

# How God Makes Men: The Principle of Success that Matters

Unedited Transcript

*Matthew 6:33, John 10:10, 14:27, 16:33, Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 4:11-12, 4:7*

Good morning, men! Welcome to Man in the Mirror's Men's Bible Study, where we always have room for one more! Let's begin by doing a shout out this morning. We have a new group that has begun meeting at Melbourne United Methodist Church of Melbourne, FL. Five men meeting weekly Wednesdays at 7:00 pm using the video Bible Studies along with us. Kenneth Clift is the leader, and I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm, rousing welcome to this new group to the Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us!

The series we're in is called *How God Makes Men*. This is the tenth and final instalment of this series, and so it seemed appropriate to finish the series up on the principle of success that matters. One day I was on an airplane, talking with one of the flight attendants, and when she found out I work with men as a vocation, she wanted to visit. She said, I don't understand my husband. I wanted to say I doubt I will be able to help you with that, but I went ahead and continued to listen. She said he will work for months on end, leaving at 4:00 am and not get home until after 6:00 pm. This can go on for months, and he'll be very animated. Then suddenly it's like someone flipped a switch, and he becomes despondent. He'll mope around the house for another few months. I asked him what is it that you want? What is the problem? And he cannot give me an answer. She said these cycles are very predictable, I can chart them on paper, but I just don't know how to help him. He has the job he always wanted, loves his work when he loves it. We have a beautiful home and two lovely children. What is it that he wants? What is his problem? It begs a very interesting question; how is it that a man can get exactly what he wants and still not be happy? The problem, the way I would describe, is he has a disease we could call success sickness. I know about this disease because I certainly had a bad case of it. Success sickness is the disease of always wanting more but then never being happy when you get it. In the work that we do at Man in the Mirror, sometimes men are not meeting their goals and that's what makes them unhappy. But a far more common situation is for men to actually meet their goals, but for whatever reason it really doesn't satisfy them. We all know that failure means to not get what you want, but another way of defining failure might be to say that failure means to succeed in a way that doesn't really matter. So today I want to talk to you about this success that matters.

## **What Keeps Men from Finding Success that Matters?**

What keeps men from finding success that matters? I have worked, as most of you know, with men for three decades. I have met with many of you in one on one meetings, I have met literally with thousands of men in one on one meetings. I enjoy doing that, I've seen many of you over at the restaurants here after the Bible Study. But whether it's around the country or here in town, I love meeting you guys and hearing your stories. Just as an aside, I love meeting guys and getting to know them, but when you get to know a guy, you get to know him up to a certain point and you love him. But then you get to know him a little more and you wish you didn't know him. You know what I'm saying? Just a little joke. A little true joke. But when meeting with guys, and listening to men try to articulate what's holding them back

from success that matters, they invariably mention one or more of seven symptoms, seven inner aches and pains. We did a whole series on this, I wrote a book on this called *Man Alive*.

Number one, a man will say I just feel like I'm in this all alone. He'll say, I don't feel like God cares about me personally. Not really. Number three, I don't feel like my life has purpose, it feels random. Four, I have these destructive behaviors that keep dragging me back down. Number five, my soul feels dry. Number six, my most important relationships, they're not healthy, not really. Number seven, I really don't feel like I'm doing anything that will make a difference and leave the world a better place. Can you relate to any of these inner aches and pains?

So how do we take those inner aches and pains and turn them into a success that really matters? First, let's talk about how we get this success sickness and what's holding us back from finding this, from solving these problems. I have made two profound errors in my life that I think many other men have also made that have kept me from finding a success that matters. Not necessarily from finding success, but finding a success that matters. The first was that money would solve my problems and success would make me happy. That thought was something I began to develop even in high school! Money will solve my problems and success will make me happy, and I made that into a world view. That's how I saw the world! I thought if I could just get enough money and success, then that would solve all of my problems! And that's how I caught success sickness. In my case, I was fortunate. It was a good economy and all of my dreams came true. I thought it was because I was so smart, but of course it turned out that it wasn't. But because of a good economy and hard work, I got everything I ever wanted, and I was miserable. I hated my life! I knew some of you back then and I could tell what you were thinking! Wow! Cool man! God's on his side! I wanted to say you're crazy! I hate my life! You have no idea what you're talking about! I had everything I ever wanted and I hate my life. Some of you know what I'm talking about.

