



A MAN'S GUIDE TO LIFE

A MICRO BOOK BY KYLE HEIMANN

Choosing the Right Urinal: A Man's Guide to Life

A micro book by Kyle Heimann

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For more information:
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INTRODUCTION

I understand men. I am a man.

I frequently have a beard. If I don't take proper measures, my armpits smell. If I wear shoes all day, my feet stink. . . Okay, my feet almost always stink. My back and chest are hairy enough to scare away small children at the beach, but this is how God made me.

My jobs growing up were to mow the grass, take out the trash, change light bulbs and check the fluids in the cars. I still do those same jobs today. My wife likes to kiss our son on his cheeks until they are red. I like to toss him in the air until he pukes. God designed man and woman differently.

Even though I grew up with a mom and two sisters, have been friends with girls, have dated several women and am married to a female, I don't claim to understand the ladies. It is for this reason, that I am writing a book for men.

If you are a female and thought the title of this micro book sounded disgusting, you are right. It is. You should probably put it down now before anyone gets hurt. Should you desire to read on, well, consider yourself warned.

The questions at the end of each chapter should be given time for pondering. This isn't material for a two-day silent retreat but also not something to be answered in a few words. Just take two to three minutes, the length of a short song, to think about each one. If reading and/or discussing this book with a group of guys, take the time to reflect on your own before sharing with the group . . . and then grunt.



I am a self-diagnosed ADD adult and so this is written from that perspective. I may jump around a bit in this micro book, I love donuts by the way, but eventually, I will get back on topic.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RESTROOM FOR ALL AGES

I was playing music at a New Year's Eve fundraiser in Michigan several years ago. It was going to be held in the church's social hall. While setting up for the sound check, I went to use the restroom.

When I walked into the men's room, I noticed there were two urinals. They were both the same size and mounted the same height on the wall, but one had a wooden platform to elevate a short boy to a more optimal height. The other did not.

This isn't what caught my attention. The problem was that a short boy was using the urinal without the additional step stool. I imagine his parents had been telling him that he was a big boy and he could use the big boy potty and he was exercising that right (perhaps to the disdain of the janitor). Heck, I don't know, maybe he just saw it as a challenge, like when my cousin and I would have contests to see how far away from the urinal we could stand and still make it (the key is drinking lots of water).

So as I walked in the room, I had three options:

1. I could wait for him to finish using the “man’s urinal.”
2. I could use the “stall” toilet (this always makes me feel silly—do I lock the door or not? I don’t need a locked door when using the urinal).
3. I could use the . . . yes . . . the child’s urinal.

Not one to back down on challenges myself, I stepped onto the platform and used the urinal. What a picture that must have been: me, a grown adult, on the stool, and him, a young boy, not quite tall enough. I couldn’t help but smile.

You may be wondering, “What does this have to do with our faith?” Well, allow me to explain.

You see, God has a plan for us no matter how young or old. Someone said, “If you are still breathing, then God has a plan for you.” The problem is, we often fail to consult God.

We grow up with people asking us, “What do **you** want to be when you grow up? What do **you** want to do when you get out of high school? What do **you** want to study in college? What do **you** want to do when you graduate?” People are asking the wrong question. And when you ask the wrong question, how can you possibly expect to get the right answer? There might not be stupid questions, but there are wrong questions.

Fortunately for me, I had people in my family and some great mentors who challenged me by asking a different question: “What does **God** want you to do with your life?”

I know a bunch of guys who are standing at the wrong urinal. God has a plan for them and they have chosen a different path. Their path may be interesting and financially rewarding. It may fulfill a worldly notion of success, but it doesn't bring them joy. They will always have a spot inside them that is uncomfortable and they may be making a mess of things . . . because they are standing at the wrong urinal.

Question: How can we change our prayers, our thoughts and our actions to seek God's plan instead of ours?

Challenge: Read about some of your favorite Saints. Notice the joy that comes from doing the will of God.



People often ask why I have a beard. The answer is quite simple: "Because I didn't shave it off." Although that may seem like a smart alec remark (my mom often accused me of being a smart alec), I am actually quite serious. God gave me this facial hair, and although I try to keep it trimmed up and respectable looking, it grows on my face naturally, as I assume God had intended. So perhaps you should ask God why I have a beard.

