

# The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

## Time Management: Doing God's Will

Unedited Transcript

*John 15:8, Matthew 13:23, Colossians 4:5, Matthew 26:41, 2 Samuel 5:17-25, Proverbs 16:1-4*

Good morning, men! So when we were doing the videos of these campfires, I was off to the side and I sat my chair up on a slight hill. Fortunately the camera didn't get it, but I fell over sideways! So I put my chair back up, and would you believe fifteen minutes later I fell over again! Welcome! We're going to do a couple of shout outs to get started this morning. The first one goes to the St. Luke's United Methodist Church of Edmond, OK. 8 men who meet at the Coffee Commission on Fridays at 7:00am using the Video Bible Study. Led by Mike Wallace and we are looking for an Area Director for this region in Oklahoma. I wanted to just read something from them. He said we are a new satellite church, we want to increase our friendships and discipleship. Most of the new members like me are new to the thought of a men's group, all eager to grow in faith and so forth. Isn't that terrific?

Then second, we have Men's Monday Plan4it Service of Alexandria, VA. 20 men who have been meeting for 8 years at the church on Mondays at 7:00pm using the Video Bible Study. Led by Marco Johnson and we are looking for an Area Director for this region in Virginia. We want to welcome you, too, so would you join me in giving a very rousing, warm welcome to these men to the Man in the Mirror Bible Study? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you here!

We're going to be in the series The Man in the Mirror. This morning we're going to be talking about Time Management: Doing God's Will. Everybody wants to be more productive with their time and their lives. Certainly, I do. In fact, I would say if creativity is my drug, then productivity is my idol. I just love feeling productive! Everybody, you've got a handout. Pick it up and look at the blank side of it. Imagine that this represents the next 24 hours. How is it that you can... what you write on this over the next 24 hours, how can it be exactly what you'd like it to be, what you think God would like it to be? That's really what this message is about. You have this blank sheet of paper and you're going to fill it up today. How can you use your time most wisely to live out the will of God? We've talked about making decisions and we said the Big Idea there is that the goal is to bring my will into alignment with God's will. If you can make a decision that brings my will into alignment with God's will, that's a pretty good decision! Then we release that with some priorities, some rubrics around which we can organize our lives in our last session. We said that priorities help us to manage the pressures that would otherwise manage us. Now, we want to roll into implementing all this, how do we actually spend our time, how do we do that in the most effective way.

### **God wants us to be productive!**

First up, we want to be productive, but guess what? God wants us to be productive, too! A couple of verses, I mentioned last week John 15:8:

This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my what? Disciples!

This is a discipleship Bible Study. We are interested in helping men grow as disciples and disciplemakers, and one of the things that disciples do is they bear much fruit. Then, you should open to Matthew 13:23, and this is the fourth seed in the parable of the sower:

But what was sown on good soil is the man who hears the word, and understands it, and he produces a crop, thirty, sixty, a hundred times that which was sown.

Then if you would, you can write this down, Colossians 4:5:

Make the most of every opportunity.

2 Timothy 2:4:

A soldier does not get involved in civilian affairs.

Then there's the whole urgency thing, 1 Corinthians 7:29:

The time is short, and the parable about trimming your wicks because you don't know the day and the hour.

So God very much wants us to be productive, and there's this kind of urgency that there is to it. That's why we think about things like what's the purpose of our life? What is God's will? How do we make good decisions? Our callings, our gifts, our priorities... then, how we manage our time, because God has made us to want to be productive.

At this point, one thing we must expressly cover is that we're not talking about working for grace. We're not walking around with a little sign that says I will work for grace. This is not about works righteousness, but once we have Christ and once we understand the excellency of the Gospel and appreciate the mercy that's been extended to us day by day... I mean, is there anybody in this room who is so dull that at the end of any day, you would actually want what you deserved? When we grow in Christ in our spiritual maturity, we will want to do the things that he wants us to do, not because we're afraid he's going to spank us if we don't do it or that somebody is going to shame us because we didn't do it, but because we love him! It's easy to love somebody who loves you. He loves us so much, we appreciate that so much, and we want to do something to please him! We live to please him out of gratitude.

### **What holds us back?**

What's holding us back from this? Turn with me to Matthew 26:41. When we were talking about decisions, we went through this entire passage of Jesus in the garden, three times praying Lord if you're willing, please take away this suffering, yet not my will but your will be done. That's where we developed the Big Idea that the goal is to bring my will as Jesus did, into alignment with God's will, that's the goal, that's where we got that idea from, this passage surrounding verse 41. I want to just drill down on this one verse. Verse 41:

Sing and dance so that you will not fall into temptation. Eat, drink, be merry. Watch and pray. Watch, guard your heart, watch what's going on. And pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

Then, the spirit is willing, but the body is what? Weak! So what holds us back? The spirit is willing, the pneuma is willing, but the body, the sarx, the flesh is so stinking weak! Forget God's standards, I can't live up to my own standards! The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak so watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. Do you think that for one moment when Peter and the others fell asleep that they didn't care about what was going on? Just think, your best friend, your leader, the one person that has ever been able to help you in a significant way is suffering and in pain. You're going to be right there with him, you're going to be feeling that. So the spirit, Jesus knew this, he said the spirit is willing, it's your flesh, it's your body that's weak.

