

The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

Broken Relationships

Unedited Transcript

Philippians 2:3-5, 21

Well, good morning men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more man. I was at a reception recently, and my wife and I got separated. I ran into a friend of hers and I asked her how she was doing. She told me, and she said I know all about how you and your family are doing because Patsy and I were talking in the ladies room. I'm thinking, you know, I don't get it. I go into the men's room and they have urinals, toilets, and sinks. I'm in and I'm out. Ladies, though, they can go to a restroom and I don't know what's in there! I want to go into one of these ladies rooms sometime and see what's in there! Besides, when I'm in a restroom, I'm trying not to make eye contact, you know! If a man accidentally brushes against some guy, he says oh I'm sorry! Women, they hold hands as they walk to the ladies room together!

So we're going to break into a new section, part 2 of *The Man in the Mirror* this morning. We just finished off with identity problems, and we're going to start talking about relationship problems, solving our relationship problems. The series is *The Man in the Mirror: Solving the 24 Problems Men Face*. But before we do that, let's go ahead and have a couple of shout outs this morning to a new group and an existing group.

This goes to a new group, "SPCF Men's Bible Study" of Stony Point Christian Fellowship Church in Santa Rosa, CA. 5 men who meet at the leader's home on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month at 7:00pm using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Jim Wright, and we are looking for an Area Director for the Santa Rosa, CA region.

Then also, I guess two new groups, First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti in Ypsilanti, MI. 3 men who meet at the church weekly on Sundays at 9:30am using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Tim Shannon, and Mark Prim is the Area Director for this region in Michigan. You can look him up at <http://www.maninthemirror.org/ad> and get to know him a little bit. So these are two new groups. I wonder if you would join me in welcoming them into the Man in the Mirror Bible Study? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're really glad to have you with us!

The title of today's message is Broken Relationships. We'll be doing four messages in the relationships rubric. We'll start out here talking about broken relationships.

The problem: what is it, and why does it matter?

First up, the problem: what is it, and why does it matter? So what is the problem? Every survey, every single survey that asks people what's really important to them, they always say the same thing. Family!

Relationships! But, for most men, even though they will say that what's most important to them are relationships and family, when it comes to how they actually prioritize their lives, the mindset that they live by, they find that their identity, they find their significance not in their relationships, not in their family, but in title, in accomplishment, in possessions, in money, in financial status.

A longtime acquaintance of mine, Jim, was telling me that his best friend from high school and college joined the military, went off to war, and got killed. At the funeral, Jim saw his friend's father, a very distinguished businessman, a high capacity, high achiever, who had made lots and lots of money, looking very distinguished. Of course he was broken up because his son had died, and my friend Jim didn't really know the man too well, because he was always working. After the service, the man came over to Jim and he said, "You were my son's best friend, weren't you?" He said, "Yes sir, I was." Then tears flooded his eyes. He said, "Could you tell me a little about my son? I was so busy I never really got to know him." There is no pain deeper than relationship pain.

So why is this such a problem? Well, it's such a problem because of the collateral damage that we leave in our wake, not to mention the pain we experience. Once we had a young woman come to work at our office. I'll call her Stephanie. She had just graduated from FSU, so she had a college degree, and she took the job as the receptionist at our ministry. Not the normal job you would expect somebody who just got a college degree to take. Well, maybe in this economy it is! One day I asked her, "Stephanie, what are you doing here?" She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You just graduated college. You've got a college degree," in whatever it was. I said, "Why did you take this modestly paying job at a ministry?" She said, "Oh, I see what you mean." Then she said this, "When I was 9 years old, my mother and father were separated. After that, I saw my dad a few times. Then, when I turned 13, my mother and father were divorced and I've never seen my father since then." She said, "So the reason that I came to work here is that I was thinking that if my life could help one other young woman not to have to go through what I've gone through, then that would be worth the price." There's a little postscript to this story, by the way. Through our national network we found her father somewhere up in New Jersey and got connected to him and were able to reunite father and daughter. You cannot imagine the joy on the part of our leadership team at her wedding during the father daughter dance when the two of them were gazing adoringly into each other's eyes. It was a very special moment! So there's this collateral damage that is so devastating.

