

# THE PURPOSE AND TRANSITIONING OF THE FOUR LEVELS OF GROWTH AT OUR MANMAKERS CAMPS

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Our ManMakers Gatherings Inc, are wilderness type, weeklong camps for serious young men who desire to be challenged and stretched in regard to the formation of Christian character and Christ-like masculinity. Our camps create a “rite of passage” experience designed to encourage young men between the ages of 12-16<sup>1</sup> to adopt a philosophy of early maturity as well as to assist them in making the transition to responsible adulthood. Our aim is to impart to our young campers a personal code of chivalry that governs their thoughts, manners, behaviors and actions.

We believe that major behavioral changes genuinely take place only after there are major changes in one’s character and values. Therefore, our camps are designed with activities, lessons and trainings that move our campers through a series of four powerful metaphors that symbolize different stages of growth and personal character development. These are:

**1. The Way of the Dog**, which is designed to help the camper grow in the areas of obedience, submission, courage and self-sufficiency, and the character traits of meekness and humility. At this stage a young man comes to be able to not only learn skills that will help him survive in the wild alone, but also be able to identify and share with a group the gifts and skills he has to contribute to the group. Those activities that challenge a young man as an individual belong to this level. Some of the things a young man learns at this level are:

- Medieval sword fighting techniques
- How to make a bow-fire
- How to fish
- How to keep warm in the wild - solo
- How to read a compass
- Tracking and Orientation
- Making their own knife
- Developing a personal vision of who they are
- Rock climbing and trip line
- Ropes course
- Miscellaneous survival skills

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<sup>1</sup> Or junior high and high-schoolers

**2. The Way of the Parrot**, which is designed to help the camper learn how to listen in such a way that he is able to repeat the things taught to him or learned by him verbatim. Things important to know are to be heard, seen, said and seized. Then they become theirs to own and to apply whenever they find themselves in need of them. Things taught as concepts, principles and lessons happen at this level. Some things a Parrot level camper learns are:

- The importance of myth and story telling And the telling their own story
- Repeating the teachings of others
- The Way of the Green Pilgrim
- The importance of legacy, heritage and generational blessing
- The importance of pain and ordeal in a rite of passage (nothing worth having comes cheap)
- Slogans and Mottos of manhood
- Reciting the Nicene Creed Tag-team style
- Learning St. Patrick's Breast Plate
- How to have a personal quiet time, journaling, and devotions...
- Etc...

**3. The Way of the Bison** is designed to teach the importance of community and commitment, self – sacrifice, and team spirit. Activities that require team work, personal sacrifice, and endurance will take place at this level. Some things the Bison level camper will come to learn are:

- Trebuchet competition
- Obstacle Course
- Night Hunt
- Dragohir (medieval Live Action Role Play or LARP)
- Team Chores
- Participating and cooperating with team activities
- Altruism

**4. The Way of the Owl** is designed to teach the importance of applying what one has learned, so that knowledge becomes wisdom. Things requiring personal application and verbal articulation happen at this level. Some things learned and applied at this level are:

- Astronomy
- Learning to be comfortable with one's self and one's thoughts (how to think in solitude and quietude)
- Applying and imparting what one has found to be true
- Learning how to "work the Problem"
- Dealing with adversity
- Leading courageously
- Learning the value of purpose and a transcendent cause in seeing and assessing things clearly
- The circle and the line and the Celtic cross as a compass for life
- Coming up with a "to Do" list of things that will be done after the camp to promote personal transformation
- Learning "who" one is (self-identity) and what one's purpose in life is...

The transitioning from one level to another should have its own ritual and/or rite of passage marking the moment. This should include surprise (coming up from behind and blindfolding an individual, and leading him off into the wilderness somewhere, where his clan has gathered, each prepared to say something that adds to the transition, like reminding him what the way of the \_\_\_\_\_ means, and what will be required of him, as well as encouraging words that have to do with what positive things were displayed by him in the last level, and what he did to successfully pass into the next level. A bead or stone or some characteristic representing the animal type he mastered should be given him representing this next level that is to be placed on the leather thong given him when he registered at the camp. The last thing to be added to the thong will be a stone or bead representing his over-all accomplishments at the camp.

Most campers may not successfully pass through all the levels the first time at camp. It may take them one or two successive camps to attain to the owl level. Each time a camper comes back for the annual gatherings, they may take up where they left off the year before. All those who pass through all the levels may come back each successive year as a clan leader or camp counselor.

Those who successfully complete any of the above levels can take their checklist, signed by their clan leader and Andy White or Nicolas Bertolero, and have the activities accomplished therein to count on their Knighthood requirements sheet. But the things checked off on their camp check list must correspond with what is on their requirements sheet.

