

The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

Leading an Unexamined Life

Unedited Transcript

Colossians 2:8, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 6:12, 2 Corinthians 10:5 & 13:5, Psalm 139:23-24

Well, good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more guy! We've got a couple of shout outs to do this morning. As I said before, we're going to start doing a couple a week because we have more and more groups signing up. The first shout out today will go to Men of Iron of LifeHouse Church in Alton, IL. They're 8 men who meet at the church weekly on Wednesdays at 7:00pm using the Video Bible Study and are led by Patrick McDonald. We're looking for an Area Director in that area as well!

Our second shout out today is going to Cornerstone Men of Carbondale Cornerstone Church in Carbondale, KS. 15 men who meet at the church weekly on Saturdays at 9:00am using the Video Bible Study and they're a new group led by Russell Mayfield. Looking for an Area Director out there as well. So I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm Man in the Mirror welcome to these two groups that are joining us now? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're very glad to have you with us.

Also, Dana Hardy has brought the leadership team from Idlewild Baptist Church here this morning. They're having a No Man Left Behind Conference starting tonight over there, so they thought they would come and just preview a little bit about what some of the possibilities are. Why don't you men just stand up and let us welcome you as well? Brought their pastor as well, so thank you for being here today!

We're doing a new series, The Man in the Mirror: Solving the 24 Problems Men Face. Last week, the Big Idea: **The rat race is the conflict between who I am created to be and who I am tempted to be.** Why does that happen? Why is there this conflict between who I am created to be and who I am tempted to be? The reason we get caught up in that is the topic of today, and that is the issue of leading an unexamined life. We're going to talk about what that is, how it happens and what you can do about it.

I would just like to ask a couple of men... Pat would you take that mirror and look in it and in one word tell me what comes to mind when you look at yourself? It's a hard one isn't it? Some of you men are on the top of the mountain. You look in there and you say oh I'm handsome or cool! But others of you have been going through really difficult times, so when you look in the mirror... Mike, look in the mirror and tell me what one word comes to mind? It's growing? What comes to mind? Yeah, that's me. So the number one shortcoming of men is that we tend to lead unexamined lives, and there are consequences to that. Most of us have not carefully chiseled our world view by a search for truth and obedience to God. Instead, we rush from task to busy task, not calling enough time outs to reflect on life's larger meaning and purpose. So we tend to lead these unexamined lives.

What is the problem, and why does it matter?

I want to tell you about a young man, I'm going to call him Johnathan. He's in his 30's. Johnathan became a Christian at a very early age in elementary school, went to church with his parents, and when his parents stopped going to church, he continued to go on his own. When he went off to college, he continued to go to church even though he was a student on his own. But as he said in his own words, I never had anybody to mentor me, I never had any discipleship. He got married when he was 22, a friend helped him get a job as a salesman. He had never sold anything before but it just sounded like a good idea, so he just jumped into it. He never prayed about it, never thought about it, just jumped in to being a salesman. Over the next 15 years when it was a good economy, every time Monster.com headhunters would call him and offer him a position, he said sure. He said I never prayed about any of these jobs, but every time they offered me a little bit more money, I took the job. I moved my family 15 times in 15 years. We were always involved in a church every place we went, but there was never any discipleship, so I didn't really know how I was supposed to act. I was leading an unexamined life. So the home improvements company that I was working for had a program where they would match dollar for dollar each year money that I wanted to spend on a home improvement. If I wanted to do a \$4,000 home improvement, if I would put up \$2,000, they would match that and put up \$2,000. I thought that was a pretty good idea, so for 5 years in a row I used that program, but because I was leading an unexamined life as a Christian, I would go buy the improvements one day, submit my receipt to the company to get reimbursed and then I would return the goods the next day and get all the money back. Over a period of 5 years, I had collected over \$24,000 in cash from my company. I left that company. Not long after that, I got a phone call from them. They had discovered what I had done. I said, you're right, I shouldn't have done that, I'll pay you back, and he did. He thought that was going to be the end of it, because he had been leading an unexamined life. Imagine his shock when he gets contacted by the local prosecutor in the community where this company is headquartered. As it turned out, they charged him with several felony counts. He actually ended up spending 3 days in jail and is still on probation and has a felony record now, because of leading an unexamined life. He said it didn't seem like a big deal to me, but now there's a man in my church who has taken me under his wing and has begun to disciple me and show me how I'm supposed to live my life. My life is changing, but it took this terrible situation for me to come to my senses and to start to lead this examined life.