Then, why does it matter? Here's why it matters! Because no amount of success on your job will ever be adequate to compensate for failure at home! Never! No amount will ever be adequate to compensate for failure at home! Right now, a lot of you guys feel so guilty! I'm sorry! I'm not trying to make anyone feel guilty. What I'm trying to do is move us from the problem toward the mindset of a disciple, so you can put your life on the right course if you need to, or keep it on the right course. No amount of success at work will ever be adequate to compensate for failure at home.

At a conference once, there was a group of men standing around. One of the men was an extremely successful businessman, extremely wealthy. They were standing around, six or seven men, and they were all congratulating this other man on being so rich and successful. After a few men had said these things to him, he said, "Stop. You need to understand, men, I would trade it all for a relationship with my son." The Big Idea today is this: **If you don't have enough time for your family, you can be 100% certain that you are not following God's will for your life.** If you don't have enough time for your family, and if you're not married, the relationships that are important to you, if you don't have enough time for your family, you can be 100% certain that you're not following God's will for your life. This is not meant to be a finger in the face, a poke in the chest or eye, this is meant to inflame. I'm hoping the Holy

Spirit will inflame in us a passion, a desire to give time to whom time is due. But nevertheless, the idea is, and hopefully it will prick our consciences a little, if you don't have enough time for you family, then you can be 100% certain that you're not following God's will for your life.

The mindset and priorities of a disciple

Let's take a look at the mindset and priorities of a disciple. Philippians 2 is where you should be, and I'm talking about here, of course, the mindset and priorities of a disciple as it relates to relationships. And it's very very simple; you can either do relationships in the flesh or in the sinful nature, or you can do your relationships in the power of the Holy Spirit. You can approach every interaction that you have with your wife, you can interact with her in the Spirit or you can interact with her in the flesh. Every time you have that interaction, you have to make that choice, whether it's going to be in the spirit or in the flesh, particularly when there's a conflict involved. When you do things in the flesh, and by the way, if you're a Christian, just because you're a Christian doesn't mean that you don't do things in the flesh, that you don't have a sinful nature. I realized that there is a small, minute, branch sliver of Christianity that thinks once you become a Christian, you don't sin anymore! But you still have a sinful nature. So the idea is not to gratify the desires of the sinful nature, but to walk in the Spirit.

In Philippians 2:21, Paul is talking about Timothy, and he says you know I really don't have anybody else like Timothy, because everyone looks out for their own interests. 21:

²¹ For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

He's talking about people who are selfish. That's what it means to be in the flesh, it means to be selfish. The antidote to that is actually found a little earlier in the chapter in verses 3-5, and I'm going to read this out of the NIV 2011 version. When I read to you from my own Bible, I have NIV 84, but they revised it in 2011 with some more updates. Where the word man really would be man or woman, the 2011 revision makes it gender inclusive. A lot of people are up in arms about that. I think it's a good thing personally, it certainly is in keeping with the times. It takes the verse and puts it in a very interesting light. Here it is, this is how you do relationships in the Spirit:

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...

Let me just stop right there. Value others above yourselves. I'm looking around this room at some men who are absolutely giants in God's kingdom, because I have watched them live this way, putting others before self, really having the mindset of a servant:

... in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Now this is not saying that you don't need to take care of your finances and you don't need to take care of your own health, of course you do! But the idea is that the servant mindset is otherish. The selfish mindset is selfish. A little redundant, but anyways selfish versus otherish. But each of you to the interests of others. Then it ends this way:

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...

