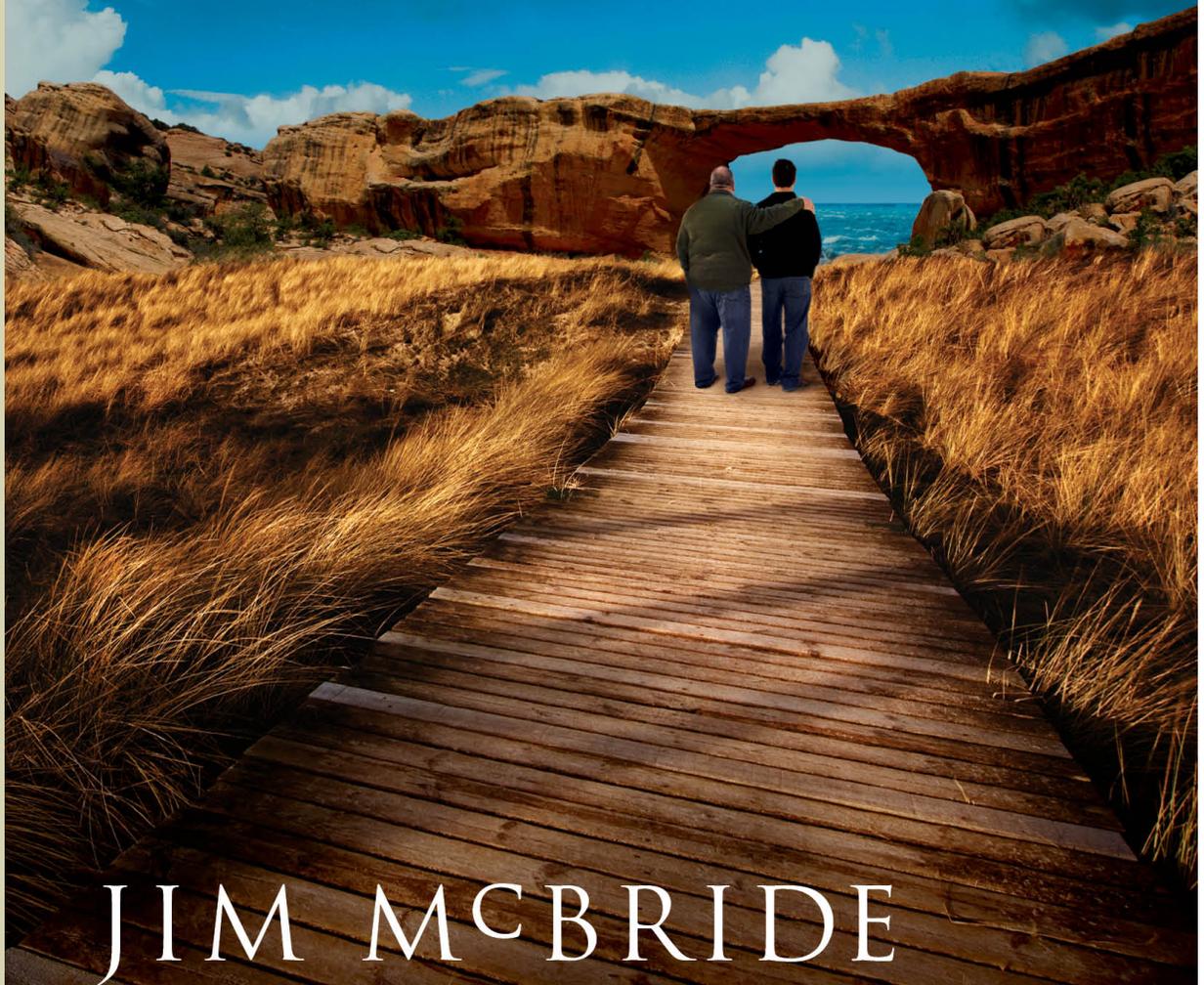


RITE OF PASSAGE

A FATHER'S BLESSING



JIM MCBRIDE

Reading Group Guide



Adulthood shouldn't be an accident. Jim McBride describes how parents can create meaningful rites of passage for their children that give them the tools for living wisely and well as an adult. In a time when many adolescents are growing up with competing and often detrimental views of what it means to be an adult, a parent or mentor who creates a rite of passage can positively and powerfully send a child into adulthood with knowledge and strong purpose.

To that end, this study guide should be used as a supplement to spark dialog about the purpose, design and implementation of a rite of passage. It is ideal for parents, churches, small groups, mentors and anyone wanting to prepare a child to effectively become a man or woman who encounters their world with a sure knowledge of what it means to be an adult.

1. McBride believes it is important to mark a young man or woman's passage into adulthood as a way of defining what it means to be a man or woman. This prevents them from being at a loss when this time comes. It also helps them to feel as if they belong to something larger than themselves.

- Did you ever experience such a rite of passage? If so, what was it like?
- If not, how do you think one would have been valuable toward helping you feel more at ease entering adulthood?
- Did you ever feel you were part of something larger in this sense? How did it impact your life?

2. Rites of passage are and were common in many cultures. The Spartans had to survive for two years in the wilderness, before they were admitted to the ranks of the military. A Maasai youth has to kill a lion, and then live in the bush for six to eight years. Jews celebrate rites of passage with a bar or bat mitzvah.

- How do these various rites prepare their members for adult life in the culture?
- How might a similar rite be beneficial for your son or daughter?

3. The three phases of a rite of passage include separation, transition, and incorporation. McBride details his experience in Marine Corp boot camp as a rite of passage. There are often many experiences we go through in life that could be called rites of passage.

- What experiences have you had in your life that involved the elements of a rite of passage?
- How were they instrumental in transforming you into a different person?



5. The author recommends capping off a rite of passage with a formal blessing as a way of setting someone aside for a special and important purpose.

- Why is this kind of blessing important for your child?
- What instances of blessing do you find in the Bible? Why were these important for their recipients?

6. To conduct their rites of passage, McBride had his sons and daughters walk through a course where they met several mentors who addressed key topics and gave them a gift. Then they reconvened for a meal, a blessing, and the giving of a final, meaningful gift.

- What do you think about this process? What would you do the same? What would you do differently?
- What are some creative ways you could design a rite of passage?

7. Some fathers don't have the greatest relationships with their children or are not particularly close to them. The author maintains that it's never too late to do something for your child, and it's important to do *something*, rather than nothing. Even if you aren't as close to your child as you could be, there's a good chance there are other adults who your child looks up to.

- What are some ways you could improve your relationship with your children prior to designing a rite of passage for them?
- How could you go about finding out who the important adults are in your child's life? How could you begin to establish a relationship with them and include them in a rite of passage?

8. It's important to be an intentional parent before the rite of passage ever happens. Ideally, you should be the main source of input in your child's life. McBride says the rite then becomes part of a pattern that the child has known all along.

- What other, smaller rites could you have with your children to mark multiple milestones as they move toward the rite of passage into adulthood?

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- What outcomes would you want for your child's rite of passage?
- How can you plan the rite of passage to guarantee these outcomes?

10. McBride maintains that it's never too late to affirm your children, tell them you love them and give them your blessing, even if they are adults and never had a rite of passage. Your blessing, whenever it comes, can be a powerful and necessary moment for your child.

- Why is it important that your children know you are behind them and that they have your blessing on their lives?
- What can you do to affirm your adult children now? What kind of blessing could you give them?