

# The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

## Biblical Christian or Cultural Christian?

Unedited Transcript

*Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 8:12-15, Romans 1:23 & 25, Revelation 2:2-4 & 3:15-17*

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study where we always have room for one more man! We have some men to welcome this morning, a couple of shout outs. The first one goes to the men at First Baptist Church of Orange Park in Orange Park, FL. 8 men who have met for a year at Penguins restaurant weekly on Mondays at 7:30am using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Mike Swartz.

Secondly, the "Man in the Mirror" Baptist Bible Church of Harare, Zimbabwe. 5 men, a new group who meet at the leader's home weekly on Mondays at 6:00pm using the Video Bible Study, and that leader is Ron Bergh.

Also, we have a number of men in town this week for the Area Director Boot Camp training, which launches them into active duty, as it were. I'd like to ask the Area Directors to please stand where you are. Let's welcome these two groups and our Area Directors with a warm Man in the Mirror welcome! Welcome guys! One, two, three, hoorah! We're glad to have you guys here, and thank you men for joining us online as well!

The series that we're in is the Man in the Mirror: Solving the 24 Problems Men Face. This morning we're going to talk about Biblical Christian or cultural Christian. What's obvious when we look at this title? What's obvious is that a lot of men today are stuck. Some of them are stuck because they have not yet experienced the freedom and the power that comes from being in Jesus Christ. Other men are stuck because they have destructive behaviors that keep dragging them back down. Other men are stuck because they have made a profession of faith in Jesus but now they've been stuck to their seats for 10, 15, or more years, and their lives are not progressing. Sometimes it's because they're just coasters, it's really on them, but other times it's because they've never been challenged deeply to walk with Christ. It's kind of like they've enlisted, been issued a weapon, and never taught how to clean and shoot the weapon, so they're not going to be of much value on the day of battle. Then there are men, of course, approximately 10% of men who have made a profession of faith in Jesus, who are leading the life of a strong Biblical Christian. The obvious thing is that none of these men want to lead the life of a luke warm cultural Christian, so how do we explain that?

We're going to look at three questions this morning. The first one is why are there so many cultural Christians and why are there not more Biblical Christians? Why are there so few Biblical Christians? How do men get stuck and then what do we do as a group to help these men? So let's get started.

**Why are there so few Biblical Christians?**

First up, why are there so few Biblical Christians? You should be at Matthew 28:18, and this is the text we know as the Great Commission. So guys, it was always going to be hard. Did you know that? It was always going to be hard. It is through many sufferings that we enter the kingdom of God. Now it has been granted to you not only the privilege of trusting Christ Jesus as Lord, but also suffering for him. It was always going to be hard! Now the Great Commission, the last or near last words of Jesus, he says:

“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will always be with you.”

It was always going to be harder than you thought it was, and he’s always going to be with you! This is the system that God has set up. We have the Great Commission, go and make disciples, but it is juxtaposed over and against the principle of the parable of the sower. Turn with me to Luke 8, because this is where the opposition comes from, this is why it’s hard. Luke 8:12. Jesus has just told the parable of the sower of four soils. A farmer went out to scatter his seed and as he went along, some fell on the rocky path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on the rocky soil, and withered away when the heat came. Some fell among the thorns and the thistles and sprouted up but then withered away, did not mature. Finally, some fell on the good soil and produced a crop a hundred times what was sown. Then Jesus gives the interpretation of this parable beginning at verse 12:

The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup> Those along the path are the ones who hear, and the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts so that they cannot believe and be saved.

This is the non-Christian, or as I’ve started calling them the not-yet-Christian. The second one:

<sup>13</sup> Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.

These are called many things throughout the ages, but they are emotional hearers. They like the idea of Christianity when they first hear it, they receive it emotionally, but they don’t really put their faith and trust in Jesus, they just get excited about all the benefits of Christianity without counting the cost, per se. That would be a cultural Christian type C. They may or may not be in church, but they have never truly and earnestly received Jesus and repented of their sins, so they have a counterfeit faith. The next verse:

<sup>14</sup> The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.