That word mindset is the change from the 84 NIV to the new one. In the 84, it says but also to the interests of others. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the mindset of Christ. Here's what it says in the NIV, your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. So in the NIV 84 it says attitude, synonym mindset. I like this word mindset a lot, because when you're making decisions about your priorities, what they are going to be, priorities always come out of a world view or a mindset. The problem for men is that we by nature tend to be more task oriented, and women by nature tend to be more relationship oriented. That doesn't mean that men are not relationship oriented, it's just that we tend to be more task oriented. That's the first priority. And women, that doesn't mean they aren't task oriented, it just means their first priority tends to be relationships. These are generalizations. I realize 20% of the time it could be the other way around, but if you can't talk in generalizations, you can't communicate! The reason we use generalizations is because they are generally true! Men are generally task oriented and women are generally relationship oriented. You might be more relationship oriented. That's okay! The point is that most men are more task oriented and in the pursuit of a good life because of that, they tend to leave a trail of broken relationships.

Met a guy, I'll call him Brian. He wanted to provide for his family. All the right motifs, good heart. So he decided to start his own trucking company. One truck, short hauls around town. That was the means he had in mind. The end he had in mind was to build a better life for his family, his wife, his infant son. He had just had a baby, Shaun. The means that he had in mind was to build this business. So he threw himself into it. He did great work, so he got more and more customers, and eventually he was leaving before the sun came up and getting home after dark every day. One night he came home and his wife met him at the screen door. She said that when she had been putting their 5 year old son Shaun to bed that night, he said, "Mommy, where does Daddy live?" He laughed at first, thought it was cute. Then he realized oh my gosh, what have I done? He realized he had gotten the ends and the means mixed up! The ends had been to build a better life for his family, the means was going to be his business, but because he's task oriented more than relationship oriented, he got enthralled, intoxicated, by doing the task, doing the work. Eventually, the work became the ends, and the family became the means. He got them mixed up. That's why it's important to have this mindset of Christ Jesus, because the right mindset does lead to the right priorities. But you have to be vigilant about this all the time because of the culture. We say to the culture, all of us, Christians and non-Christians, that what's really important to us are the relationships. The culture says back to us what's really important to you is money, possessions, accomplishments, title. Why this is important, to have the mindset and priorities of a disciple is because of the Big Idea, if you don't have enough time for your family or your other relationships, you can be 100% certain that you're not following God's will for your life! And that could be extended family as well! Some of us don't have great relationships with some members of our extended families. Some of us haven't even reached out to certain members of our extended families. Probably for good reasons, but that doesn't make it right.

Practical ideas for healthy relationships

Finally, practical ideas for healthy relationships. How are you behind closed doors? When you go home and you pull up the drawbridge on your private castle, what kind of a man are you behind closed doors? I'll tell you what kind of a man I was early with young kids. I was an irritable man, I was an angry man. I came into my marriage angry, and it took a long time to undo that anger, to get it to be a normal person's anger. I can remember pleading with God, crying to God for help. As a result, by Sunday night, I was so ready to be back at work. By Sunday night, I was so grumpy that my wife said why don't you move the TV into the bedroom and just stay in the bedroom on Sunday evenings. That's pretty bad! So

that's how I was. Fortunately, I've been walking with the Lord for a long time, so it's not like that anymore. I'm being honest with you so that you can be honest with yourself. Are you a grumpy man looking for a place to grump? I just see a lot of grumpy guys out there, and I know what happens! I can tell when a guy's baseline is irritable and angry. You can tell if a guy has a lot of anger in him and I know that has to come out somewhere. I know where it comes out, it comes out at home. That's fine. Here's what you need to know. Dr. Henry Brandt said other people do not create your spirit, they only reveal it. The application is your wife doesn't create your spirit, she's just revealing it. So the first practical idea is to figure out if you're a grumpy guy and just confess that. Confession is good for the soul, they say. There is a firewall that the devil puts up between us and each of our sins. It's an opaque firewall, he doesn't want us to see our sinfulness. The greatest firewall of all is pride. I don't want to admit that I'm a grumpy person! I don't want to admit that it's really just revealing my spirit! That's pride! That's the firewall of pride. So the first practical thing to do is if you have this irritable grumpy thing going on, is to just admit it. And you know what, it's not just admit to yourself, it's admit to the person you're grumpy against. Confessing. You know what honey, we've been married for so many years and I just want to confess to you that I've been a grumpy person, and I'm so sorry. You don't have to make a bigger deal out of it than that, and say by telling you this I am asking God to help me get by this.

