

1: WHAT SHAPED YOU?

By John
In Faith, Family, Identity

6 Min Read



Photo by [Quino Al](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Discipled by the World Series: Relearning Manhood in Christ.

OPENING THOUGHT

Every man carries invisible fingerprints on his soul. We've all been shaped—by family, culture, mentors, heroes, even by the absence of the voices we longed to hear. For many, the lessons started early: *"Real men don't cry."* *"Man up."* *"Handle your own problems."* Some of these messages helped us push through challenges, but others subtly distorted our understanding of God, ourselves, and what it means to be a man. What we rarely say out loud is this: the strongest influences in our lives often weren't chosen. They happened to us. A father's silence, a coach's harsh words, or the constant noise of social media shaped us as much as intentional teaching ever did.

Discipleship starts long before you make your decision to follow Christ. Coaches, the military, or workplace mentors helped shape your habits and values. Today's culture's repeated messages, the media, and peers all contribute to this shaping process. Your parents, teachers, and peers modeled what was considered "normal" behavior, and it was absorbed. Experiences, environments, and even trauma helped in the formation process.

Many men underestimate how deeply they've been shaped by what they *didn't* hear: a dad who never said "I love you," a mentor who never affirmed them, or a church that never taught them about grace. In leading men's groups, I've been surprised and saddened at the number of men who have said, "My dad and I never really talked." Or "My dad never showed up for one of my games." Men wait their whole lives to be affirmed by their dad. When those words never come, they look for affirmation elsewhere—career success, respect from other men, sexual desires, or practical skills.

What we don't process, we pass on. Many men unknowingly repeat the same unhealthy models with their kids, marriages, or friendships because they never pause to evaluate where those patterns came from.

Identity shaping is an ongoing process; it's not static. Many men assume "what shaped me" is fixed in childhood. But shaping is continuous—your workplace, friendships, social media, television, and even your current church are still forming your idea of manhood today.

Men rarely talk about how ashamed and uncomfortable they feel of the influences that shaped them—whether it's a broken home, addiction in the family, an absent dad, or a mentor who failed. That unspoken shame keeps them from speaking up and allowing God to redeem it.

SCRIPTURE

**"Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."**
—Romans 12:2 (ESV)

Romans 12:2 is both a warning and an invitation. "Do not be conformed to this world" is subtle but powerful. It's the locker room jokes that normalize treating women as objects. It's the business culture that tells you workaholic is a badge of honor. It's the pressure to build your identity on money, success, or what you own. Paul warns us not to be pressed into that mold. Instead, he points to transformation through the renewing of our minds—a re-calibration of how we think, feel, and act, centered in Christ.

APPLICATION

Take a moment to trace your story. Who shaped you? Maybe it was a dad who modeled hard work but never showed affection. Maybe it was a teacher who believed in you—or one who tore you down. Maybe it was a church that taught you about God's holiness but never about His grace. Whether we realize it or not, each of these voices discipled us.

Here's what often isn't talked about: discipleship doesn't start in a Bible study. It starts in life. We are all *already* being discipled—by culture, family, peers, screens, and systems. The problem isn't whether we've been discipled; it's whether the shaping forces pointed us toward Jesus or away from Him.

And here's what's not said enough: not everything that shaped you was bad. God can redeem even the imperfect examples. A demanding boss may have taught you resilience. A broken father may have left gaps that forced you to lean on your heavenly Father. But unless you pause to examine those shaping voices, you'll never know which to keep and which to unlearn.

Living as a man of God begins with honesty. Before you can walk in the freedom Christ offers, you must face the lessons you've carried unexamined. Otherwise, you'll pass them on to others—your children, your coworkers, your friends—without even realizing it.

TODAY'S CHALLENGE: WHO/WHAT'S SHAPING YOUR IDENTITY?

Take 15 minutes today and write down three voices that shaped how you think about being a man. They could be people, cultural messages, or even that inner voice. For each one, ask:

- Did this influence bring me closer to the character of Jesus?
- Or did it push me further away?

Invite God to show you where His truth needs to replace old lies. This may feel uncomfortable, but honesty is the doorway to transformation.

Then pray this:

"Father, I confess that I've been shaped by many voices other than Yours. Some of those voices have led me into pride, fear, or shame. Others have helped me grow. Today I ask for Your Spirit to renew my mind. Help me see what to keep, what to release, and what to relearn in Christ. Shape me into the man You designed me to be."

FINAL THOUGHT

Manhood is not a blank slate—it's a story written by the people and situations of your past. But here's the hope: in Christ, He will rewrite your story. You don't have to conform to the patterns of your past. You don't have to repeat the cycles you grew up with. The renewing of your mind is possible because God Himself is the Author.

The world says, *"You are who you are."* But Jesus says, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). What shaped you yesterday doesn't have to define you today.

This week's step: This week, choose one shaping voice you identified and talk it through with a trusted brother in Christ. Ask him to pray with you about how God might be

transforming that influence. Remember: renewal happens not just in isolation but in community. It can be scary to open up to someone else, trust God to be with you during this trying time.

WANT TO GET FUTURE DEVOTIONALS BY EMAIL? USE THE CONTACT FORM—JUST ENTER YOUR NAME AND EMAIL, AND TYPE “SUBSCRIBE” IN THE MESSAGE BOX.

SNAG THIS PRINT-FRIENDLY VERSION FOR YOUR NEXT MEN’S BREAKFAST OR BIBLE STUDY.

Contact: John Leavy

Email: johndleavy@gmail.com

Website: 1Man2Another.com