This is the man who has made a profession of faith in Jesus, and now he’s stuck because he has not done anything to grow his faith. This is my story, this is the verse that turned my life around! I knew that there was something desperately wrong with my life! I had no idea what was going on, all I knew was that I was luke warm! All I knew was that I hated my life! I could see all these other guys around me getting these remarkable results and the joy, the peace, and contentment they had! I put my game face on and tried to pretend that I had it, and I didn’t, and I hated my life! One day I was reading this verse, and I said that’s it! That’s my life! That’s how I got stuck! That’s the cultural Christian type D, defeated. This person is a Christian but like it says in the verse they do not mature. Verse 15:

<sup>15</sup> But the seed on the good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produces a crop.

A fruitful life! Fruitful in the fruit of the spirit, the Great Commission, neighbor love, and loving God, being a Godly father and husband, whatever it is. And you know men like this! These are the Biblical Christians. So you see these four types of people that Jesus explains in this passage, the non-Christian, the cultural Christian type C for counterfeit, the cultural Christian type D for defeated, and the Biblical Christian. So Jesus is out scattering seed, and then he's commission us to go out and scatter seed, the word of God, and some of it's going to fall on rocky soil, some on the hard path, some in the thorns, and some in the good soil. So it was always going to be harder than you thought it was going to be! This Great Commission was always going to be harder, so why are there so few Biblical Christians? There's a couple of Biblical reasons for you. Think about it. You had 11 men, one had already betrayed Jesus, and right before the Great Commission it says some of them doubted. So you had 11 men, many of them doubters! Think about the impact of those men! There have been thousands of movements that have come and gone. There have been many empires that have risen and crumbled, and yet here we are! According to a recent pew research consolidated study, there 2.18 billion Christians in the world today out of 6.9 billion people, so about 1/3 of the world's population has come out of these 11, some doubtful, men that Jesus had assembled. Even in our own country we think of ourselves as a Christian country. Some debate that, but we are Christian nation. Our foundation started that way. Did you know that even in 1800, only 1/14 Americans belonged to an evangelical church? There were about 350,000 Christians in the year 1800 out of 5.3 million residents. Then by 1850 it about doubled to 1/7, so about 1/7 of roughly 23 million people were part of an evangelical church. Then it's doubled again to today. Today, it's about 1/3 Americans, but we are still a minority, but Christianity had been marching forward steadily in the world and in our nation, too. There are more Christians today as a percentage of the total and in terms of absolute numbers, somewhere between 80-100 million are evangelical Christians compared to 350,000 in 1800. So we're an expanding group of people, but we're still a minority.

There also have been some shifts taking place in culture, and what's interesting to note is that even though we are a minority, until recently, Christians set the table for the values that were adopted in general culture. But now that has shifted, so secular values are no longer informed as much as they were by Christianity. Some people think the problem is Christianity, but the problem is not Christianity, it's non-Christianity! So these secular values have found their way into everyday life and they no longer seem to inform the new ideas that are being adopted in general culture.

What are these values? Francis Schaeffer in 1976 wrote a book called *How Should We Then Live?* In that book, he talked about two impoverished values that seem to be taking over our nation. The first he said was personal peace. I just don't want to be bothered by your problems, I want to be left alone. I want to be free to live my life and not be consumed by the troubles of other people. I want to put a wall around me and I want to lead a life of personal peace. Second impoverished value, affluence, a life of things, things, and more things. We won't go into a cultural analysis, but you can see how these two values are pervasive now. Then, there is a third value that has emerged out of this. People run the rat race, they lead unexamined lives, and then they adopt a third value, cultural Christianity, which I would define in many ways, but the way I would talk to you this morning about it is this, it's the greatest lesson that I've ever learned. I'm in the middle of a business crisis, I realized that I'm cultural Christian, I'm sitting around in the rubble one day and this thought goes through my mind. I think it's the greatest lesson that I've ever learned. See if this doesn't make sense, you've heard it before perhaps, there is a God we want and there is a God who is. They are not the same God. The turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is. Does that make sense? God is who he is.

Cultural Christianity means to seek the God we want, Biblical Christianity means to seek the God who is. He is who he is! And the problem with personal peace, affluence, and cultural Christianity, not only are these three impoverished values, but they're very contagious. So a lot of Christians catch these contagious values, and the result is they end up being stuck. Here's the Big Idea this morning: **No matter how men get stuck in cultural Christianity, the only solution is to disciple them out.** No matter how a man gets stuck! The only solution is to disciple him out!

### **How do men get stuck?**

The next thing I want us to talk about then is how is it that men do get stuck? Let's start with Genesis 1 and start reading the Bible! How do men get stuck? There are two principle ideas. We find them in Romans 1:23 and 25. Everybody has a different best learning style, but it is so valuable to see things with your own eyes, even to write down notes, just from learning theory perspective I would encourage you to do that. There are two problems that are revealed in these passages, two ways that men get stuck. The first is idols, and the second is lies. Let's read the text together. Verse 23:

<sup>23</sup> They exchange the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man, and birds, and animals and reptiles.

They made idols. Verse 25:

<sup>25</sup> They exchange the truth of God for a lie (they believed a lie) and they worshipped and served created things, rather than the creator who is forever praised.

Men make idols! John Calvin said that men are idol factories. We can make an idol out of anything! If you're a deacon or elder at your church, you can make that into an idol! If you are doing service in the community, you can turn that into an idol! You can turn anything into an idol! Because anything that you find your identity being wrapped up in and anything that you worship other than God is an idol. The root of all idolatry is unbelief. What is it that is not believed? What's not believed is that Jesus Christ alone is enough to make me happy. I need something else! Jesus isn't enough for me, I need something else. The moment you get to that place...

I used to race cars. One day I was at the track with a guy who never missed the opportunity to race, he had the money to do it. I had been a very out loud Christian guy, so he knew that I was a Christian. One day with a lot of sobriety and seriousness he asked when does my racing become an idol? Good question! God wants you to enjoy things, whether that's racing or bicycling or going to the gym or wind surfing or college football... whatever it is! God wants you to enjoy those things! But when do they become an idol? When does your home become an idol? When does a relationship become an idol? That's what I told him, I said an idol is anything of which we think Jesus Christ alone is not enough to make me happy. I also need this, I can't be happy without this. Idols! Men make idols.

Lies! Men believe lies! There are only two languages in the world: truth and lies. And the native tongue of every man in this room, online, and myself, is lies, because the prince of this world is the father of lies. We're all subject to the fall, our native tongue is lies. But, when we become a Christian, we learn a new language, we become bilingual. We also speak truth, but what's the problem with being bilingual and having your first language be lies and your learned language truth? If you don't use the new language on a regular basis, if it falls into disuse, what happens? You revert to your native tongue. So there are a lot of counterfeit ideas out there. Which counterfeit \$100 bill is the one most likely to make

it into circulation? Which one? The one that looks the most like the real thing! So there are a lot of lies out there that look very close to the real thing, but they're not. Men get stuck when they make these idols, and men get stuck when they believe these lies.

There are three lies that I'm just going to mention quickly, not in depth. They're my lies. Number one, and I've progressed along through these, number one: men believe the lie money will solve my problems and success will make me happy. Then once they get past that or maybe at the same time, a second lie: I can have the best of both worlds. The best of the Christian world view and the best that the world has to offer. I can have my cake and eat it, too! Then the third lie, one that gets so many men stuck, guys who really and truly earnestly want to love God, but they're so filled with guilt and shame for what they've done that they believe the third lie: you need to deserve grace. You're not good enough, you need to deserve this. Get out and work! Work work work! So those are just some of the examples. You can obviously add to this list. You could also add to these ways that men get stuck, but these are just two really core problems, the problem of making idols and the problem of exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

So what's the result of all this? Well the result of all this are the passages listed in Revelation, we lose our first love. We become luke warm. When we mingle with the culture and adopt their customs, we become cultural Christians. We get ensnared, we think that we can love God without giving up our idol. We believe these lies, we think money really will make me happy! Success will solve my problems. We believe the lie that we really can have the best of both worlds! And we get stuck.

