

# The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

## The Secret of Job Contentment

Unedited Transcript

*Genesis 2:15, 3:17; 1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:1,11-12; Colossians 3:17,22-24; Philippians 4:2-3; Luke 14:31-33*

Good morning, men! Room pick up, lights on, you won't be very content with your job if you don't go out and take care of that little problem! We'd like to welcome you all here to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more man! We have some Area Directors in town, and affiliates in town this week doing some training, so I would just like to welcome each of them to the Bible Study this morning. Guys, raise your hands so that the guys at your tables will know who you are. If you see one of these guys at your tables, be sure to give them a special welcome!

We want to do a couple of shout outs this morning. First one goes to "Side Tracked" of River Pointe Church in Richmond, TX. They named their group Side Tracked because men have a tendency to get side tracked! 6 men who have met for a few months weekly on Tuesdays at 7:00pm using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Brandon Fore, and we are looking for an Area Director out there, by the way!

The second shout out goes to a new group, "Men on a Journey" of Journey By Grace Church in Belle Vernon, PA. That's near Monongahela! You know how I know that? I was just looking at my cheat sheet. 8 men who meet at the church weekly on Thursdays at 7:00pm using the Video Bible Study. Led by Bill Payne. 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 glad to have you with us!

We're doing this series The Man in the Mirror: Solving the 24 Problems Men Face. I'm always looking for a compelling problem that is screaming for an immediate solution that's addressed by the text that we're looking at for the day. The Gallops 2013 survey of the American work place found that 70% of Americans do not find their work rewarding. That's a shame since roughly half of our waking hours revolve around our work, but there's an even bigger problem because if a man is unhappy in his work, he's unhappy everywhere. You know, you can be unhappy at home and compartmentalize that and go off and have a great day at work. You know what I'm talking about, but don't tell your wife that. But you know it's true! You can compartmentalize problems at home and go have a great day at work! But if you're not happy, if you're not content, if you're not doing well at your job, it is just making you miserable everywhere! And you know exactly what I'm talking about. Today, I just want you to know it doesn't have to be like that. You can find contentment no matter what kind of a job you have, no matter how big it is and demanding, no matter how small it is and menial, you can find contentment. So the promise for the message today is simply that you can be content regardless of what you do.

Last week, last time we were together, we talked about the issue of purpose, why do I exist. We looked at four universal purposes, loving God, loving people, the Great Commission, the Cultural Mandate, or

Great Commission – building the kingdom, the cultural mandate – tending the culture, taking care of the culture. One aspect of tending the culture is our work and it's half of what we do roughly. Let's drill down on that today. The title of the message is The Secret of Job Contentment.

### **A brief "theology of work"**

I want to do three things with you. I want to give you a brief theology of work, then I want to look at three ideas that can help you find contentment. Then, what do you do if you try all those things and still are not content? What can you do then?

So first up, a brief theology of work. You should be at Genesis 2:15. Let me tell you the reason I have you look at your Bibles. I want you to be familiar with the word of God. I want you to have a tactile experience, whether it's on your iPhone, iPad or a written text. I want you to be more and more increasingly familiar with the word of God, so that's why we actually look up the verses instead of just put them on the screen and feed them to you that way. There's nothing wrong with doing it that way, but from a learning theory perspective, I want you to experience the word of God for yourself. I just think it will really enrich your experience. So Genesis 2:15. How many of you think that work is a curse? How many of you feel cursed by your work? We have men at all levels of spiritual maturity at this Bible Study, and one common problem is that men who are early in their spiritual journeys often think that work is a curse on man. That is not the case, that is not the case at all. Let's take a look at Genesis 2:15, this is part of the creation story:

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

So we see here this taking care of it, this tending the culture, doing the work. You'll notice that this is the very first job that was ever given to a man, and what was the job? Landscape maintenance! There are no menial jobs in the kingdom of God. Then, if you will look over at Genesis 3:17, between these two verses, the fall has taken place, the apple has been eaten, and God is prescribing what will happen as a consequence of the fall:

<sup>17</sup> To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;  
through painful toil you will eat food from it  
all the days of your life.

