

The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

Significance: The Search for Meaning and Purpose

Unedited Transcript

Psalms 8:3-8, James 4:13-15, 2 Corinthians 5:17, John 8:31-32, 13:34-35, 15:5-8

Good morning, men! How's everybody doing today? Good! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more man! We want to do a couple of shout outs today. The first one is going to go to a group called Elevate of New Life Church in Noblesville, IN. 16 men who have met for 6 months at New Life weekly on Fridays at 7:30pm using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Thomas Gray, and Rob Leonard is the Area Director close to them. In fact, Rob told me that he already knows Thomas, so that's great news!

The second shout out today is going to Men's group at Whitehall of Whitehall Bible Fellowship Church in Coplay, PA. 9 men who meet at the leaders home weekly on Tuesdays at 7:00pm using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Joel Vooz, and by the way you have an Area Director just South of there, Dave Armstrong. So I wonder if you would join me in giving these men a warm Man in the Mirror Welcome? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're really glad to have you with us!

The series that we're in is The Man in the Mirror. When I was in my 20's, I took my wife on a vacation to Freeport in the Bahamas. I learned that over on the beach, we were at the Princess Hotel, and over on the beach there was a 10 story condominium called the Xanadu, and Howard Hughes, at the time the richest man in the world, had taken over the top floor of the Xanadu and turned the four penthouse condominiums there into a citadel of power where he spent the last 20 years of his life. When we arrived, he had been dead for 2 years. So when my wife was doing whatever she was doing that particular afternoon, I made my way over to the Xanadu, curious. Found my way into the elevator, found myself on the 10th floor, and facing this imposing door which had a little portal window and about five or six layers of 3M film with kind of a makeshift mirrored look to it. The edges were peeling up and when I tried to look through, I couldn't see anything. Just about that moment, the elevator chimed and a maid walked out of the elevator cab. She gave me the evil eye, buddy! She's thinking what are you doing here! So I told her that I had always admired Howard Hughes, and I was so excited to be here! I just was wondering if there was any way I could get inside and look around this fortress that Howard Hughes had created? And she just for a moment flickered a little smile, so I saw an opening and I jumped in and picked up the gap, and before you know it I had talked her into letting me walk through Howard Hughes' apartments. I don't know what I was expecting. I thought there would probably be some opulent chandeliers and some rare expensive art, the fingerprints of some European designer visible everywhere. But what I saw was more like a cut rate motel, or a boarding house. There were these thread bare, olive plaid cushions sitting in cut rate wood frames. The bathroom fixtures looked like they came out of a cheap motel. I couldn't believe it! The further I penetrated into the fortress, the more

excited I got! In fact I got adrenaline like when you get in a near miss on the interstate. I could picture him making intercontinental phone calls and writing those very famous notes to his subordinates. When I was done, I was just so struck how ironic it was that in spite of all of the money, all of the fame, all of the power, all of that had begun to return to dust the moment that his body had hit room temperature. Betrayed by all of those things, sequestered from the world.

What was the need that Howard Hughes was trying to satisfy? What is the need that you and I are trying to satisfy when we work 16 hours a day or 14 hours a day for six weeks running so that we can win a sales contest where they'll give us a plaque that we'll hang on our wall. And when we change jobs, we'll never hang that back up but we'll never throw it away, we'll store it someplace where it creates dust. But it's important to us that we have it! What is the need that you and I are trying to satisfy? That's real dust, that's my dust! I'll never throw this away!

Today we're going to talk about significance, the search for meaning and purpose.

What is a man's greatest need?

First up, I want us to talk about what is a man's greatest need? Whether you are just trying to survive from paycheck to paycheck, or trying to achieve your full potential, or conquer the world like Howard Hughes, all men want their lives to count. All men want their lives to make a difference, all of us want to find meaning, all of us want to make a contribution, all of us want to exceed, to excel, to achieve, to do something with our lives that will make a difference. Easily, the most innate need that a man has is the need to be significant, to find meaning and purpose to his life. Turn to Psalm 8:3. I want to talk about where does this need come from? I've already said it's an innate need, so in chapter 8 verse 3 we read these words:

³When I consider your heavens,
The work of your fingers,
The moon and the stars,
Which you have set in place,
⁴What is man that you are mindful of him,
The son of man that you care for him?

⁵You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
And crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
You put everything under his feet:

⁷All the flocks and herds,
And the beasts of the field,

⁸The birds of the air,
And the fish in the sea,
All that swim the paths of the seas.

⁹Oh Lord, our Lord,
How excellent is your name in all the earth!

So if you just take a look there, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels. That's the issue of our identity. Who am I? I am

just a little lower than the angels. I am God's most excellent creation. You are God's most excellent Creation. God was at his very best when he made you. You are his crowning achievement. That's the identity of every human being, every man, whether they acknowledge it or not. They still are the full expression of God's creative genius.