CHAPTER TWO

A MANLY MAN

As men, we are able to do things women can't. We are able to go to the bathroom all by ourselves. Women have to at least go in pairs. It makes me feel manly just thinking about our bathroom independence.

Our world is constantly feeding us an image of what it means to be a man. This usually involves having washboard abs, owning posters of women in skimpy clothing, drinking beer, and showing no emotions. Rumor has it, Chuck Norris's tears cure cancer – too bad he hasn't ever cried, right? So manly!

When I think of the men who have really inspired me, I think of men who were compassionate, caring, respectful, brave, faithful to God and family and were invested in the lives of their kids. I think of passionate and loving priests who were an example of prayer and always available to their community. I don't think of men who looked down upon women. I don't think of men who were addicted to alcohol, pornography or work. I think of men who put God, family and others first and would sacrifice anything for them.

When I was a kid, our parish priest, a former

military chaplain, told the story of some men who were together when a grenade was tossed at them. Knowing that there wasn't time for them to get away, one of the men jumped on top of the grenade, absorbing the shrapnel into his chest. He obviously didn't survive, but his sacrifice saved the life of his friends.

That is a manly man. One who would sacrifice himself for others. One who would give up his time, money and talents for another. If you think that sounds a lot like Jesus, you are right. He was manly. He had a sweet beard. He was a carpenter and therefore was probably pretty strong (he was only using hand tools, no circular saws). He was tough but he was known for respecting his mother and others, spending time in prayer, sharing the faith with others and his willingness to sacrifice anything, including his life, for another person. **That** is a manly man. Oh, and he probably could go to the bathroom all by himself.

Question: Who is someone in your life that is a real, manly role model? Why?

Challenge: Be a role model to others.



I change my own oil. Sure it saves me some money to do it myself, but more so, there is a sense of satisfaction that I did some sort of handy manual labor. Forget the fact that I have spent more money hiring mechanics to fix my mistakes than the amount of money I have saved from doing it myself.

CHAPTER THREE

SUCCESS IS FAILURE?

Would you like to be successful? I assume you would say, “Yes,” unless you think it’s a trick question (which it kind of is).

Of course we want to be successful because the opposite of success is failure. The question is, “What is the **definition** of success?”

The world would define success as a nice car, a big house, a prestigious job, popularity, comfort and security. Throw some bling and a hot lady in there and you have yourself some respect . . . or do you?

The crazy thing is that God doesn’t care about any of that. God turns things upside down and tells us that, to be the greatest, you must serve (Mt. 23:11). **That** is success.

You can be a huge success by society’s standards. You can be featured on TV with your mansion, fancy home theater and fast cars and still be a complete failure in the eyes of God. Money isn’t evil, but it can distract us from our focus on God. On the other hand, you can be a man of integrity, prayer, love and service

and be a success in the eyes of God while failing miserably by the world's definition. That is a failure that I can handle!

So, if you are using the wrong definition of success, then failure is exactly what you need. When I was in 5th grade, I was playing basketball and was wide open. I made the layup: 2 points!! But for the other team. IT WASN'T OUR BASKET! My team never let me live that down. If you are aiming for the wrong goal, then it is best you miss.

Question: Think about goals that you have. Which ones are God driven and which are world driven?

Challenge: Take some time to sit quietly and think about your priorities. Church would be a great place to do this.



Urinal cakes taste nothing like
other cakes that I've tasted.

CHAPTER FOUR

SO WHERE ARE YOU AIMING?

Have you ever seen a urinal with a fake fly in it? Sometime in the 1980s, the Airport in Amsterdam installed urinals that had a realistic-looking fly etched into the porcelain. They found that this small detail reduced their messes by 80 percent. As it turns out, we, as men, have an instinctual tendency to aim for the fly.

I don't know if it's because we want to make it move, we want to kill it, or if we know for sure that it's fake but still can't resist aiming for a target. Either way, a strategically placed fake insect keeps us on task. We are goal oriented. We like competition, and if you give us a challenge, we find it hard to turn down.