The second error that I made; after I became Christian because of the misery of success that didn't matter, I still wanted to have the best of both worlds. Wanting all the best of what Jesus Christ had to offer but without abandoning all of the abundance and material possessions of the world. I was a divided man, trying to have my cake and eat it, too. The Bible talks about this in Romans 1, they exchange the truth of God for a lie and they exchange the glory of God for an idol. Galatians 5, a little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough. That was my life. At the root of every single idol, every single lie, is unbelief. It's not believing that Jesus Christ alone is enough to make us happy! If you have not concluded that Jesus Christ and nothing else is enough to satisfy the deepest longings of your heart, then guess what? You believe a lie, according to the Bible, or you've made an idol. This is a powerful lie, that Jesus Christ is not enough to make you happy, and that's what keeps men from finding success that matters.

Let's flip this. You've heard me say this before, so this is a pop quiz; what is the highest honor to which a man can aspire? Of all the things that you could possibly want to be in the world as a Christian, what is the highest possible honor to which you could aspire? To be a disciple of Jesus Christ! To be a disciple of Jesus is absolutely the highest honor to which a man can aspire! When Jesus called men to come and follow him and be with him, he called them to be what? Disciples! It's the highest honor that you can have as a man. Because this is a disciple making ministry, it would only make sense that the Big Idea for this session would be this: **Success that matters is to be a disciple: called to live "in" Christ, equipped to live "like" Christ, sent to live "for" Christ.** Every aspect of your life can be wrapped up in this called, equipped, sent idea. Called to live in Christ; that means called to be born again, called to salvation, called to have repentance and faith and receive the gift of eternal life. Then called to live in Christ to

abide in him. We talked about the principle of abiding in this series that we did. Equipped to live like Christ, this is the teaching, this is the growth, and this is the transformation that takes place. And then sent to live for Christ. This is the neighbor love part of it, this is the bearing much fruit part of it, the fruit of the Spirit part of it. This is good deeds and service, it is to my father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. Success that matters is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Why is there so much confusion about this? Because there are so many different ways of taking the Bible and making it say what you want it to say. There is, for example, an entire strand of Christianity that is ascetic, that basically teaches to completely withdraw and disengage from the world. Vows of poverty, and other such things. This is more around the world than in the United States. The flipside of that is this idea, this taking the Bible and making it say God loves you so much that all he wants is for you to be happy, healthy and wealthy. Happy, happy, happy! Healthy, healthy, healthy! Wealthy, wealthy, wealthy! Because people want to hear that, there are people willing to tell you that, that it's the essence of Christianity. I'm here to tell you that's exchanging the truth of God for a lie.

### **What does Christianity Teach?**

Let's move on to clarify this confusion and talk about what does Christianity actually teach about success that matters? John 10:10, prosperity gospel, this would be one of the foundational ideas that leads to a twist. Jesus is speaking and he says:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

This is the abundant life. Does Jesus promise an abundant life? Absolutely! When you become a Christian, you tap into an abundant life that Jesus promises. What is that abundant life? And by the way, in an allergic reaction to bad theology, let's not throw the baby out with the bath water. This is the baby, the abundant life is yours if you are in Christ, but what does that entail? It does not necessarily entail a material abundance. Jesus said you will always have the poor with you, he had a special place in his heart for the poor, so it couldn't possibly mean a material abundance necessarily, but do you know Christians who have material abundance? Absolutely! Is that part of John 10:10? Absolutely! Do you know Christians who have an abundance who also have problems? Of course you do! Do you know Christians who have a material abundance and don't have problems? I've often said that I believe the poor have an advantage over the rich, because they can still cling to the illusion that money will still solve their problems. Even though we have the promise of abundance, we also are told by Jesus that we will have hardships; in this world you will have trouble, John 16:33. Matthew 6:33, in this world you will have trouble, but take heart for I have overcome the world. But in this world, you will have trouble. Acts 14:22, it is through many hardships that we must enter the kingdom of God. Hardships and tribulations are very much also a part of this.

Turn to Luke 6:47 with me. This is the story about building on the rock, or building on the sand. The reason I want you to see this is that this is... let's call it a proof text for calling, equipping, and sending. Jesus said go and make disciples, he called men to be his disciples, and in verse 47 he says:

I will show you what they are like.

Calling, you see it? I will show you what he is like that comes to me. I call men to be with me, to live in me, hears my words, equipping men to be like me, and puts them into practice, sending men to live for

me. You see it? It's all through the Bible. You can find it or part of it on every page, but Jesus tells us, he goes on from there:

They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

Turn with me now to Philippians 4 and let's look at Paul's understanding of success that matters given all of the things then that we've talked about. Verse 11. Paul says this, he's concluding a little story here:

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Why? Because I am his disciple. That's what success that matters is all about, it's getting to this contentment. Jesus said my peace I leave with you, not as the world gives do I give. And then this contentment. The Big Idea today, **Success that matters is to be a disciple: called to live "in" Christ, equipped to live "like" Christ, sent to live "for" Christ.** That's what Paul understood, he understood that success that matters is the result, the overflow of being a disciple of Jesus.