Now, what's holding us back, then, is this flesh that doesn't want to do what? Watch and pray. This is actually going to be a message about prayer and you may think it a bit odd that we're going to talk about prayer to resolve the issue of time management, but that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to figure out how to do God's will and manage our time with this principle of prayer. I realize it may be difficult to figure that out, but let me show you how that works.

### **Willing Spirits, Weak Bodies**

I'm going to show you for kinds of guys. The first guy, he has **no plan, and he has no prayer**, he doesn't pray about it so it's a little double meaning here. He has no plan and he doesn't pray. It doesn't even really deserve a lot of discussion here because there's nobody in this room that would be so stupid that you would not have a plan, nor would you pray. But anyway, there are people out there who have no plan and as a result have no prayer. Trust me, you know that.

Then the second guy, he's the guy that is a planner, but then he doesn't pray. He plans and he doesn't pray, **plan, no pray**. That's his motto. It's actually not a motto, he's just a secularist, he's in the world. This is the way the world is, they make plans, they go to (and I won't name names) the positive thinking types, if you will it, you believe it, and all those things. And look, there are a lot of really great principles in those seminars, but they all rely on you, and your weak body to pull it off, and that's why they're still in business and that's why you keep having to go back every two or three years for boosters, because it doesn't really work on the long term. It will work on the short term, for a while. It'll work 20 years, and then it will betray you, usually at the worst possible moment, after you have taken on a big mortgage, lot's of expenses... you know how that works.

Now to the ones I'm more familiar with. This was my credo after I became a Christian: **plan, then pray**. You see, I didn't have a blank sheet of paper when I came to God. I had a full sheet of paper. I knew exactly what I wanted to do with my life, so I had a plan and I wasn't looking for God's wisdom, I was looking for God's permission. I wanted him to approve my plan. So when I made an appointment with God... I'll just give you a story.

My background was real estate development, so I would have a piece of land tied up under a contingency contract, subject to getting the zoning approvals and so forth. Then, something would happen and it would be delayed, and now I've got quite a bit of money tied up in the project and the contract is supposed to close, and I need an extension from the seller or I'm going to lose all the money that I've put up, the architectural plans and the lawyers, the zoning people, and all that kind of stuff, the planners and so forth. I had made my plan and now I need to pray, because now it's not going the way I

want! I would go to God and I'm a salesman, I knew he was really busy, I didn't want to bother him. I knew he was busy with famines and floods and cancers and all kinds of problems around the world, isis now, all kinds of things going on with him so I didn't want to bother him. So I make my plan and I work it and if I need to I'll pray, so now I'll need to pray. I know that God's very busy with all these things, I'm a salesman, I use the alternate of choice close. I go to God and I say God I know you're very busy, but I have something very important I need to talk to you about. Would five o'clock this afternoon be better for you or how about 7:00 am in the morning? He would always say my calendar is pretty open, I can meet with you whenever you want. I would say good, I'll see you at seven in the morning then, because I need to get my presentation together. So I'd stay up all night and I would write my prospectus and then at 4:00 am it would dawn on me that God is very busy and I need to slap an executive summary on the front of this thing. One page that kind of just outlines what I'm looking for. Then I would meet with God at seven in the morning, and I'm caricaturing this but barely, and I would say God I know you're very busy, I don't want to bother you or take up too much of your time, but I've got this serious problem. I've got all this money tied up in here and I need to get the seller to give me an extension, and they're balking at that. If you will change the sellers mind, here's what I'll do, I will split the profits with you on this deal and we'll both be better off. What do you think? As I say, I'm caricaturing that, but barely! I saw prayer as a way to bargain with God. When I came to God, I didn't come as a sheep looking for the shepherd's guidance. I came because I knew what I wanted. I was not standing at a fork in the road, not knowing whether to go left or right, I know I which way I wanted to go, I wanted to go to the left. This is how, in our immaturity, it's okay, we're men who come as spiritual infants. Toddlers, then teenagers, rebellious. Eventually, we move on, it's okay, but now you know if this has been your modus operandi, now you can just see how foolish it sounds.

The fourth of these, my new credo, is **pray, then plan**. So in other words, before I would ever even think about doing a project, I'm going to bring that to God with a blank sheet of paper and say okay, what do you want me to do with my time? What decision do you want me to make? Lord, I will be as Mother Teresa said, a little pencil in your hands. Show me what to write. Even as I say that, waves of guilt come over me because I am a serial offender whose Father has to bail him out every day and whose brother has to pay his fine every day! So I don't even do this very well! Preparing this talk this week. I was half way done before I even thought about praying about what God might want me to say to you! Again! Violating my own principle! I have it written down! I have my own principles for this written down, it says first thing on my worksheet pray! Then it says last thing, pray!