Men, here's the Big Idea today: **It is for a lack of discipleship that men lead unexamined lives.** When you look in the mirror, there are two yous. There's the visible you, that's the you that is known by others, it's the man we project to others, it's the image that we want to have for ourselves, and then there is the second you, the real you. It is the you that is known by our God, and the idea of leading an examined life is to bring these two into alignment.

We all want the same things, right? We want to do something with our lives that will make a difference. We want someone to share our lives with. We want to have a belief system, a faith system, a belief system that helps explain why life is so hard. We all want the same things. Here's the problem with that, it's that it's not just Christianity that promises to solve or satisfy those issues, those questions. All world views promise to solve or satisfy those problems. You see, Christianity and secularism, let's just include all the other isms under secularism, they're not trying to solve different problems. They're trying to solve the same problems, just in different ways.

How does it happen?

Let's take a look at the scriptures and see just how it is that a man gets caught up in this unexamined life, how does it happen? Colossians 2:8. You should be there, if you're not, just listen:

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human traditions and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

See to it that no one takes you captive. How it happens that we lead an unexamined life is that we get taken captive! How? Through hollow and deceptive philosophies that depend on the basic principles and traditions of this world! So there is a worldview in the world, it's called secularism, it's a hollow, deceptive philosophy and it takes men captive.

Turn to Romans 12:2. Another way we get caught up in leading an unexamined life, this text says:

²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

So the idea is that... if the text is saying don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, we get caught up in leading an unexamined life by conforming to the pattern of this world. The world has a pattern. Pattern is another word for world view. A world view is a system or structure through which we can interpret the things that are going on around us.

Turn to Ephesians 6:12. It's worth noting that these two world views are as diametrically opposed as the East is from West. They have no touch points in common, none! Ephesians 6:12:

¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

It is a spiritual battle! The battle between the Christian world view and the secular world view, it is a spiritual battle. How do we get caught up? The world wants to take us captive, conforming to the pattern of this world. There's a spiritual battle that's going on, so practically speaking for most of us our world views are not carefully chiseled by a personal search for truth and obedience to God. Rather, we just take it as it comes. We say I like that, I don't like that, so we do that and not that, instead of being relentlessly searching for the truth. So the results of this, men end up doing what seems right in their own eyes. Men end up trying to have the best of both worlds. Men end up in syncretism, the blending of two or more world views together, trying to come up with a new and improved third world view. Men become Christian in spirit, but secular in practice, like Johnathan. They catch success sickness, the disease of always wanting more but then never being happy when we get it. We lead unexamined lives as a result, and we get caught up in the rat race as a result, and we become cultural Christians as a result, and we pierce ourselves with many many griefs, unnecessary griefs! Because, as the Big Idea today says, **it is for a lack of discipleship that men lead unexamined lives**, and what is discipleship? What is it? If God's put somebody in your path who is stuck, discipleship means what? Discipleship means finding out why, why is that man stuck, and then helping him solve that problem! There are formal programs in discipleship and so on, but at the essence, you don't need a program! You just need to love somebody enough to disciple them by finding out why are they stuck and then helping them solve that problem! And it's for a lack of that that men all around us lead unexamined lives! Hopefully nobody here, but possibly somebody here, but all around us there are men leading unexamined lives! And it's because nobody's ever pressed in on them and said hey, you look like you're stuck! What's wrong? Why is that? Would you like me to try to help you figure out how to solve that problem? That's discipleship!

What can we do about it?

Finally, what can we do about this, for ourselves especially? There was a pastor who was a sports enthusiast, and he was trying to make a connection with a new congregant who also was a sports enthusiast. The pastor liked boxing, so he invited the new man to a boxing match, to which he had never been. They were sitting ringside, and just before the match started, one of the boxers made the sign of the cross. New guy leans toward the pastor and says what does that mean? He says, well, it doesn't mean a thing if the guy can't box! There you have discipleship! It's good to have faith, but if you don't know how to box, if you don't grow in that faith, learn the elementary parts of that faith and how to apply it, it's not going to mean much when the other guy starts swinging at you in this spiritual battle that we all are in!

