



The Character Company

Additional material: Articles (written by Uncle Keith)

Our 5 National symbols

Introduction

You are growing up in the context of your country, South Africa. It is a very interesting country because of the enormous diversity of culture, language, culture, religion and ethnicity. There is also a mixed population of people from very different backgrounds, some very privileged, others not. Add to that the political situation and economic challenges that may face many of us, day to day. Then there is easy access to pornography, drugs and crime that may promise a get-rich option if you are prepared to break the law. All these things bring a huge amount of pressure on any boy growing up. Do you want to be pushed around and pulled back and forth without having a firm foundation? It can be scary, and it is no way for a man to lead to be a protector or a Godly man in South Africa.

One very good way of dealing with all these things that seem to push and pull you is to remember the Five Values. We have five National Symbols that will help us to remember what the values are and how to live them every day.

1. National Flower: King Protea

Every year, between June and September, the King Protea flowers. No one tells it to grow and no one tells it to open its petals, revealing a magnificent flower.

It represents **self-discipline**.



This is a good value to start with because if you can have self-discipline, then you will put all the other values into practice without being told. And it is when you are on your own, with no one to tell you what to do that you will need to remember the values. It is hard, sometimes, to do that but that is what self-discipline is all about. It's not to do the things



that you do without thinking. No, it is to do the things that you must do, even if you don't like doing them, and without someone reminding or telling you.

What are some of the things that a Godly man in South Africa should be disciplined about?

- The law. Many South Africans simply do not obey the law. Maybe they don't realize that the laws of the land are there to protect us and to help the country run well. Maybe they don't realize either that God would have his men obey the laws and not be a rebel.
- The people. Good manners. Respect. Love. Honour. Humility. Helpfulness. Being an example of a good man. When these characteristics are visible to others, we become men of substance. Men who do not need to put others down, go behind their backs, knock them out of the way, disrespect them because they are too old or too young, be hateful or boastful.
- The countryside and the city. No one really likes to see rubbish lying in the streets or plastic bags littering the countryside, but all this debris finds its way there because of people who don't care. Be that man that will look a little harder for the dustbin or keep the rubbish with you until you get home.
- Himself. The self-disciplined man is quite rare. Be special and be disciplined so that you can be an example to many other men and boys.

2. National tree: Real Yellowwood

South African days can be hot. The sun can be cruel. But the Yellowwood tree kindly provides cool shade. It protects one from the burning sun and allows one to gain their strength again. It asks for nothing in return.



Kindness is the value that comes to mind when thinking about the Yellowwood.

This is one way that you can be a MAN that cares for people and animals. South Africa is a country where there is so much need. Some people are poor and go to bed hungry. Others have plenty money but are unhappy and lost, not knowing who to turn to with other problems.



Kindness is show that you have a good heart, which is a great value. As a MAN, it means showing that you have a good heart and it means to expect nothing in return. Remembering that we show kindness for the benefit of others. We do things from our heart to help people, protect people, stand up for people and love people; not for ourselves. Kindness is being humble; not boastful. It often means you have to sacrifice something to be kind to someone else who is in need.

3. National fish: Galjoen

Life as a fish may seem very peaceful. Not so. Swimming in the sea is challenging. There are strong currents and tides that can carry a fish into dangerous waters where predators lurk, dash it against the rocks or even dump it on the beach.



It needs to swim against the tide and against the currents. It needs **courage!**

In South Africa, we may find a number of things that concern us. Things that scare us at times. Not only things like crime but also a fear of being shamed because you didn't go with the crowd who were doing wrong. Maybe you are offered drugs. "Just a little helper" they might say, "to help you over the exams." Or perhaps you mates were talking sex and porn and making jokes about 'wimps who are scared to have their first sexual experience or 'not man enough to discuss women as 'things' (objectify) to use that show that you are a man.

This is where a MAN will be like the Galjoen and swim against the common current. He will not take part in the discussions with other men about their sexual experiences, but he will stand up with respect as someone who treats women as people, not sex objects. When everyone – all the boys – seem to be smoking weed or taking pills to help them perform better in the exams or on the sports field, remember the Galjoen. Have the courage to swim against the tide and say, "Not me!"



4. National animal: Springbok

Ever seen the eyes of a gentle Springbok. They are large and innocent looking. It seems to graze happily in the veld and not intent on being unkind to anything or anyone.

It represents **honesty**.



Telling the truth can be difficult. When it is easy to tell the truth, such as telling you mom that you got 85% for math's, we do it well. But when we have to own up to a mistake or take back the extra R20.00 change that the cashier gave you by mistake, then being honest can be more difficult. Many men will make excuses not to be honest saying things like, "Oh no one will know," or "It was a little white lie." Maybe excuses like "It's not worth going back with the R20.00. Anyway, Pick 'n Pay can afford it." Those are excuses, not good reasons. Do you want to live a dishonest life? It starts with small things and then becomes a bad habit, growing to larger things. Get rid of those little dishonest times, every time and you will be a MAN that South Africa is proud of. You will also honour God!

5. National bird: Blue crane

Look at the smart appearance of the Blue crane. Properly dressed clean and well preened, smooth feathers. It walks with dignity and shows utmost **respect**.



South Africans have respect for this bird because of its bravery, especially when killing a snake. The Xhosa people call the Blue Crane "Indwe". When a warrior showed bravery in battle, he was honoured and shown respect by the chief by having Blue Crane feathers put in his hair. These warriors were then known as men of "ugaba" or trouble, meaning if trouble arose, they were the ones who could restore order. South Africa is a place of many people from all walks of life. A great way to embrace the difference is to learn about the different cultures and customs and how to show respect in a way that you would like to be treated. We cannot believe that the world revolves around us, that we are the center of the universe. MEN, we must respect others and realize that respect is not about us. It is about others: your parents, your friends, teachers and MENTors, about the country and it's laws. It is about showing respect for God!