### **Steps to Find Success that Matters**

Now, a couple of steps to find success that matters. We always want to make sure that we're doing application oriented Bible Study, giving you news that you can use. It's 9:00 am, the phone is ringing, the customers are complaining, how do you take this and apply it there? So what? Success that matters is to be a disciple? So what? Maybe it's 6:00 pm and you get home. The house is chaos and your wife if you have one is pulling her hair out. How does this relate to that? I don't know if it does or not... Let me tell you, it certainly does! It is good to remember what it says in Psalm 84:10, better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere! To be his disciple, better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere! I like to say that my worst day with Jesus has been infinitely better than my best day without him! Because of all the errors that I made and continue to make even to this day! Yeah, sure! I'm sinning every day! But I understand how to find success that matters. I understand how to get rid of the lie, get rid of the idol through repentance and faith, and the main step to success that matters is to repetitively, every day come humbly to the foot of the cross in repentance and faith and answer this call to live in Christ. That's the starting point! Some of you may have never taken that first step. In other words, the starting point for you to be called to live in Christ, to become a disciple, the starting point for you is to say you know what? I realize that I have had the same things keeping me from finding success that really matters as that guy up there has been talking about. Or it triggered some other reason that's kept you from finding a success that really matters. The big step for you is to say Jesus I have made a grave mistake. I have been seeking success in all the wrong places. I now understand that you have so ordered your creation that I will never be able to find the happiness that I seek in any worldly pursuit apart from you. It finally clicks, I get it! Success that matters is to become your disciple. You're ready to take that first step, and so when we close in prayer in a moment, if you have not given your life yet to Jesus or started a personal relationship with Jesus, however you may say it, I would like to give you that opportunity this morning. To invite Jesus to come into your life! Everything we've been talking about

this morning, success that matters, starts with that decision that you have to make, to give your life to Jesus. That's the most important part, whether for the first time, or daily repetition, it's to come humbly before the foot of the cross and give your life to Jesus, and to do so every day. That's what it means to be called to live in Christ.

Then equipped. You're here, that's great! Then sent to go and make disciples and do other service, these are the other steps. On your handout today in some sense, everything that we've talked about, all these other principles in this series are steps to success that matters. So, I listed them out here along with the Big Ideas. You can look at them later. My favorite story in the whole world, I haven't told it here in a long time, but I'm going to tell it again as we close. There was an elementary school class that went on a field trip to the studio of a famous sculptor. As they walked through the door, each of the children shrank back because there in the door meeting them was this huge ferocious sculpture of a lion. One of the little kids went over to the sculptor and asked hey mister! How were you able to make such a realistic looking lion? He said son it was easy. I started with a large block of granite and then I chipped away everything that didn't look like a lion. That's how we find success that matters! You and I are hard as rock, like a big block of granite. Ask your wife. To find success that matters is to bring ourselves into the real presence of God and then invite the Holy Spirit to chip away anything that doesn't look like a disciple of Jesus. Let us pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Dearest Father, thank you for this idea of discipleship, that we can follow you, that you call us to live in you, equip us to live like you, and send us to live for you. What a blessing that is to each and every one of us! The highest honor to which we can aspire! Lord, for those of us who are at different points along the pilgrimage and already in the deal, I pray that you help us think about how you want us to respond, how you want to help us to present ourselves to you, to chip away what doesn't look like a disciple of Jesus. Then, if you're a man who is very interested in Christianity, you're seeking, wanting to know more about it, but you've never really taken that step of asking Jesus to come into your life by faith, I'd like to give you that opportunity this morning. Jesus said in Revelations 3:20 I stand at the door and knock. If anyone will open the door, I will come in to him. He wants to be your savior and Lord, so if you would like to take that first step and begin the Christian journey and you've never done that before, let me invite you to pray this prayer silently to yourself after me:

Lord Jesus, I need you. I do open the door of my life and I do invite you to come into me not really fully understanding what that even means, but I do know that I have faith in you. I have faith to believe that you died for my sins and that you, because of that, want to give me eternal life which I now receive. I ask you to forgive all of my sins and to make me the kind of man that you want me to be and I now invite you to help me to become this disciple that we've been talking about this morning so that I may find a success that really matters. I make this prayer in the name of Jesus, amen!