PRAISE FOR BE A MAN, MY SON

In a world that seems intent on exchanging gender for androgyny, where tolerance and inclusiveness has become synonymous with compromise, and where political correctness has replaced sound thinking, young men need guidance on what it means to be a man. *Be a Man my Son* provides a wonderful narrative on the journey from newborn to manhood. It will tug at your heart and challenge your thinking on what it means to live in the world as a man.

It is an essential piece of equipment for every father to carry in his backpack as he hikes off with his son into the wilderness of emerging manhood. Like Kipling’s poem ‘*If*’, which Norman quotes in the book, every son should have a copy and every father should journey with him through its pages.

*Marcus Y Wilkins, lawyer*

*New Zealand*

It’s all in the mind. The soul transcends the body. Through his books, we have come to appreciate Norman Nel’s profound thoughts on a variety of subjects. Using a father’s reminiscences to his son as a vehicle, he covers a wide spectrum of subjects – thought provoking stuff. Make sure you read it – it could make of you a man, my friend!

*Francois W van Heerden, retired farmer*
The dream of any father is to guide his son on the journey to manhood with all its ramifications. Reading this wonderful assessment of true-to-life happenings in our challenging world, we get the impression the author is a person with vast experience.

Norman Nel is not one to put pen to paper on any subject to which he has not given serious thought over a long period. At an early stage in his career his doctor told him he would not live very long, but it was only after many years as a successful businessman that poor health led to the development of his special gift to write. He has published numerous books on a variety of subjects. His wisdom on the relationship between a father and son – neglected by so many – is a valuable addition.

*Gert le Roux, sports journalist*

The author’s experience and thoughts on a complex subject highlight his enthusiasm to solve the dilemmas of many family relationships. We all have dreams, none more profound than those for our children, and this book gives some guidelines on how to realize them. A must read.

*Dr Paul Keet,*

MBChB (Pret.) FCS (SA) Ophth, FRCS (Edin) Ophth
BE A MAN, MY SON

Norman Nel
When I look back, son, at all the things that happened to your mother and me before you arrived, nothing could have prepared us for the metamorphosis that our lives would undergo. You had no choice in the matter, you could not select the parents you wanted, nor for that matter where they lived. These things were determined from above. By coincidence, you were loaned to us for a while, and that is all that really matters now.

On arrival, you were a tiny little baby, but even then there was something Godly about you. You soon took over the entire command of our home. I became your bodyguard and your lackey: you were in complete command, regardless of weather, time, distance or anything else.

You treated me with every sort of insolence, even disrespect, but I was too much in awe to give any backchat. You clawed my hair and twist-
ed my nose. Normally, when I face danger I am ready to repel it, yet when you screamed in my ears and made me perform duties unbecoming to a gentleman, I just had to get on with it.

Sometimes I even had to suck from your bottle, tasting that warm insipid stuff to see if the temperature was right for you. I can taste that liquid in my mouth to this day. The wind in your stomach had to be released by gently rubbing on your back – inevitably resulting in your boiling over on my shoulder, mostly when I wore a nice clean suit. When you chose to relieve yourself it was usually at 2 AM. I sometimes had to call on all my discipline not to give you a piece of my mind, especially when you kept this up for two or three hours, your little face intimating that nothing suited you more than a little exercise and noise at this time of night. Your mother and I had no choice but to keep going until we were almost exhausted.

I had decided I would not confuse you with baby talk, but soon became quite adept at using this undignified way of communicating with you. When you started crawling, I had to protect you from new dangers. Those exploring little fingers went into everything, the wall plug, the
pot on the table, anything that could be pulled over on top of you. Everything had to be secured, put out of reach or stored away. Then, when you started walking, our home and yard were too small for you and I had to take you on frequent visits to the playground.

When you smiled in your sleep I did not know whether it was because you were concocting some new way to get at me or because the angels were whispering in your ears.

I learned new things from you every day. You were enterprising, irrepressible and brimful of lawless activities. I could do whatever I pleased but I could not get you to stay in the park – the streets with the fast-moving traffic were where you wanted to be. What kept me going was that twinkle in your eye, the laughter in your soul and the accumulating treasure of memories. And, of course, the future: of the thousands of babies born in the country every year, nobody knows which one will become a future presi-