I can think of many times in the past that I have been dared to do something stupid. You wouldn't believe some of the things that I have eaten. Many jalapeños and bowls of hot sauce have been consumed because someone challenged me - and who can back down on a dare? We are target-oriented people. But what is our target?

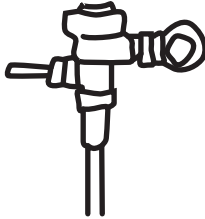
If our focus is not on God, then we will make a mess. And if we don't know anything about our target,

then how are we supposed to aim?

The trick is finding our fly in the urinal. Finding something that will help us stay on task. If we are forming our hearts by reading the Bible, being active in Mass, participating in the sacraments and being involved in our family, community, youth groups, bible studies and faith sharing groups, then we will unconsciously hit our mark, and life will be less messy.

Question: What are some ways that you can improve your relationship with Christ so you have better aim?

Challenge: Add some spiritual reading to your weekly routine.



I wonder who came up with that handle that comes off the urinal for flushing. I love that you can push or pull it in any direction and it will still flush.

CHAPTER FIVE

DON'T FORGET TO FLUSH

In college, we decided to be environmentally friendly and save some water. We adopted the philosophy of, “If it’s yellow, let it mellow. If it’s brown, flush it down.”

We established a line that once crossed, required attention. Venial urinations and mortal defecations – if you will.

The problem with allowing our “business” to sit in the toilet was that bacteria and grime would quickly build up on the porcelain, leaving our toilet looking quite nasty. This meant we had to scrub it more often in order to keep a decent looking toilet for our guests.

The comparison to Confession is almost too obvious to even mention here. The longer we go without the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the more things accumulate. Our soul gets dirtier and dirtier, and although we might ignore the change, our behavior is affected.

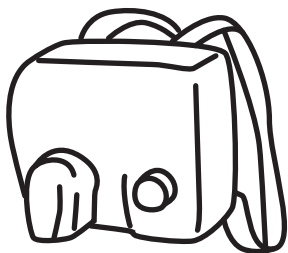
Our sins might not seem like that big of a deal, but sin builds upon sin until our souls are in serious

need of some spiritual toilet bowl cleaner and a good brush. The more frequently we go to confession, the better our conscience. We will look and smell better . . . at least spiritually. (The aroma of Christ [2 Cor. 2:15])

Question: Are you going to Confession as often as you should?

Don't know what to confess or want to prepare better? Find an examination of conscience and thoughtfully read through it. You can find one at www.kyleheimann.com.

Challenge: Go to confession at least once a month.



It is always a special treat to find a jet air dryer in a public restroom. Did you know these have claimed speeds of up to 400 mph? This has to be the most manly way to dry your hands in the universe! I wonder what would happen if I would strap 31 of them to my back?

Can anyone say jet-pack?

CHAPTER SIX

BE OPEN TO CHANGE

Sometimes, I walk to the bathroom with a plan. I think I am just going to go “number one.” As I approach the urinal, I realize that I should probably take a stall because I might need some of the features that it allows.

As much as I felt called to the married life, I went many years looking for the “right one.” Being in several relationships and not being convinced that I was being called to marry these women, I stayed open to the possibility of priesthood and religious life.

In today’s world, there isn’t much support for someone who wants to be a priest, brother or dedicated single. Most men don’t even consider it. The secular world can’t make any sense of the celibate life. It is for this reason that we need to consider it even more diligently.

Our internal desire for a wife and family is normal. We were designed to want a relationship with a woman. The thing is, some men are called to a different type of relationship. The priest takes the Church as his bride and devotes his life entirely to “her” needs just

as a married man would for his wife. Ask any priest and he will tell you he isn't lonely or missing out on something.

It is important for every unmarried man to keep that option open, and to explore it. I went on many vocations retreats, religious order "Come and See" weekends and eventually spent a year in Honduras with some Franciscan friars. Although, by the end of all that, I was pretty sure that God was calling me to marriage, I still kept my options open. I always wanted to leave room for God to guide me back onto His path in case I had misunderstood.

