

Philosophical Foundation for Gents Camp SA Father and Sons Camp

This can get 'deep' quite quickly. Camp itself will not be a lecture or information heavy. It will be full of fun, challenge, games, stories, and bonding time. However, none of it is incidental and is tied to the camp's deeper philosophical outlook. Gents Camp SA Father and Sons (GCFS) is run by Christians, but has a broad philosophical outlook that draws on psychology, pedagogy, anthropology, and sociology. The camp allows space for fathers (figures) from different worldview backgrounds to participate and use their personal belief system to fill in the gaps with what is consistent with their worldview. The main aim of this camp is to help fathers become clear on what type of legacy they want to pass on to their sons, and what type of meaningful activities will help them do that. To this end, GENTS Camp Father and Sons aims to help fathers be meaningfully present in their sons' lives while they are aged 8-12 years old*. The following is the general belief and value framework that Gents Camp SA Father and Sons Camp uses.

Beliefs

- Males and females are mostly similar, but their general differences are significant for how males develop well and healthy male role-models they emulate. It is also significant for how they learn to relate to females and those who generally are different from them.
- Culturally, gender roles shift over time as contexts change. GCFS doesn't adopt any gender roles per se, but encourages males to use their strengths (whatever they are) to serve those in their community.
- A good archetype male model allows for variation that gives freedom in its pursuit, not repressive restriction. GCFS helps fathers to identify the type of male archetype they are holding up to their sons. On camp, we use the language of '**The Hero's Journey**' (Appendix 1) to communicate how males pursue meaning and legacy in life, through ideals of manhood.
- Fatherhood is by far the primary relationship that young boys need to find guidance in exploring and using power well as they grow up. Fathers are needed to teach and role-model guidance to their sons, especially how they uphold the dignity of other people, and especially women, as sacred partners in life.
- Testosterone, the male hormone, biologically predisposes males to be interested in power (in many forms). This does not make men better leaders, but it does mean they have great need to be guided how to use power (physical, and other) constructively, not destructively
- Other good men are needed around adolescent boys to inspire them of a manhood even better than one good father can give. Fathers have the responsibility of finding good other role models for their sons
- Learning is primarily 'caught' not 'taught', and as such, being a good father requires doing important 'stuff' together with sons (and explaining what you can as you go).

* GCFS will also give some input to help fathers understand how their relationship with their son naturally changes as they enter adolescence, and how fathering must change accordingly.

Values

- **Boys need lots of male guidance and ‘strong’ love.** They don’t know what’s best for themselves. Healthy identify comes as those who know better, shape a strong and flexible structure for boys to develop in.
- GCFS uses a **male spiritual developmental framework** (Appendix 2) common in psychology that reflects natural ‘types’ of power exploration at different ages (Cowboy, Warrior, Lover, King, Wiseman). GCFS uses lots of different types of activities to help boys explore the power they have and find healthy boundaries for that power.
- ***You exist therefore you serve.*** Not ‘You exist therefore you deserve’
- **Life has Meaning**, with a capital ‘M’. The responsibility of fathers is to tell great stories, role model ethics consistent with this Meaning, and to champion and support their boys in its pursuit.
- **It takes a village to raise a child.** Fathers need to establish good communities of other great role models that their sons will latch on to growing into adolescence
- People are made to be in **interdependent relationships** with each other. Boys need to be guided into healthy responsibility and community involvement, not allowed to lapse into self-seeking isolationism.
- **Delayed gratification** is (patience) is one of the most important virtues for boys to develop to counter their natural, but childish impulsiveness.

Helpful readings on the philosophical foundations of GCFS

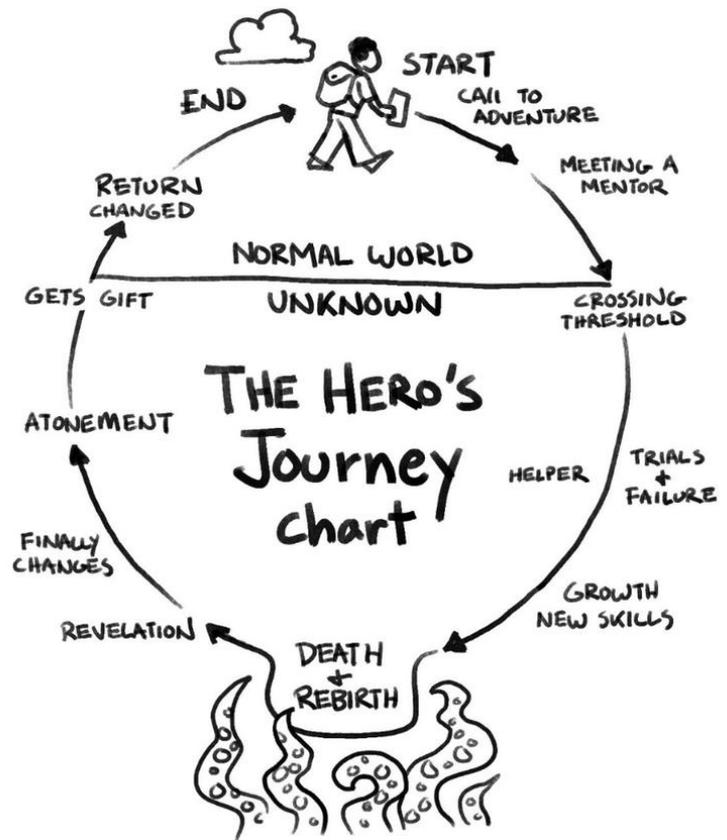
- [The Hero with a Thousand Faces](#) – by Joseph Campbell
- [Adam’s Return – The Five Promises of Male initiation](#), by Richard Rohr
- [The Boy Crisis: Why Our Boys Are Struggling and What We Can Do About It](#) – Warren Farrell
- [Mythology \(Storytelling\) with John Bucher](#) - Ologies

Appendix 1 – The Hero's Journey

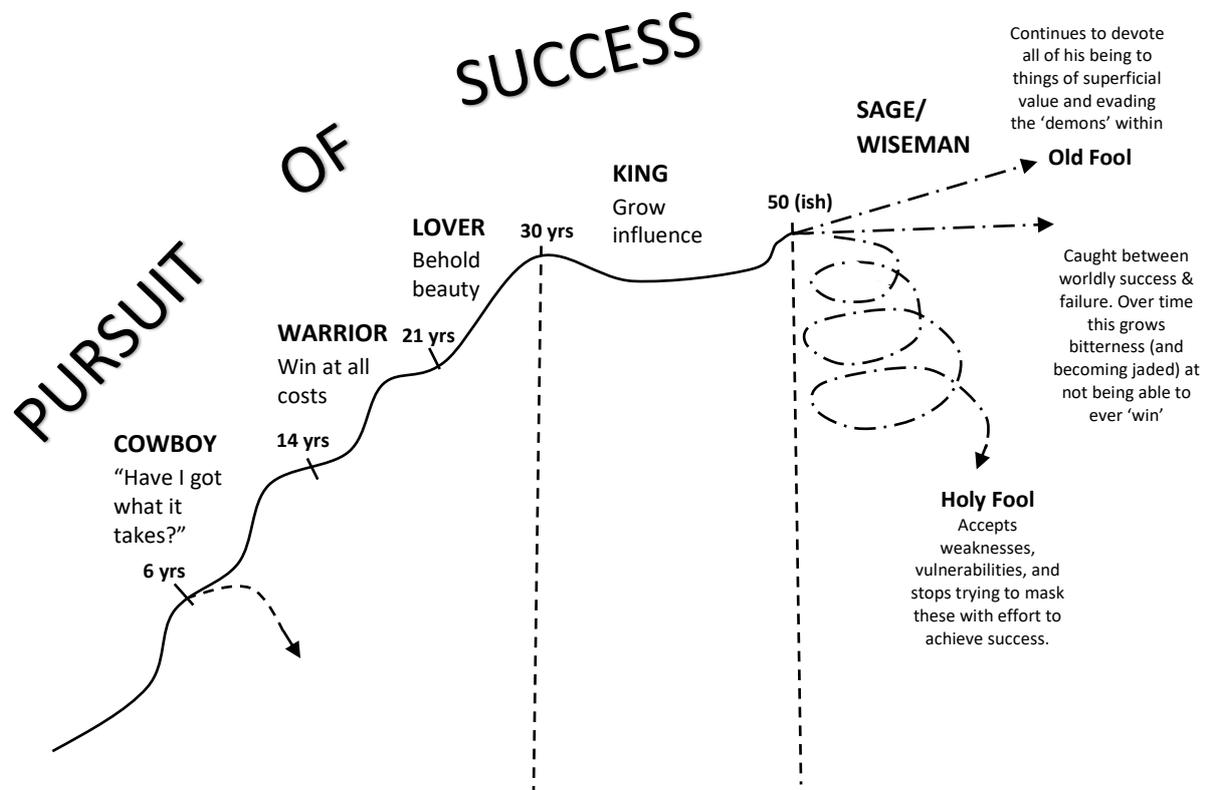
The Hero's Journey reflects a transcendent story that has been told in various forms across time, culture, and continent (See "The Hero with a Thousand Faces"). The story reflects a deep intuition about life, meaning, and success. It is so true, that it is considered 'Myth'. This meta-narrative sets a rubric to understand the rhythms and cycles of the seasons of life. The secret that the novice discovers (with the help of a mentor) within this journey is that the enemy within must be defeated before the external enemy can be defeated.

Older examples of this story include ['Enuma Elish'](#) or ['Beowulf'](#). More recent examples include Star Wars, The Lion King, and EVERY super hero movie. Though not a Christian himself, Jordan B Peterson describes Jesus, and the New Testament's narrative the best telling of The Hero's Journey from a psychological standpoint of how you overcome tragedy and evil.

Men who don't defeat the dragon within before trying to defeat the external threats in life, set themselves (and others) up for catastrophic loss. See appendix 2 for how 'The Hero's Journey' is relevant in different stages of male development.



Appendix 2 Male Spiritual Development Framework



THE LIFELONG PURSUIT OF SUCCESS

At each stage of development there is a desire to exert power and influence to achieve success. The tension is that without good role-models, these efforts will lapse into domination - destructively working against nature (self, others, and objects). Good role-models will teach a deeper, more satisfying power and influence, which is mastery – working with the nature of the people and objects that surround. Both domination and mastery give 'success feedback'. However, unguided males will sometimes take a lifetime for the unhealthy path of domination to collapse, destroying their own lives, and those around them. Burnout, mid-life crises, breakdowns, etc are typical adult signs that the path of domination has collapsed and can't bear any more weight. Though these are traumatic events, they can cause a healthy disruption that enables the male to build from healthy 'Holy Fool' foundations.

COWBOY: Need to prove oneself not a helpless baby. I can do it! Complete refusal to be helped

WARRIOR: Duty, responsibility, sacrifice, obedience

LOVER: Committed, nurturing, mutual relationships with people, nature, and objects. Addictions are a by-product of this not developing properly

KING: Desire to extend influence over as many people as possible

WISEMAN: Doesn't need to feed 'ego'. Happy to be a guide. Understands life's transcendent principles