When I do pray, it's interesting, though, I find that a breakthrough usually follows. You know what I'm saying? Turn with me to 2 Samuel 5:17. Here's the reason that sometimes I don't pray: because I've given a lot of talks before. I have experience. I don't need to pray, I already know what to do. I'm an expert at my job, some would say. About you, some would say. You're an expert, you know what you're doing, so you don't need to pray. The text we're going to look at now, I believe that the reason that the Holy Spirit preserved this story, the reason this text was brought into existence, is to speak to all of us who think we already know what we need to do, and therefore don't need to pray. There had been some things going on. The Philistines were occupying Israel. Verse 17:

When the Philistines had heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold (caves probably). Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; so David inquired of the Lord, "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?"

He's practicing pray, then plan.

The Lord answered him, "Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you."

So David went to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them.

So it happened exactly the way it should happen. Now watch this, in verse 22 it says:

Once more the Philistines came up and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim...

Was this the following year, when the time for fighting wars was good or was this a few years later? We don't know, but it says once more they came up. David was thinking I know what to do, I've fought them before, I beat them, I asked God what to do, he showed me what to do, so I know what to do. They have come again, I have this same problem again this year I had last year, I know what to do. But notice what David does, and David didn't always pray before he acted (not unlike you and me), but watch what David does:

... so David inquired of the Lord, and he answered (look what God does!), "Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army." So David did what the Lord commanded, and he struck down all the Philistines.

Same problem, different way of solving it and that! That! If you can remember this point here! We learn something from this text of scripture that we learn no other way, and that is every situation, no matter how many times you've seen it before, is worthy of asking God in prayer, what his will is, what you should do, how you should manage that time. The Big Idea today is this: **Move from "Plan, then pray" to "Pray, then plan."**

### **How can disciples get this right?**

Finally, how can disciples get this right? First and foremost, don't get this confused with works righteousness, that God wants us to be productive, and remember that prayer is a two way conversation. We could talk for days about prayer, couldn't we? But I think that one thing that the Lord would want all of us to remember this morning is that prayer is a two way conversation. How many of us think of prayer as a one way discourse? We pray and we don't hear a voice, although I happen to be one of those unusual people who have actually heard the voice of God. Some of you perhaps have, too, but that's very unusual and only happened a few times in my life. For the most part we pray, and then God communicates with us very clearly but not by voice. He communicates very clearly with us because you have somebody, an opponent, maybe a Philistine who's been coming against you, and you pray, you've asked God for help, to show you what to do, which way you should handle it? And suddenly what happens? They do a 180! And a year later, they're your best friend! How did that happen? Well, maybe not your best friend, but they do a 180 on you! You have had conflict in your marriage for years and years, and you have prayed, and you think God doesn't hear you. Then suddenly boom! Everything changes! That's the Holy Spirit! The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not even know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit intercedes for us with words so deep that groans cannot express! And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, who is interceding for the saints in accordance with God's will, Romans 8:26-27.

Or, we pray and we were absolutely sure we could never forgive that person or whatever it is. Or we could never get this task done, since we're talking about time management. Suddenly, boom! Everything changes! You change your mind! Suddenly you believe you could do what you thought you could never do before! That's the Holy Spirit! For it is God, Philippians 2:12-13, who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Or you're reading along in the word of God and you've read that passage dozens of times or maybe a few times, but on this day it's like you just got tazered! God's truth speaks to you! This happened to me, Psalm 15. Long story, too long for today, but I had a building, a problem, a major tenant moves out, can't make the payments on the building. The lender is livid about it and I'm livid with them about it because they wouldn't give me any grace on the thing, so I decided to go to war with them. I just couldn't get a piece, and I said Lord I need to hear from you. So I was praying after I put the plan in motion, so it was plan then pray then plan. In Psalm 15 it says he who keeps his oath even when it hurts, he who does these things will never be shaken. I said you know what? I gave my word and that's enough. So I raised my hands and the Holy Spirit changed my heart through the word.

Of course, there are other ways God will answer prayer: through circumstances, the counsel of friends and so forth. The Big Idea today is this, move from plan, then pray to pray, then plan. Pray about everything. Why? Because your spirit might be willing but your flesh, your body, is very weak, and God has given us prayer as a way to make sure at the end of the day, that you've spent your time wisely. By the way, when God answers your prayer, please, all of us, me too, let's be sure to say thank you Jesus for answering my prayer. A spirit of gratitude to go with these answers to prayer. Let's pray!

### **Closing Prayer**

Our dearest Father, we do come, gratefully to you today, and we all know that we will spend our time today in ways that hopefully will be honoring to you. We want to do that, Lord, we want to manage our time well, we want to do your will, so Lord give us this deep interest and desire to really pray about everything, as it says in the scriptures, so that we might actually do your will in our lives, be productive, and bear much fruit, and produce the crop you're looking for and make the most of every occasion. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen!