

# The Battle for Men's Souls

*John 10:10, Matthew 28:18-20*

Good morning, men. Win the man, win the family. Who said that? Satan said that. Maybe I said it too, but it seems like he said it first and maybe he said it a little bit louder.

This morning I want us to talk about the battle for men's souls which we do from time to time and take stock, take a little update. Here is what needs to be said for the battle for men's souls.

We want to do a shout out to two new groups. The first one was started by Donald Kennard at East Hill Church in Gresham, Oregon. They call their group Momentum. They just finished three years of Men's Fraternity and are ready for something new so they will be joining us for the video Bible study. We welcome you men.

Pastor Bruce Ontonagon, Michigan. To the men of Ontonagon United Methodist Church in Michigan we welcome you. This is the first start of their men's ministry in their church and now they will become part of the Man in the Mirror Bible study online. Join me in giving them a big shout out. One, two, three, hoorah! Glad to have you men with us.

## THE "MAN PROBLEM"

The Battle for Men's Souls. The first thing I want us to take a look at is the men problem. We have an urgent men problem. This slide talks about for every ten men in the average United States church...

- 9 will have kids who leave the church
- 8 will not find their jobs satisfying
- 6 will pay monthly minimum on credit cards
- 5 have a major problem with pornography
- 4 will get divorced affecting 1,000,000 children each year
- Only 1 will have a biblical worldview
- All 10 will struggle to balance family & work

This men problem has become a crisis that is out of control. There are so many ways to illustrate it, but I like to watch American Idol. I don't know why I missed it the first seven or eight seasons. I just love seeing young people aspiring in their different talents and so forth. The dreams and the back stories are always so interesting.

About three years ago there was a young man named Adam Lambert, and after the show he came out that he was openly gay. This year it is interesting because in the auditions they had several openly gay young men. I can't remember if there were women who were lesbians as well. There were young men openly gay and promoting it, and one who was a cross dresser who made it in the final forty.

I was thinking how quickly this conversation has shifted. Homosexuality is no different than adultery or any kind of illicit sex, but it is considered to be sinful behavior in the Bible. Those people who have a predisposition to have same sex attraction are called upon to restrain

themselves just as those of us, the 97% of us who do not have a same sex attraction who, have an opposite sex attraction are called upon to restrain ourselves from immoral and illicit sexual behavior. That is the backdrop of it.

Now this whole thing has shifted. In I saw in USA Today in the upper left hand corner said "President Pressures Supreme Court to Lift Ban on Gay Marriage." I am not picking on gays at all. I am certainly not a basher of anybody. But I am just using one illustration in the culture wars how quickly this is changing and how much there is a battle for men's souls.

It said something about pressuring the court about lifting the ban. It was the Supreme Court of California. Maybe it was overstated in the headlines, but nevertheless we have the president of the United States openly pushing for a redefinition of the American family. I posted something and someone wrote me back and said that is the culture war. We should be focused on building the kingdom of God. I wrote back and said I appreciate what you are saying but it is never an either/or, it is always a both/and because we are called to build the kingdom and tend the culture. We do have a responsibility in both areas.

The point is we have this staggering men problem that has arisen and it is virtually out of control. We now have a whole generation of man-children growing up. As Tony Evans said to our group, the single women of America are raising their boys to be women. Tom Skinner, my good friend taught me many years ago that mothers of young men in urban inner-city New Jersey, those young men learned how to urinate sitting on the toilet because that is all they had seen. There are many other kinds of illustrations like this, but the point is we have this incredible men problem and the collateral damage to this is absolutely staggering.

41% of all births in the United States today are to unwed mothers which means that there are 41% of men donating their sperm to get young women pregnant and then are not being responsible. Actually a lot of them are responsible because one of the new values is cohabitation. We don't need to be married. Only 26% of young people under the age of 30 are actually married. That means 3 out of 4 men who are 30 years of age are not married. Hey, men, get a woman, get hitched, have a family, grow up, be a man. But here is the problem. We have not done our job. We have not done what Jesus Christ has asked us to do. If you will, look with me at John 10:10. Let's just ask the question, what's going on here? Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."

This is the abundant life, but here is what happened. This whole thing got turned around and now what people think, having an abundant life means is being happy, healthy and wealthy and insulating ourselves from the problems of other people.

We have been talking for the last couple of weeks in this Bible study about what the ethos of being a Christian and disciple is, and it is to be a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In a culture that is absorbed, and I am talking about a Christian culture that is absorbed in personal fulfillment and being all God created me to be, and carried to an extreme, and I think those things are important but when they are carried to an extremely we become very self-indulgent and we end up asking the question, what do I want? We look for churches asking us

what do I want to be, and help me be all I was created to be instead of asking, what does the master need?

We have this incredible men problem because Satan himself has said win the man, win the family. His purpose is to steal and to kill and to destroy and I am here to tell you as one who works in this every day, Satan has plundered our nation. He has taken our men hostage. They are in captivity. They have done all the things that they should not do. They are responsible for these decisions. They are responsible for their own decisions. Every man is responsible for his own life. We are not communists. Every man is responsible for his own life, but we created a Christian culture that basically encourages men to exchange the truth of God for lies and the glory of God for idols.

This whole idea of what is in it for me? We have a whole consumer church movement now. I watched one church at my gym. I don't hear it, I just see it on the screen but they have the closed captioning and the message every week is the same. God loves you and He wants you to be rich, happy, and if you have problems, that is not your fault. This is that kind of consumer messaging.

Here is the bottom line. The inescapable conclusion is men have become one of the largest neglected people groups. We raise money for Man in the Mirror. We have major donors and monthly donors and if you are not one, I would encourage you to consider it. One day one of the major donors called me on the phone. He has been a friend long before I was in ministry and we were friends in business. He started donating \$10,000 a year to the ministry. It is almost like for him a minor investment, if you would. He calls me on the phone one day because he is just that kind of guy – very candid and frank.

He said, "Pat, I just wanted to let you know I will not be able to support your ministry anymore." I said, "Okay, Paul." This is Paul Kuck who founded Regal Marine. I said, "That is fine, but tell me why." If you knew Paul you know this is how he is. "My passion is for prison ministry and teenage crisis pregnancy centers."

I laughed and said, "Paul that is great. We need many more prison ministries and many more teenage crisis pregnancy centers, but Paul, why do you think young men end up in prison?" 85% of men in prison have no father figure. 90% of inmates are men. "How do you think young men end up in prison? Why do you think one man's teenage son will hop in to bed with another man's teenage daughter and make a baby so they need a teenage crisis pregnancy center?" He said, "Ah, I see your point."

I said, "By all means keep supporting them, but someone has to go back upstream to the headwaters to where these problems start. Systemic problems require systemic solutions. Somebody has to deal with the reason why the men are in prison in the first place. Someone has to deal with the reason they are in bed together in the first place. He said, "Okay, I'll keep supporting your ministry."

Turn with me to Matthew 28:18. I realized that in this audience there are a number of you, maybe most of you who can actually repeat this from memory. This is the great commission. These are the marching orders for the church of Jesus Christ. Who is the church of Jesus Christ? Say, "I am." Say, "We are." We are the church of Christ. These are the marching orders for us.

These are the marching orders for me. These are the last or near last words of Jesus and you know that when somebody's getting ready to make their exit they want to say the most important thing. These are very important words indeed. More billions of people and dollars have been mobilized by this single speech than any other speech that has been given in the history of the world. As we approach these words, let's not take them lightly. This is what Jesus said. These are His marching orders. They have never been rescinded, amended or altered. They still stand today. This is the mission of the church of Jesus Christ.

He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." That is the Great Commission and then there is a promise. "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

As we go He promises that He will be with us. But this is the marching order. If this is the most important thing that Jesus wanted to say to us, let me ask you a question. Do you not think that a failure to make disciples of men is a moral failure? That it is an issue of right and wrong when we do not make disciples?

When my dad walked into his church there were no men in that church who knowing what needed to be done, saw that young father, that rookie husband with four little kids, and knowing what needed to be done, took action. The result is we are over 85 years down the road from when my grandfather deserted my dad's family and when he was still figuring out what to do right, and we still don't have it right, because the vision of his church was to put him to work, not to disciple him. So he had to guess at how to be a dad and a husband. He did a pretty good job on guessing how to be a godly husband. He had a beautiful 56 year marriage but it didn't work out at all in terms of the boys. You've heard me tell this story. I quit high school in the middle of my senior year. My next brother follows in my footsteps, and he dies of a heroin overdose. My next brother never had a job for more than six months until he was 50 years of age. My youngest brother is a recovering drug addict and alcoholic. He is divorced and a hermit. He just never saw it coming.