<sup>18</sup> It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow  
you will eat your food  
until you return to the ground,  
since from it you were taken;  
for dust you are  
and to dust you will return."

So what do we learn from this text that we would learn no other way? There is no other way we would know this truth, that work is a gift that God has given us. He has given us the dignity of causality. God

alone is the one who makes the corn plant grow, but he has chosen to not do it by himself. Instead he has allowed us the dignity of causality. The farmer must prepare the soil, plant the seed, fertilize the crop, water the crop, pull the weeds, bring in the harvest. If the farmer fails to do any one of these things, the crop will fail. The crop may fail for other reasons, too, but it will most certainly fail for those reasons. God has given us this dignity of causality, that we actually work and see produce. This is to my father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. Of course, he means spiritual fruit, but he also means cultural fruit as well. He's given us dominion over the birds of the air, the fish of the sea and the animals. He's given us dominion over those. Work is a gift.

Secondly, work is hard. We must do this work while feeling the prick of thorns. Because of the fall, every time you go out to meet with a customer, you're having to manage against the fall. You're having to manage against the fall in him because he's selfish, sinful, he wants to do the right things but he finds it difficult to do it. He can't even express to you what's really in his mind and heart in terms of what he even really wants to buy. You on the other hand, as the salesman, you've heard the saying buyers are liars, but so are sellers? Everybody's a liar so everybody's working everybody all the time. That's just the way it is, so we have to, as believers, do our work while managing against the fall. Managing against the fall in the other person and managing against the fall in ourselves. That's why we have to watch our words so carefully. How we say things, the posture that we assume, the expression on our faces, because all of these things are subject to misinterpretation because of this fall. Work is a gift, work is hard.

Turn with me to Jeremiah 29:7. When I said Jeremiah 29, those of you who are Bible geeks probably thought I was going to say chapter 29 verses 10 and following, but I'm not! It's verse 7! Before that one where we always quote I know the plans that I have for you, plans to prosper you and so forth. But look what it says down in verse 7. It says (this is to the exiles in Babylon):

<sup>7</sup>Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Work is the will of God. Work for the peace and the prosperity of the place where God has placed you, whether you feel like you're in exile or you feel like you're in the promised land! The idea is that work is the will of God. Let's complement that by looking at 2 Thessalonians 3:10. I'm moving pretty quick, so if you're not able to move that quick you might just want to write down the verses and look them up later. This is a very well known text, at least the concept is. 2 Thessalonians 3:10:

<sup>10</sup>For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

There are extenuating circumstances where people can't work and that kind of thing, but the bottom line is that work is the will of God for your life. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:1:

As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God...

Work pleases God! Look at verse 11:

... make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, <sup>12</sup>so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Francis of Assisi was out hoeing his garden one day. Somebody asked him what would you do today if you learned that Jesus was coming back this afternoon? He said I would finish hoeing my garden. He was so utterly convinced that what he was doing was the will of God and that it pleased God that hoeing his garden was the thing that he would do, his calling at that particular time. That's the thing that he would do if he thought that Jesus would be returning that afternoon! That is job contentment! To know that if you're driving a bus around Orlando, that you have the dignity of causality. You are actually helping people get from where they live, because they lack transportation, to where they work so they can earn a living for their family, so they can put food on their tables, so they can pay their bills, so that they can have the dignity of this gift of work in the lives of other people. Now whether they use that or not, that's up to them.