Why do I exist? You made ruler over the works of your hands. He has given us dominion. So it's setup in verse 3, when I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the work of his hands. He has delegated the dominion over all things to us. Why do we exist? To take dominion over the creation, to take care of the creation. Genesis 1:27-28 it's the cultural mandate, as it were, and because we are Christians it's the Great Commission.

What is it that is obvious when you read this text? What's obvious is that why is it that most men, being more than half, find taking hold of this significance, this identity, this purpose, this meaning, so difficult? Why do they find it so frustrating? Why are they stuck? Not able to take hold of this significance. Our frustration is not because we don't think it's possible. We all know by intuition that we are created for a purpose, we are created for meaning, and our frustration is not that we don't think it's possible but that we have not yet been able to take hold of it, to seize it! What is a man's greatest need? It's to be significant, to find meaning, to find purpose.

What one thing, fully understood and truly believed could change everything for the man who is still seeking significance? It's the Big Idea today: **How we answer the questions "Who am I?" and "Why do I exist?" determines our significance.** How you answer these two questions, that is what will determine your significance. There are different ways to answer these questions. Two great ways. There's the 80 year answer and then there's the forever answer. There are inappropriate ways to answer these questions and then there are appropriate ways to answer these questions. The Big Idea, **How we answer the questions "Who am I?" and "Why do I exist?" determines our significance.** Our sense of significance, this innate desire that we have, that we see here, that's described in Psalm 8.

How do men try to satisfy their greatest need?

How do men try to satisfy their greatest need? I'd like to have a couple of volunteers come up, and that would be Danny and Lucas. Turn with me to James 4:13. I want us to just see one iteration of these two different ways that men pursue significance. This has to do with starting a business. I'm going to ask Lucas to read one phrase out of verse 13:

"Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."

So Lucas, his way that he's going to pursue his significance, today or tomorrow he is going to go to some city. He's going to spend a year there, carry on business, and make money. Good luck! I hope it works out! Now here's what the text says. Listen you who say that:

¹⁴ Why, you don't even know what's going to happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, (what Danny says! Danny, what do you say?) "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

So if the Lord wills it, we will live and do this or that. Notice that they're both going to do the same thing. They're both going to go to some place and try to establish a business and make money. But one

is going to do it in his own strength, his own power, for his own need, and his own ends. The other is going to do it as an expression of God's will. Thank you guys so much! So there is one example of the two ways you can do this.

There are so many inappropriate ways to pursue significance. In the book I talk about three of them. I talk about fame, possessions, and power, but there are so many other ways to do it as well. So many people are trying to be famous or increase their reputation. It was mentioned in the video at the beginning. They want respect. I remember that drove me at one point in my life! I can remember coming home after doing everything! Meeting all the goals that should have brought that sense of significance and meaning and purpose, I had done it all! I had a big luxury car to prove it! I remember coming home one day, and putting the garage door down. I got out of the car and I went over to the wall and I just began kicking that wall until I couldn't kick anymore, because I was just so utterly frustrated! Some people are just so utterly frustrated because they have not achieved what they wanted, what they thought would bring them meaning, purpose and significance. But others are just as frustrated because they did! By the way I had to paint the wall when we went to sell the house because it had footprints all over the side of the wall. I thought it would be a little embarrassing to answer where they had come from.

Some think possessions will bring them this sense of meaning and purpose. Or if I could just send my kids to that school, if I could just marry that woman, if I could just live in that neighborhood, if I could just drive that car! I was driving that car! Beautiful car! The luster of the metallic blue paint glistened in the sun, and the aroma of the white leather seats was an aphrodisiac to a young materialist like me! Hmm! Until three weeks past. Then one day, I'm sitting at a traffic light, and I see the same car but in a different color and I said darn! I wish I had bought that color! Very fleeting this kind of significance, meaning and purpose, to try to extract it from possessions.

Maybe it's power? The ability to control other people, to control affairs, to be in charge, to be the big man. Don Hodel who actually spoke right here once, former secretary of the interior under Reagan, he said that when he was the secretary, he reminded all of the staff that their power was very fleeting. He said there were people down in the bowels of this building who don't even know the names of the former secretaries. One man served on a board with him and he said we come into the world as babies and that's how we go out. He said enjoy your power while you can, because once you retire, they won't return your phone calls anymore. The problem is if who I am is what I do, then who am I when I don't do what I do anymore? Finding our significance in our position... all of these are inappropriate ways. They are ways that will just melt away with the passage of time and we'll be left empty, disillusioned. Just like Howard Hughes! But without the money of course! The Big Idea today: **How we answer the questions "Who am I?" and "Why do I exist?" determines our significance.**

How does a disciple satisfy his need to be significant?