There is a battle raging and not in culture – in the church, among us. At your tables there is a battle raging. You have an opponent. He is a terrorist, and he wants you because he knows if he can win you he can throw your family into as much turmoil as he has thrown mine. Or maybe your family is already in that much turmoil, and he will prevent you from being a cycle breaker.

These are the marching orders. I am just here to say until you do that forget all of the rest of the ministry stuff. Yeah. Let me tell you. Clean water in Africa is extremely important. But if we don't start focusing more of our resources on discipling men, there is not going to be any money to send people to make clean water in Africa. It is a system. It is all tied together.

By the way, I didn't plan on saying any of this in this talk today. Here is the big idea for the day. **Anything less than a plan to disciple every willing man is a catastrophic moral failure.** Anything less than a plan for every church to disciple every willing man, and a plan for you to disciple every willing man, is a moral failure of catastrophic and epic proportion.

The problem is it could have been written in the past tense. It is already a catastrophic failure, but that is the beautiful thing about Christianity. It is the religion of hope. It is the religion of

another chance. It is the religion of grace. It is the only hope of the world. Jesus Christ in a man's life is the only hope that he would have to win the battle for his soul.

Hugh Maclellan who is one of America's leading Christian philanthropists – half a billion dollars in a big fund. He told me many years ago, and I confirmed with him yesterday with permission to continue to use this. This is a man who sends tens of millions of dollars all around the world, and I'm quoting, said, "The greatest need we have in America is to reach our men." The greatest need, he says. Are you sure you want to say the greatest need, I said. He said absolutely, that is the greatest need we have in America to reach our men. There are hopeful signs, because anytime somebody thinks they have a unique message from God, they don't. Whenever God is getting ready to do something He is going to put that into the minds of thousands and tens of thousands of his children, so it is very encouraging you are hearing more and more about this.

In fact, I was doing an interview on one of my books and I was talking to Michael Harrington, who runs Salem Radio News for Salem Broadcasting. There are 2000 radio stations around the country, the biggest of its kind. It is the 800 lb gorilla in the Christian Broadcasting business and for 25 years he has been running Salem Radio News. He said that for 25 years he has been asking Christian leaders on a regular basis, what are the issues on your mind? Over the last couple of years it is very clear that men in the church has become a top five issue in the Christian church.

That should be very encouraging. I know many of you have been talking to me recently about the stirring in your heart to do something great for God in the area of discipling men.

The big idea, **anything less than the plan to disciple every willing man is a catastrophic moral failure.** We are letting down our Lord. If we had been asking over the last ten years, what does the Master need, instead of what do I want, there would have been a lot more people responding to this crisis.

## **THE "CHURCH PROBLEM"**

We do have an urgent men problem. But we have an urgent men problem that is closely connected to the fact we also have an urgent church problem. That is us. Don't think institution church – go ahead and think that, as long as you see yourself inside it.

I want to apologize in advance if your church is doing a good job discipling men. There are lots of churches doing an effective job discipling men. My apologies to you if that is your church. We do need, however to reserve the right to critique ourselves if we are going to be more effective. Any businessman knows this. It has been well-said, the church has many critics but no rivals.

The church has many problems but we are not going to solve this problem unless the church of Jesus Christ is involved in solving the problem. We are not going to say the church has failed so we are going to get the government to do it. But the reality is the vast majority of churches have no plan to disciple their men.

How could this be? How could this happen? What is going on? The reason that the church is not doing this is because we the church have a deeply flawed understanding of the priority of

making disciples in general and men in particular. We have a deeply flawed understanding of the priority that Jesus puts on making disciples.

Second, we have a deeply flawed understanding of what a disciple is. Very few people of my experience cannot tell me what a disciple is in a meaningful way. We have our definition here because a) it is biblical, and b) it is actionable. To review that disciple definition with you, a disciple is called to live in Christ, equipped to live like Christ, sent to live for Christ. Called, equipped, sent. Calling is the salvation peace; calling people to be born again. Equipping is spiritual transformation, adult learning classes, ongoing spiritual transformation. And sent to live for Christ is all the things involved in abiding in Christ, neighbor-love, bearing much fruit and serving the Lord.

Most churches could not tell you what a disciple is except to do the work of the church. If someone really loves God they will really serve the Lord. That is true in as far as it goes, but there is so much more. It is such a rich concept.

