

Walk to Manhood

A Ceremony to Move Boys to Manhood

By Dan Webster

Recently, I invited five men to participate in a ceremony celebrating my youngest son's graduation from high school and his move from being a boy to becoming a man. It was called *Logan Webster's Walk to Manhood*. In our American culture we lack a ritual that inaugurates a boy moving from childhood into manhood. As young guys grow up in America there is the experience of being a boy, then a moving into adolescence...and then at some unknown time a male theoretically becomes a man. I decided that this philosophy of helping boys to manhood was not good enough and felt it necessary to give my youngest son a tangible experience to hang his hat on as to when he was welcomed into the fellowship of men. Below you will read about this event. Feel free to use any or all of it as you prepare your son for manhood. Hopefully it will stimulate you to come up with something that will be meaningful to your son.

The *Walk to Manhood* event took place beginning Friday evening at 5pm and concluded on Saturday morning around 11am. The event was held at a summer home of a friend in central Michigan. This location was private, gave a chance to play on 4x4's, and also was perfect for quiet walks in the woods.

The objectives of the *Walk To Manhood* were to celebrate Logan's life, impart a blessing to him as a young man, deepen enduring life-long relationships with a group of men who love and believe in him, give him a vision for what manhood could be, through 'walks' that each man would have with Logan, and to transition Logan from being a boy to being a man.

Logan and I had been talking about a working definition of what a man is...

A MAN IS someone who...rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects the greater reward – God's reward!¹

There were numerous elements that made our time together that weekend a success. Each of the following elements played an important role in the overall experience. Following this overview there is a copy of the letter I mailed to all the men who participated in Logan's *Walk to Manhood*. It can be used as a template for your letter if you wish.

Here is a list of the key contributing elements blow by blow.

1. The right venue.

As I mentioned above, our venue was a cabin in the woods away from everyone and everything. I'd suggest that you find a similar location that allows for privacy and fun.

2. The right group of men to share the event with my son.

I did not do this celebration alone...I needed the help and support of other men. Some might choose to do something alone, I found I couldn't. I realized a long time ago that there are things

¹ This definition, along with a number of the ideas for Logan's *Walk To Manhood* were taken from *Raising A Modern-Day Knight*, by Robert Lewis (Tyndale Press). This book is a gold mine of ideas.

I've wanted to say to Logan that are not easy to say. These were thoughts that seemed stuck in my head and yet they needed to be said directly to my son if he was to feel my blessing and move into manhood. The presence of other men helped for the right things to be said in the way they needed to be said. Also, there are so many life lessons that are best received through the voices of other men rather than coming from 'dad'.

My son respected each of these men. This was very important. These guys had each known Logan for years and long for his success in the future. Also, all these men are committed dads and understand what it means to be a man. I was surprised at how quickly they each volunteered to participate. And let me say...the event marked all of us on deep levels.

The group of men was diverse. One man lived through most of his high school and college days stoned before he became a Christian. Another man was once the captain of the Duke University football team. One of these men works on the Chicago Board of Trade, the others were a pastor/school teacher/business owner/and parachurch organization leader. Each of these men had diverse life-lessons to share with Logan. Each man was different, yet we all shared a common faith in Jesus Christ.

3. A time to PLAY together.

Given the intensity of parts of the weekend it was necessary to have time to play. We were able to get on 4x4's and be crazy for a couple hours right at the beginning of the gathering. Find something that your son will enjoy. All the men participated too. I mostly took video footage of Logan almost running down the other men. It was wild, had some edge to it, and was just plain fun to do. As a maturing young man Logan needs to see men play hard and clean.

4. A steak dinner on Friday evening with directed discussion.

Dinner on Friday evening (following the 4x4 fun) gave me an opportunity to overview the *Walk to Manhood* event for Logan. The topic for discussion at dinner was *lessons we learned going from high school to college*. This time gave each man an opportunity to share in a "no baloney" kind of way the real mistakes (along with the good decisions) he made in that transition. Logan needed to hear both. HONESTY is absolutely crucial. Stories about cheating, drugs, women, right friends, work, integrity, temptation, study habits, getting connected with a church were all shared by different men.