Work as an act of worship. Turn to Colossians 3. I said that this was going to be a brief theology of work, but it doesn't seem brief anymore. I'll wrap it up here. Colossians 3:17:

<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

You could also look up 1 Corinthians 10:31 if you wanted to. Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do everything for the glory of God. Work is an act of worship. Work is a gift. Work is hard. Work is the will of God. Work pleases God, and work is an act of worship. Hakeem Olajuwon, back to back NBA titles, 12 times all-star, seven feet tall, two hundred sixty pounds of muscle! He was interviewed by an ESPN reporter who said they tell me that during practice you will go after loose balls, diving on the floor like it's the NBA finals. That after practice, you'll stick around for hours on end, practicing hook shots. What is it about you that makes you want to do that? To give 110%? He said, you need to understand something. For me, it's not just work, it's an act of worship. God has given me this ability to play this game and how could I possibly dishonor him by not giving it my very best? No, I don't go to work when I play basketball, I go to worship. Now what's interesting is that Hakeem Olajuwon is a Muslim, and yet God in his providence has given him the discernment to understand something that every Christian should know! That work is meant to be an act of worship, something that brings glory to God, something that pleases God, something that we do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father when we do it.

No job is menial. Look at chapter 3 verses 22 and following:

<sup>22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters (or employees obey your earthly bosses) in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

No job is menial. Whatever God has put into your heart, do it. There is a higher purpose in every menial task. I had a guy come one day to the visitor table and he said one evening he was in a Bible Study. An attorney said to him, haven't I seen you before? Don't you work in my building? He said as a matter of fact, I do. I'm a disciple of Jesus disguised as your janitor. But he understood the dignity of his work, that there was purpose doing janitorial work. You've seen them, you've seen them at airports, you've seen men and women doing janitorial work or housekeepers doing their work and you know you can sense that they find dignity in what they're doing! They see a purpose in what they're doing, they understand that by making a room clean or making a bathroom clean for weary travelers going from city to city to

do commerce, or traveling to the city to see their children, are benefitting from their service. Service they are doing for God, and you can tell a lot of them are Christians. To bring glory to God, because it's a gift! Is it hard? Yeah! Is it menial? Yeah! But there's a higher purpose to every menial task if you do it for the Lord. So here's the Big Idea today. You've got this bus driver who's driving around and he sees a higher purpose in what he's doing. He sees value to what he's doing, he has a Biblical perspective, a bigger perspective of what he's doing. And he's doing what he's doing for the glory of God, and he's trusting God to meet all of the needs that he has. Another bus driver is driving around, same kind of bus, different route, but he's discontent. He's discontent because his ambition was to get into management, and that isn't happening. His ambition was that he would be the boss, and he's not, he's the employee. His ambition was that he would be ruling over people and have power, prestige, and respect, and he's not doing that. He's driving a bus. So he's not getting what he wants. Here's the Big Idea: **The secret of job contentment is not getting what I want, but redefining what I need.** That's the secret of job contentment! It's not getting what we want, it's redefining what we need. It's understanding this brief theology of work, and there's a lot more that could be said about work, but just in this brief theology of work, it's understanding the nature of work, the dignity of causality. Yes, it's hard, but no menial job exists without a higher purpose, and when we do things for the glory of God, to bring honor to God, as an act of worship, because we understand that it's the will of God, it just turns around our whole concept of what we need.

So here's the problem: wants become needs, needs become expectations, expectations become disappointments, disappointments become discontents. All disappointment is the result of unmet expectations, whatever the area. In your marriage, if you have disappointment in your marriage, I guarantee you there's an expectation somewhere that wasn't met. If you're unhappy in your job, I'll guarantee you that somewhere there was something that you expected to happen, an expectation that didn't come to pass that has led to disappointment. Where do expectations come from? Thinking we need something! And why do we think we need something? That starts because we want something. So the Big Idea, not getting what I want but redefining what I want, that's the secret.

### **3 concrete ideas to redefine what you need**

Let's take a look at 3 concrete ideas that can help redefine what you need. These are in the book, I'm going to pass through these a little more quickly than ordinarily because of the time. The first one, redefine your ambition. What is your ambition? Why do you work? What is your ambition? Is it to make a lot of money? Is it to make the number? Is it to develop a place where you can gratify your ego? Satisfy your need to be respected? Or is it like we read about in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, making your business to lead a quiet life? Redefine your ambition.