The church has a deeply flawed understanding of the priority of making disciples and of what a disciple is. Most churches have a deeply flawed understanding of how effective they actually are. Every church is doing so many things 90% right. With just a little tweaking and adjusting of the dials, getting some of the static out of the line. This is not some sort of project where we need to build a manufacturing plant from the ground up. It is in place. It has a budget, it has the right doctrine, usually, and it has the structure, it has management. It has product. It has people. With just a little bit of tweaking most churches can get right at it. That is what happens.

In our No Man Left Behind model we have now been trained thousands of leaders and churches. The churches that actually use the model have on average a 48% increase of men attending their churches in 2.5 years. Can you believe that?

You probably would say I can't believe that, so we sent it to some PhD's in Houston and said look at this data and tell us if we are crazy. They said you are crazy but the data is right. All we are doing in this NMLB model is systematizing what churches are already doing and maybe adding a few things. A 50% increase in the number of men attending your church in 2.5 years on average.

That's not all. 84% increase in the number of men actually involved in discipleship – almost doubling the amount of men in discipleship, which is why we are all ramped up for hiring 330 area directors, because we had these results and sat on these results for a few years until Bruce Wilkinson asked, do you think God wants to disciple men? We said yes. Why are you sitting on this? That is why we are trying to proliferate this model to as many churches as possible. Most churches are already doing a lot of things right and they don't even understand.

Finally, most churches have a deeply flawed understanding of how to sustain something they started. Did you know that 2/3 of all organization initiatives fail outright? That doesn't make a difference for profit, non-profit, public or private. It is almost like an iron law. There are some things that some successful initiatives embrace that some do not embrace. Most churches have a deeply flawed understanding of that which makes sense. They are doing church. They are doing spiritual things, counseling, marriages, baptisms, burials. But that doesn't mean you can't

look to outside experts to help you figure out what are the effective concepts that need to be applied.

The vast majority of churches have no plan and a deeply flawed understanding in many areas. We are already out of time. I am barely getting started here. Let me breeze through the rest of it. Why would God give any of us at the Bible study or any church or group more men if they had not been faithful to disciple the men they already have? Think about it. As a manager of a business if you have an ineffective group of people who are not doing an effective job with the work they do have, are you going to give them more work?

The big idea today is **anything less than a plan to disciple any willing man is a catastrophic moral failure**. Finally, we have talked about the men problem, the church problem; let's just say a word about leaving no man left behind.

## **NO MAN LEFT BEHIND**

This may or may not be your hot button – men's discipleship. I don't care. Make it one. If your calling is honestly, truly and deeply to teenage crisis pregnancy centers and that is where you want to devote your time and resources, do that. But think about the men who are involved in the lives of these pregnant teenage girls, how they got there and what you can do to be a part of that solution, and the ramifications. Every man deserves an opportunity to become the man God created him to be.

I can tell you that discipling men is not a top priority in any denomination in the United States based on the actual allocation of the financial and intellectual resources. Not one denomination has made men's discipleship a top priority. I think that is going to change. As of right now if you look at how the budget and brains are allocated, not one. If every man deserves the opportunity to become a disciple of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and if it is a moral failure not to do it, but we are not allocating financial and intellectual resources to do it, how is it going to happen?

Here is what I have discovered. God doesn't tell me what He is going to do. He just tells me what He wants me to do. I am not telling you what to do. But is God telling you to do something? He may tell you to do something that fails. You realize that. You watched The Bible you have watched how hard it was. 400 years of slavery in Egypt for the promised people.

There is one men's ministry and it belongs to God. So we are all in this together. The big idea today is this. **Anything less than a plan to disciple every willing man is a catastrophic moral failure**. I say to our opponent, our foe, that thief who has plundered our men, and gutted the family and gutted the institution of marriage, we are not going to leave any man behind, so you need to get ready for the greatest battle you have ever fought. This is what we say to you: we will not surrender; we will not compromise; we will not give up; we will not be defeated. This is the battle for men's souls and we do not negotiate with terrorists. Let's pray.

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Our great God and Father, Lord I confess that the thing I was most concerned about this morning was not being seen as radical or a hothead, or overly enthusiastic and that I was more interested in being liked than being faithful. I thank You that You actually delivered a different message than I planned. I pray that You would help us win this battle for men's souls. I pray too,

because we talk different messages every week, and we don't have big long lists we give men to make You happy or avoid Your wrath. There is not really a list this morning, but I do pray Father that You would change some minds because we all do what we want to do. The things that we believe in are the things we do. Belief determines our behavior. I pray You would take this message and You would show each of us how and if You want us to respond. We ask this in Your Name, Jesus. Amen.