5. A video celebrating Logan's life.

Following dinner we went to a TV and watched two short video presentations I had prepared celebrating Logan's life. The first was a collage of photographs from being a baby to the current day including pictures of his grandparents, mom and brothers throughout the years. The second included highlights from his high school soccer career and recent graduation ceremony. The purpose of these videos was to celebrate the first eighteen years of his life. The feeling was...*yea God for Logan's life...he is loved and honored tonight!*

6. A discussion about what men do that children do not do.

Following the video celebration of Logan's life we sat around and discussed...*What are things that boys do that men don't do and what are things that men do that boys don't do?* The purpose of this discussion was twofold. First, it gave Logan a chance to hear that a change is about to occur. One point that was emphasized was that childhood is about being served, manhood is

about stepping up and serving the world through your God-given gifts, talents and energy. The second purpose was to set up an assignment that Logan would complete before the next morning.

7. *An assignment of a letter for Logan to write.*

Following our discussion above, I asked Logan to write a letter before the next morning that described what he needed to leave behind as he moved on to become a man. Logan did not know when I assigned him this task that the letter would be burned in the next morning's ceremony.

8. *7a.m. wake up call and breakfast together.*

The next morning we got up pretty early so that each man would have time to do his walk with Logan. There was not a specific question or issue to discuss at breakfast. We were just all trying to wake up. At the end of the meal I explained that each man had a 15-30 minute walk with Logan to share a specific lesson or message for him.

9. *The individual walks of each man with Logan.*

Each man understood that he had from 15 to 30 minutes to walk with Logan and impart whatever he might be led to share. I told each man that when it came to what they share, I wanted for each of them to ask God what He would like for them to share with Logan. I believe the Lord gave each man something to say about life, love, family, failure, work, faith, etc. One of the men had a few questions to ask Logan. Another had a very personal failure experience to share. Another gave Logan a simple gift that reminded him that he was a leader and should live like one. I asked each man to come up with a slogan (or motto) that encapsulated the theme of their comments and a verse from the Bible to go with the thought. I asked them to come to the event with their 'slogan thought' and verse written on a 3x5 card that they could give to Logan at the end of their walk. I also asked them to put all their phone numbers on the back of the card so that Logan could call them in the future if needed.

10. *The ceremony.*

Following the walks each man had with Logan we all gathered back inside the lodge in front of a large fireplace. This was the location for the final ceremony.

- a. *The burning of the letter.* One of the men began this time by explaining to Logan that the letter he wrote was now to be burned. He shared with Logan that the first 18 years of his life will always be a part of him but they are the past and now it's time to let them go and move into manhood. He explained the symbolism of letting go and leaving behind. Logan then lit the letter on fire and we all stood silent as the past was let go.
- b. *The prayer.* As a group of men we all gathered around Logan and laid hands on him and prayed blessings on him. It was very emotional for me as I stood behind him with my hands on his shoulders. I wept through my prayer asking God to help Logan know I am always behind him.
- c. *The welcome to the community of men.* At the conclusion of the prayer we had Logan stand in the middle of us men as we encircled him. I began facing Logan and said to him, *Logan, I've loved you as a baby, as a boy, as a teenager and I will love you as a man. It's my joy to be the first to welcome you into the fellowship of men.* I wept as I said this into the face of my son. We embraced and cried together. It was a moment I will never forget. I hope it will be so for Logan also. Then Logan stood in front of the next man and he said to Logan, *Logan, I now accept you as a peer and not a boy. Welcome to the fellowship of*

men. Each man looked into Logan's eyes and said something close to this. It was powerful and deep.

- d. *The giving of the gift*. Following the welcome to manhood expressions I gave Logan a gift in the form of an expensive watch with **WTH – 6/12/2004** engraved on the back of it. This was something that would always remind him of this weekend. I told Logan that every time he checked the time this gift was to remind him that it's time to be a man.
- e. *Photos, lunch and out of here*. Following the ceremony we took some pictures, thanked the men for coming, had a light lunch and drove home.

Each of us who participated in *Logan's Walk to Manhood* were marked on deep levels. Logan received a blessing that he'll never forget. Each man walked away committed to being the dad and man God calls him to be. We each sensed that something very 'right' had just taken place. I cheer you on as a man to stay passionately committed to your own growth as a man. Your personal development is the platform from which ceremonies like this can come into reality. May God bless you as you strive to lead your boys into manhood.

Dan Webster - July 2004
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Note: On the following pages you will find a letter that I send to each man to prepare him for *Logan's Walk to Manhood*.

Logan Webster
Walk To Manhood

DATE: June 11-12, 2004

TO: Jerry, Denny, Lance, Tony and Bo

FROM: Dan Webster

RE: Logan's Walk to Manhood Ceremony

Jerry, Denny, Lance, Tony and Bo –

I want to thank each of you for being willing to rearrange your schedules to share in a time to assist Logan in his transition from high school to college and on into manhood. This letter will give an overview of our time together and what I need from you to make the time work.