How is it that God has provided to solve this problem? It's the Big Idea today: **No matter how men get stuck in cultural Christianity, the only solution is to disciple them out.**

### **What can we do together to help these men?**

The final thing I want us to talk about is what can we do together to help these men? The answer is to build, and in our case, maintain, a disciple making culture. Create a disciple making culture in your life, here, in your neighborhood, in your church, in your place of work, and we do that by implementing the answers to three simple questions: what is a disciple? What is discipleship? And what is a disciple maker? So what is a disciple? A disciple is another word for Biblical Christian? What is a disciple? A disciple is a man or a woman who has been called to live in Jesus, equipped to live like Jesus, and sent to live for Jesus. The common denominator is Jesus, who calls us to salvation and then calls us to abide in the vine, that's the calling. He equips us through spiritual formation and growth to become more like him, and sends us to do acts of neighbor love and good deeds, to help build his kingdom and take care of the culture. What is a disciple? Can't have a disciple making culture if you don't know what a disciple is. Discipleship. What is discipleship? Discipleship is pretty simple; when God puts a man in your path who is stuck, discipleship means finding out why and then helping him solve that problem. That's all there is to it! Can a curriculum help? A church program? Absolutely! But those are means, not ends. The ends of discipleship are this: there are men out there who are stuck and they need help! When a guy comes walking through these doors back here on a Friday morning, he didn't just do that by accident! He has some kind of a problem that he's trying to solve, so discipleship means finding out what! Why did he just do that? Why did he just walk through that door? What is the problem that he's trying to solve? And then we try to help him solve that problem.

I'm an old guy, I've met with thousands of guys in one on one meetings, and there are seven symptoms. The presenting problems, men come here, go to church or will come and talk to you at work because

they have a money problem, a marriage problem, a work problem, or a health problem. Those are the presenting problems. But when you peel back that to the root problems, here are the seven symptoms men seem to have that the Lord uses to inspire them to walk through that door. You don't have to write these down, you can go to [patrickmorley.com](http://patrickmorley.com) and type seven symptoms in the search window and they'll pop up. Here they are, just listen to these:

I just feel like I'm in this thing all alone.

I don't feel like God cares about me personally – not really.

I don't feel like my life has a purpose. In fact, it feels random.

I have these destructive behaviors that keep dragging me back down.

My soul feels dry.

My most important relationships, they are not healthy.

I don't really feel like I'm doing anything that will make a difference and will leave the world a better place.

Those are the problems that men are trying to solve. Those are the things that have men stuck! To have a disciple making culture means that when God brings a man to us who is stuck or brings a man to you who is stuck, we find out why and then help him solve that problem. But it's kind of good to know a little bit about the kinds of problems they'll be coming with in the first place. That's part of the training that goes into building a disciple making culture.

Finally, what is a disciple maker? A disciple maker, they're the men who are willing to take other men under their wings and show them the ropes. How to be a Godly man, husband and father. They are the spiritually mature men that are willing to take the less mature younger in their faith kind of guys, and show them how to do it. That's what a disciple maker is. You don't have to take a four year college curriculum to be a disciple maker, you just have to understand what disciple is, what discipleship is, what a disciple maker is, and be part of that culture. Why? The Big Idea today. Why we do this, why we have a disciple making culture, is because when men walk through the door who are stuck, **no matter how they got stuck, the only solution is to disciple them out.** There is no other way for them to get unstuck except through Jesus Christ. Let's pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Our dearest Father, Lord, we come to you today. All of us have been stuck at one point or another, some of us are stuck right now. Lord, when you bring men to our Bible study or to a venue where one of these men have an opportunity to talk to them and they're stuck, help us to have a disciple making mindset. Help us to have a disciple making culture, so that we can find out why these men are stuck and help them with that problem, so that they can be Biblical Christians and not just cultural Christians, so that they can seek the God who is and not merely the God they want. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!