Second, redefine your boss. Who is your boss? We're at Colossians 3:22-24. Verse 23 says:

<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,  
<sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Redefining your boss. I always wanted to be my own boss. When I went into business, I had a partner and I was my own boss, and contentment was elusive. I got a hold of a book called *God Owns My Business* by Stanley Tam. I read it, I got excited! I gave it to my partner, asked him to read it. He got excited! We decided that we would act on it, so we called a board of directors meeting, the two of us, and we went down to Burger King, the only place we could afford to go for lunch. We split a whopper

and fries, and we gave our business to God, we made him the senior partner and we took on the role of junior partners. We let him be the boss. We weren't getting what we wanted so we decided to redefine what we needed. We needed God to be our boss, we needed to understand that it was God that we were working for.

So redefine your ambition, redefine your boss, and then redefine your role. We'll look at one more scripture, Luke 14:31. Steve sold his company, 80 employees. He was the owner, he decided to stay on and became the branch manager as they had sold out to a larger company. His responsibilities looked very similar, but there was a whole new reporting structure, his role had changed completely from that of an owner to a manager. We see this in Luke 14:31:

<sup>31</sup> "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

So if he makes peace, what happens? He gets to live, and culturally he would have been left in place to govern the people, but he would now be a subject to the bigger king. If he didn't make peace what would happen? He'd get killed:

<sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

Is that crazy? If you don't give up everything that you have, you can't be the disciple of Jesus! Does that mean then that you have to sell everything and go to China? Of course not! He just gave the parable, you're going to negotiate the terms of peace, you're going to surrender all of these things that you've been entrusted with. Your role is going to change, but your duties are not. That's the Big Idea here, **the secret of job contentment is not getting what I want, but redefining what I need.** Redefining my ambition, redefining my boss, redefining my role, three concrete ideas to help you.

### **What if you're still not content?**

What if you're still not content? What if you're still not content after you do all these things? I'm not talking about just work being hard, work is hard, I've said it before. When I was in business, one day a week I wanted to throw in the towel. That's why I got into ministry! But now it's two days! What if you're still not content, though? And that's not just being hard, but really this basic dissatisfaction. The norm is, you can find it in 1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 7:20-21, the norm is stay where you are. But if you really try to make it work Biblically, if you really try to redefine the ambition, if you really redefine your boss and your role, and you're still not happy, get another job for crying out loud! Enjoy this, because we're going to be talking about marriage soon and we're not going to be talking like that about marriage! Get another job!

I'll close with this, Viktor Frankl was a survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camps, a psychotherapist, he wrote the book *A Man's Search for Meaning*. He told in that book a very interesting story that a top rated American diplomat came to see him one day in Vienna. He was a very unhappy man, and had been for years. He had been under a psychotherapist for five years who had been working to convince this diplomat that he needed to reconcile his relationship with his father because the government that he worked for was the father figure in his life, and the hostility, dissatisfaction, and the angst that he was experiencing was a result of these unresolved father issues. But it's five years down the road and he's

still a very unhappy man. Frankl asked him do you like being a diplomat? He said no, I hate it. He said, well why don't you see if you can find another line of work? So he did, and five years later as Frankl followed him he said just by changing jobs, his whole outlook on life had changed, and he had become a much more content, satisfied and happy person. So if you don't like what you're doing, make a change! **The secret of job contentment is not getting what I want, but redefining what I need.** Sometimes what you need is another job! Let's pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Our dearest Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for this dignity of work that you have given to us that takes up half of our lives. I pray God that for any man that is struggling to find contentment that you would help him to first explore his perspective, his theology of work. That you would make any corrections in his perspective of work that need to be made. If he needs to redefine any part of his life, whether it's his ambition, his boss, his role, help him to do that. If there is a man, and I'm sure there's many, who after doing that are going to find they are not content, that you would help them find a job where they would have that sense of dignity that you have given us, and want us to have in our work even when it's hard. We ask this in your name Jesus, amen!