I wanted to have a family. I wanted to spend my life with someone that would challenge me and help me be a better person. I wanted to play games with my kids and for them to ride on my shoulders. Marriage isn't all green grass and picket fences, but it's what I wanted. But I would have happily surrendered my will if it wasn't what God wanted. I knew that my joy would always depend on doing God's will.

I love being married. This is the vocation God chose for me. It was by discerning the priesthood, and my wife, Kate, discerning being a nun, that we were blessed with the confidence and peace that we were called to be married. She was the urinal God chose for me (that sounded much more romantic in my head).

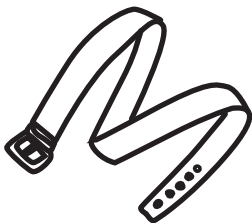
Marriage, priesthood, religious life or the dedicated single life are all amazing vocations and should all be given equal consideration. Until you say, “I do” at the marriage altar, or the indelible mark of priestly ordination is impressed upon your soul, God can call you to anything.

Your occupation is also a vocation, a calling from God. This doesn't mean that everyone is called to be in full-time ministry. It means that your job, whether office work or construction - remember Jesus was a carpenter - should be glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31).

God may not speak to you with a booming voice. He probably won't send you an e-mail or call you on the phone. Sometimes He speaks through peace. Peace and confidence of knowing that you are in the right place or heading in the right direction. If you aren't sure, or are uneasy about your path, perhaps you are standing at the wrong urinal.

Questions: If you are single, are you staying open to the priesthood or religious life? If you are married, are you encouraging young people to be open to God's call?

Challenge: Pray about/for your vocation (married, priest, brother or dedicated single). Also, think of your job as a calling rather than just a way to make money.



Belts have to be the dirtiest thing we own. We touch them before washing our hands and we never wash our belts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CLEANLINESS IS GODLINESS

Everyone is concerned with sanitation these days. They say that washing your hands frequently will reduce the amount of germs being spread. The more we touch things like ceiling fans, door knobs, toilets or rabid animals, the more we expose ourselves to bacteria and viruses that could make us and others ill.

When I was in high school, we would try to get out of cross country practice when it was raining to avoid getting sick. Our coach would tell us that you don't get sick from the rain. "It's just water; you bathe in it," he would tell us. (He must not have smelled some of the guys on our team.) The key to staying healthy was to eat healthy foods, get rest and to wash our hands frequently. That would keep our immune system sharp and our hands free of bacteria. So we ran in the rain.

Attending Mass, being involved with a youth group or adult faith sharing group, reading our Bibles, praying and finding times of silence to listen to God are like washing our hands. It isn't something we should do only once a week. The more often we do it, the healthier our souls will be.

Our joy becomes contagious. We will actually be able to share the graces of God rather than our own bitterness, anger, jealousy, etc. That is like being able to give someone the flu shot by smiling at them.

Question: What are some things you can do more frequently to better your relationship with God?

Challenge: Add something to your life that will challenge your faith. Suggestions: Read the Bible, go on a retreat, silent time for prayer, participate in a faith study group, or go to Mass more often.

SO WHAT IS THE MORAL OF THE STORY?

We have much to learn from public restrooms. So remember, there is a urinal out there for you. Washing your hands and flushing regularly will help keep you healthy, so you can improve your aim and make the right decision. Then, hopefully, when the time comes, you will choose the right urinal.

Challenge: Get a group of guys and meet on a regular basis. You can discuss this micro book, have a Bible study or just chat about life and pray with one another. Have fun while doing it. Heck, maybe your first meeting could be in the restroom?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kyle Heimann is one half of Popple, the Catholic-acoustic-humor-folk-rock duo. They travel around the country speaking and playing fun, goofy and serious songs to share their faith.

While dating, Kate bought a book for Kyle called, “What’s Your Poo Telling You?” Shortly after that they got married. They now have a baby boy who wets his pants.

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Men: Imagine that you are in a stadium and you go to the restroom. When you walk in the door, you are faced with an important decision and you have to act quickly. The challenge is *choosing the right urinal*.

This micro book is designed to question the decisions you make on a daily basis. Jesus often talked in parables and if urinals were around at the time of Christ, he probably wouldn't have used them to explain vocations . . . but I will.



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