Finally, how does a disciple satisfy his need to be significant? In other words, what one question best captures what must be asked and said at this particular moment. What is it that disciple can do to satisfy this need to be significant? Five ways you can do this. These are not the only five ways, you can add others to it. I think we can boil everything down to one of these five or some spinoff of one of these five. 2 Corinthians 5:17. It's the verse that says if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The single most important way to find significance is to be in Christ, it's our salvation, it's our eternal life. The single most important way to find significance, to find meaning and purpose, is to be in Christ. That's number one, that answers the question who am I? Who am I? I am a disciple, I am in Christ, I am a child of God, I am a

friend of Jesus, I am a disciple. To be a disciple is the highest honor to which a man can aspire! There is no greater identity, there is no greater meaning, there is no greater purpose that any of us can have that is superior to being a disciple of Jesus. Who am I? I am a disciple in Christ.

Why do I exist? Turn to John 8:31. First and foremost, to be significant as a disciple is to be in Christ. The second way to find significance as a disciple, John 8:31-32:

³¹To the Jews who had believed him (so they were Christians), Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching (or if you abide in my teaching) you are really my disciples.

So the second way that a disciple can find his significance is to abide in the teachings of Christ, and also in John 15 to abide in Christ who is the vine and to be the branch. In other words, it's to recognize that the best way to find your significance is not to be the productive element in the relationship, it's not to be the vine, it's just to be the limb, and to draw our sustenance from Christ. So it's abide. First way is to be in Christ, second way to abide, abide in Christ, and hold to his teachings.

The third way is to grow. Information is power! It's great to have a good heart, but it's also good to have the right information because information is power. It's education! 2.8 billion people, almost half the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day! Because they don't have right information. So we have the word of God, so grow! Be in Christ, abide in Christ, and grow! Hold to my teachings, abide in my teachings. Grow!

The fourth way is to love others. Turn with me to John 13:34-35. Jesus says a new command I give to you, that you love one another. All men will know you are my what? Disciples, if you what? Love one another. If you want to find significance, be a disciple, love one another. Neighbor love! Love love love! So we have in Christ, abide, grow, and love.

Then we have serve. Turn to John 15:5. Jesus says I am the vine you are the branches. If a man remains in me or abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing. In other words, apart from me you can do nothing of any lasting significance! It'll all go poof! Up in smoke! Verse 8, this is to my father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my what? Disciples! So the fifth way is to serve. A disciple satisfies his need to be significant by being in Christ. That answers the question who am I? Then to abide, to grow, to love, and to serve, that answers the questions why do I exist? We'll go into much more depth on that next week when we talk about purpose and having a written life purpose statement, but the starting point is always to be in Christ.

My friend Dan kicked a woman, ended up spending a year in prison at the age of 30 because she ruptured her spleen when he did it. The chaplain at the jail asked him in a private interview, Dan, do you know who Jesus Christ is. Of course! Dan, do you believe in him? Yes I do. Dan, have you ever given your life to Jesus Christ? No, I've never done that. She encouraged him to think about that and to decide whether or not to give his life, to be found in Christ, to answer the question who am I with the answer that I am a disciple of Jesus, I am in Christ. He came back a week later and he said that's what I want. He made that decision, it radically changed his life! If you have not done that one step yet, then this would be the starting point to find authentic and lasting significance. As we close out, I would like to offer you an opportunity to pray and to receive Jesus, to be found in Christ, to become his disciple, to answer the question who am I with the answer I am a follower in Jesus, I have put my faith in Jesus. Let's pray, and then also I'll include an opportunity if you have gotten off track to get back on track. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

First and foremost, if you are not yet in Christ, you are not a follower of Jesus, his disciple, or if you're not sure that you are, you can be sure by putting your faith in him, by making a decision in your brain to believe. It's an act of the will. You don't have to feel it, you just simply have to decide it as an act of the will. If you have never or are not sure about your relationship with Jesus, let me encourage you right now, you can settle this by telling him that you would like to have this in Christ relationship. You can do that through a prayer which I'm going to pray out loud. I encourage you that you pray this silently to yourself, and give your life to be found in Christ, give your life to Jesus. Pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need you. I thank you that you did die for my sins, for which I am sorry. As an act of my will, I know choose to believe that you did this for me as the scriptures tell. I thank you for forgiving my sins, I invite you to come into my life, and I thank you for giving me the gift of eternal life, and for giving me the foundation for having a sense of significance, a sense of meaning and purpose that will really last.

If you found yourself off track in pursuing significance, caught up in the rat race, leading an unexamined life, been a cultural Christian, whatever the case may be. Whether it's fame, respect, power, importance, money, possessions, whatever it is you thought would bring you significance and you realize that that isn't going to do it, then the Big Idea this morning is this: **How we answer the questions "Who am I?" and "Why do I exist?" determines our significance.** That you want to answer those questions in the forever way, then let me encourage you to also pray. Pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I give my life right now more than I ever have. I confess that I have been trying to answer these questions, why do I exist and what is the purpose of my life, in inappropriate ways, and I am sorry. I ask you to once again take control of my life which I now surrender freely to you, the forgiveness of these sins and all my other sins. I ask you to be the Lord and the director of my life. Show me how I can be this disciple that finds significance in the right way. And everybody said together, amen!