I'm going to give you two things, two suggestions. The first one is to make sure that you understand the differences between the Christian and the secular world views. Make sure you understand the differences, because remember both world views are trying to solve your same problems! Secularism is going to have appeals. Honestly, think about it, no world view is going to survive if it doesn't seem to solve the problem. The problem with secularism is that it does work, for ten years, twenty years, thirty years, maybe even forty years, but secularism will betray you eventually, and usually at the worst possible moment, after you've given your life to ideas that never had any possibility of satisfying the deepest longings of your life, to do something that will make a difference, to have someone in your life that you can share with and have a system that explains why life is so hard. It's like the circus performer who rides on the back of two horses, one foot firmly planted on the back of each horse. But what would happen if those two horses started to move apart? The daring circus performer would have to make a choice, to go to the one or the other. By zeroing in and understanding these dramatic and radically different world views, instead of seeing them as not that much different. In the beginnings of discipleship, they don't look that much different, because they're trying to solve the same problems, but as you get to understand the differences, then you see how far apart they are, and then you too, like the circus performer, will make a choice. And of course you'll make the right choice. So understand the differences.

The second suggestion is make a commitment to see yourself as you really are. Don't kid, trick and fool yourself. Be willing to bring yourself, your soul, naked before God and ask him to mentor you, to disciple you. Bring yourself before the men at your table and be vulnerable with them, be transparent with them, because that's how discipleship takes place. It takes place in the context of personal vulnerability and willingness to see ourselves as we really are. It's the two yous, do you continue to groom and tend and take care of this image, this visible you, or do you go for the real you, the one that's known by God?

Let's take a look at how this happens by looking at the counter to Colossians 2:8, having verses taken captive, turn with me to 2 Corinthians 10:5. The counter to having your thoughts taken captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy is this:

⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (that's leading an examined life, you see?), and we take captive every thought (all those thoughts taken captive by hollow and deceptive philosophy) to make it obedient to Christ.

What did I say? I said that most men do not have a world view that has been carefully chiseled by a personal search for truth and obedience to God. Here it is, to make it obedient to Christ! Keep your finger there, but then turn with me to Psalms 139:23-24. If Romans 12:2 says do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, the antidote to being conformed, the counter, Psalms 139:23-24:

²³Search me, oh God, and know my heart;
test me and know (any offensive way in me, that's idolatrous way) my anxious thoughts.

²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

That's how we don't end up leading an unexamined life, that's discipleship. I asked you to hold your finger at 2 Corinthians 10, go back there and turn to 2 Corinthians 13:5. Here it is:

⁵Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test (that's not a test you want to fail!)?

In the book, and we have the books back there if you want to buy them and follow along, you don't need to, but you can if you want, "*The choice between a Christian world view and a secular world view is a choice between God's race and the rat race.*" My favorite story ever: an elementary school teacher took her children to the studio of a famous sculptor. As they filed into the studio, they all had to pass by this giant, ferocious looking lion, that seemed ready to pounce on them! Every single child did the same thing, they sort of shrank back, it was so realistic. One of the kids went to the sculptor, tugged on his smock, and said hey mister, how were you able to make such a realistic looking lion? He said it was easy son, I started with a large block of marble and then I just chipped away everything that didn't look like a lion. That's discipleship, you see?

If you want to lead an examined life, bring yourself into the presence of Jesus, preferably in the company of some men who are trying to do the same thing. Then, invite the Holy Spirit to chip away everything in you that doesn't look like Jesus. The Big Idea today, **it is for a lack of discipleship that men lead unexamined lives.** Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father, there's not a man here or listening that doesn't want to be a passionate disciple. So I pray that you would help each of us, Lord, to understand the importance of knowing the differences between the Christian world view and the secular world view, because it is the difference between your race and the rat race. Then, Lord, that you would superintend these scriptures that we have looked at this morning to each of our hearts in the way that each one of us needs to have them superintended. I pray Father that we would lead examined lives. I pray that never again would anybody who ever hears about this message would ever be caught up like Johnathan was caught up in an unexamined life because of a lack of discipleship. Draw us in, Lord, make us your disciples, and we ask this in Jesus' name, and everybody said amen!