Second thing, give time to who time is due. Time is everything to a relationship! When I was a young businessman, I used to ask older guys questions. I was selling shares in my real estate deals, and the only people who had money were guys that were older. So I thought I would double dip and get some wisdom, so I began to ask all the guys that I was meeting with what their greatest regrets were. There were two regrets that showed up in virtually every man's list. First, he would say I was so busy taking care of my company that I never took care of my own personal finances. Now I'm 55 or whatever, and I need to do in 10 years what I should have done in 40. Then he would say the second thing is I was so busy with the work, the task, that I never really invested in my kids the way I wanted. Before I knew what happened, they were gone and it's too late. Frankly, sometimes they would say they really don't want to spend much time with me anymore. Give time to whom time is due. Time is everything in a relationship. Especially if you're a Christian guy, and you're trying to do good things, and you're at the church for a committee meeting on Tuesday and teaching a Bible Study on Wednesday, and on and on. You may be making a mistake. Or if you're golfing every time you get the opportunity and not taking your kids with you, or you're so into college sports that you're buried in ESPN all weekend and not investing in your kids, then you're not giving time to whom time is due. That's the second practical idea.

So get over grumpy, give time to whom time is due, and then a third one is an idea about how you can prioritize your time. I was just out of college and didn't know anyone in the business community. I didn't have parents, I didn't have a father who was a big guy in the business community, so I was just trying to break in wherever I could. I joined the Orlando Chamber of Commerce, and I went to a Chamber meeting. There was a bank president there, one of our big banks, and so I went up to introduce myself. I don't think he noticed that I noticed, but he looked at this wet behind the ears kid, and I noticed that he glanced around the room before he spoke to me, to see if there was anybody who was really important that he could have a word with. Only when he didn't see anybody that was important to him did he briefly speak to me, acknowledge my existence, or deign to notice I was there to meet him. But then later, when our business was doing good (because it was a good economy, I always thought it was because I was so smart), this same bank president want to be my pal. Same guy. He didn't remember me at all, but I remembered him, and I forgave him and he actually ended up becoming my banker, but that's another story. When this was happening, when this rise was happening and people started to notice our business, Patsy and I started getting all of these invitations to all of these dinners and charitable events and community chest things. It was just overwhelming! I'm thinking wow this is great,

we've arrived! Patsy pointed out, yeah we have arrived, but at the wrong place! So she, the proverbial woman of wisdom, got me thinking and I came up with an idea I'm going to pass on to you, because I think this can help you prioritize your time and bring you into the mindset of a disciple with the precision of a laser. I came up with this question: why not prioritize everything we do based on who's going to be crying at my funeral? Why don't I prioritize everything I do based on who's going to be crying at my funeral?

You've been to funerals. Have you ever noticed that at funerals, there's a pecking order in the seating? Up in the front row is the family and they are all crying their eyes out... well, hopefully! Then you get a little bit further back and you get to the medium friends, and then you get all the way to the back. If you're just an acquaintance of someone who has just passed away, where do you go? You don't go to the front or even the middle, you go the back, because you barely know the person, but you cared about them and you wanted to honor them. Prioritize everything you do based on who's going to be crying at your funeral. Why give the best of your time to people that are going to drop you like a hot potato if you don't perform? Why give your time to people who don't love you at the expense of those who do? The Big Idea today, if you don't have enough time for your family, or if you're not married, for your important relationships, you can be 100% certain that you are not following God's will for your life, because Jesus puts the premium on relationships. So let's pray about this.

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father, thank you so much for your word just making it so clear that we can be selfish or otherish, we can do our relationships and have them broken or do them in the Spirit and have them be healthy. Lord, I pray that over the coming weeks, too, that as we look at wives and children and friends that you help each of us to just think through how we can have the kinds of relationships that honor you but also bring joy and peace, not only to us but to them. We pray now for the discussion that we'll be doing, that you'll just help us sort through the issues of the day, in Jesus' name, amen!