It's an awesome task to raise a son. Having a community of men to assist in the task is a blessing beyond measure. Each of you ARE men! Real men both Logan and I respect. Each of us has stumbled and failed our way to where we are today. Each of us longs to be fully alive in God's grace and help other men to get to that place. This ceremony is just the next step (but I hope a meaningful one) in Logan's life journey.

"In an abundance of counselors there is victory."
Proverbs 11:14

Such deep emotion fills me as I think through what our time together with Logan might look like. Below I've listed out the general timing and activities that we will share in. I want you to know that I've been talking with Logan about a definition of manhood and what God sees as a man's responsibilities.

A MAN IS someone who...rejects passivity, accepts responsibility, leads courageously, and expects the greater reward – God's reward!

Responsibilities and prohibitions given to man in the Garden of Eden:

- God gave man a will to obey – "don't eat the fruit"
- God gave man a work to do – "cultivate the garden"
- God gave man a woman to love – "Eve"

THE WHAT: Logan Webster *WALK TO MANHOOD*

LOCATION: The Lodge – see attachment

TIMING: Friday, June 11, 5pm to Saturday, June 12, noon

SCHEDULE:

Friday

5pm Play at the lodge – 4x4’s, fish, etc.

7pm Formal Dinner - steaks

- Sharing of the vision to manhood
- Men share about lessons and transition from high school to college
- Video of Logan’s life up to graduation
- Explanation of next morning’s activity

9:30pm Logan writes his letter listing what children do that men do not do

10pm Hang out

Saturday

7am Breakfast

7:30am Each man has his walk with Logan

10:00am Logan’s commitment to pursue manhood

Burning of the letter of childhood

The prayer over Logan

The acceptance as a peer – *“Logan, you are now my friend as a man.”*

Giving the gift – *a watch*

11am Light lunch – shoot the breeze

ANY QUESTIONS: Call me...
Dan Webster
616-335-..... work
616-335-..... home
616-405-..... cell

For this to be a great event, here is what I need from each of you:

1. Pray for the event and that God will give you something meaningful to share with Logan.
2. At **the Friday evening dinner**, the topic of discussion will be: *lessons we learned making our transition from high school to college*. I'd like for each of you to share about your high school graduation and the challenges you faced moving from high school to college or work. It would be great if each of you would openly share about your collegiate successes and failures: describe honestly and in detail the things you did wrong, the things you did right, and how these things impacted your life later on. We will discuss what we would choose to do over if we could now that we know what we know. As we help Logan think about college...I'd like to have us emphasize...beginning strong academically, setting goals and boundaries, resisting the host of temptations that await. This conversation must be **HONEST**. No bullshit here...let's tell Logan the good and the bad and what God has taught us. This will be fun and I expect a lot of energy around this conversation.
3. Now concerning **The Walk** each of you will have with Logan Saturday morning. These can last from 15 to 30 minutes. Denny's lodge is a perfect place to do these walks. It's secluded and beautiful. Some of you know Logan well and others just a little. I've attached a letter I wrote to Logan this last Christmas on '*What's Right With You*' that will give you more insight in to him. When it comes to what you share...rather than me tell you what I want you to say to him, I'd like for you to ask God what He would like for you to share with Logan. I believe the Lord will give you something to say about life, love, family, work, faith... You may have a couple questions to ask Logan and invite him to ask you questions. It would be fantastic if you could come up with a **slogan** or motto that encapsulates the theme of your comments and a verse from the Bible to go with the thought.

Here are a couple ideas:

- You are who you are when no one is looking – Proverbs 20:7
- You have what it takes – Phil 4:13
- Put God first – I Cor. 16:13

Please come to the event with your 'slogan thought' and verse written on a 3x5 card that you can give to Logan at the end of your walk. I'll have some 3x5 cards if you want to write them on Friday evening. Please write your name and phone numbers on it so that he can have those if he ever needs to call you. I am going to take all these life slogans/mottos and put them on a plaque with a photo of all of us. This will be something Logan can keep for the years to come. Every time he looks at it he will remember that there is a group of men who love him, believe in him and expect the best of him.

4. The **prayer ceremony** at the end of the walks will allow each of us to lay hands on and pray for Logan. At the end of the prayers we will have Logan stand in the middle of us as we stand in a circle. We will have Logan face each man one at a time and we will say to him, "*Logan, I now accept you as a peer and not as a boy. Welcome to the fellowship of men.*" With that each man will hug him.
5. Then I will give Logan the gift of a watch as a memento of our time together. With that we will have a light lunch and head home.