried out in your life.

And one thing about you;

You will master your Masculinity only by following the deep internal truths that already exist within you, not by doing or being what others say or expect.

Group Reflection Questions

Where do you fall on the spectrum of Nature v. Nurture, or the concept that Masculinity is a brute fact, or an idea created by culture? How so?

Nurture _____ Nature
(Idea) _____
(Fact)

How have you been caught in the trap of believing Masculinity was determined by external constructs like how you look, the size of your penis, how many women you had sex with or your status (money, job, car, etc.) rather than internals like integrity, courage, passion, personal strength or wise choices and actions.

External 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Internal

In what ways have you gotten caught up in the externals that define Masculinity?

To what degree do you believe Masculinity is essentially good or do you believe it is inherently toxic? Assess this from a personal place, you as a man, ok or not ok?

Toxic 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Good

Explain why you think this.

With the definition I present here, what comes to mind and what reactions do you have? (“Masculinity is a deep reality present within the core being of every man. Mature Masculinity is revealed in a drive to be a generous and powerful force for good, founded upon a solid internal integrity and identity, expressed through purposeful and creative movement into the world, and lived out with passion for life and relationship.”)

Of the four foundational facts, which seem to capture your attention and have the most value? Which ones don’t seem to fit with your worldview?

Write something about each of these about whether you agree or not, and why?

Masculinity is good -

Masculinity must be released not restrained -

Masculinity must be defined from within –

A man has no feminine side –

Which of these push into preconceived ideas that seem hard to reconcile? If you have an internal reaction, write your rebuttal, why you disagree and what your proof is otherwise.

When you consider the idea of mastering your Masculinity, what seems like an obstacle, what seems do-able, what seems exciting?

What other thoughts or insights do you have about this chapter?