

The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

How Can a Man Change?

Unedited Transcript

Proverbs 19:27, Philippians 2:12-13

Good morning, men! Please open your Bibles to Galatians chapter 3. We will begin this morning by doing a shout out. Every week it seems we are able to welcome new groups to the Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study. All over the country, all over the world, and so today we want to welcome Iron on Iron of Faith Evangelical Free Church in Sparta, WI. 8 men who have been meeting at the church for 5 years on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Charlie Strickland and we are looking for a man to join our field staff in the Sparta, WI area! I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm shout out to these men at faith Iron on Iron? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we are really glad that you're here!

So this is the wrap up for the Man in the Mirror series. Subtitle, Solving the 24 Problems Men Face. The final problem that we'll look at is, "How can a man change?"

The Case for Daily Effort

We want to begin by looking at the case for daily effort. What is something that you really want to change? It might be one of the twenty-four problems that men face that we've been looking at. It might be relationships, the way you make decisions, manage your time, how you handle your money. The identity, will you pursue your identity. One of the emotions like pride, fear, anger that were mentioned in the video at the top. How does that happen?

You already know this, but it's not going to happen just because you really want it to happen. In fact, you also know that if the change that you want in your life would've happened, it would've already happened by now, unless you had some help from another source. I want us to look at Galatians, chapter 3, verses 1 to 3, to begin. Romans 9:16 says, "It does not depend on man's desire or effort, but in God's mercy," referring to salvation. But then, Paul writes, in Galatians about what happens after salvation: "You foolish Galatians. What has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive his spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish," and then this is the key, "after beginning with the spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" This word, "human effort" here is the Greek word sarx, S-A-R-X, which in the Bible is used to refer to "out of our own simple natures." Out of our own simple natures. Out of our flesh, out of our own human effort and desire, are we now trying to accomplish this Christian life.

In one sense, we see that the Bible speaks against trying to accomplish change out of our own effort. And yet, not much change is going to happen unless you put forth some effort, right? We also need to

understand that the Bible says other things about human effort. You might want to write down these verses if you want to check them out later. Jesus in Luke 13 verse 24 says, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not be able to." Romans 14:19: "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and individual edification." Ephesians chapter 4 verse 3: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace." Hebrews 4 verse 11: "Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest." Hebrews 12 verse 14: "Make every effort to live in peace with all men." Second Peter 1:5: "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith, goodness. And to goodness, knowledge."

We are commended to put in effort, human effort, not out of a simple nature, but as we are imbued with power from the Holy Spirit to take that spiritual power and then apply effort to make the changes in our lives. Our lives are really best understood as a daily, moment by moment journey that is requiring personal effort on our part to stay on track. There are many different types of analogies that you use, I use a ton of them, I noticed in the book I probably drove people crazy in the book, I used so many different analogies. Like a rechargeable battery and a treadmill, that you have to keep moving forward or you'll fall of the back, and all that. I think for the purposes of what we're doing today, an analogy that would be one I didn't use in the book, would be our physical bodies.

You know that we need food, we need water, or sustenance. Exercise and rest, of course, are good. We know that if we abuse our bodies, that they will continue to work for a long, long time. Then, one day, they'll just, break down and we will have put ourselves in a situation that it will take a long, long, long time to get them back to where they should have been all along. And so, the idea here is just making a case for daily effort. Proper nutrition every day is very important. Proper exercise every day, is very important. Emotional health, having a social life so that we have the stability that comes from friendships. All of these things are so important. If we don't, we will end up at least in the area of food, suffering from malnutrition, or even in the area of relationship, suffering from malnutrition. You and I both know that we can also suffer from spiritual malnutrition.

Turn with me if you would to Philippians chapter 2, verse 13. Philippians chapter 2, look at verse 12 and 13. We put forth effort, but we put forth effort in this way. Verse 12: "Therefore my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence," watch this. "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Put forth some effort. Do the work. This is what Jerry Bridges writes: "Man's part is to work but to do so in reliance upon God and the Holy Spirit to enable him to work." God's work does not make our work unnecessary, but makes it effective, you see. There are 2 kinds of effort. There's self-reliance, and then there is reliance upon the power of God who so wonderfully dwells within us in the person of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. These are the two kinds of effort that we can put forth. How can you and I then accelerate this change? I'm going to give you a big idea today, and I'm going to break it down, we'll explain what it means. Here it is: **Discipleship (food, water, friends) = Changed Life**. "Discipleship", and I put in parentheses, "food, water, friends, equals changed life". Discipleship equals changed life. Now, I put food water friends. I came up with a long list of other things too, that you could put up there, but I've reduced it down to these three things because I think if you get these three elements of nutrition, spiritual nutrition, if you have these three things in your life, you're going to be okay. Everything else will, probably, fall into place.

Practical Daily Steps to Change

Let's take a look at some practical daily steps to change. The first would be a daily preparation. Daily preparation. Turn, if you would to Hebrews chapter 4 verses 12 and 13. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 4 and 13. Again, if you are not a bible person, you can't flip around and find all these things with me that's okay, don't worry about it. You can just write down the verses, you can look on with somebody else. You can just listen. You can do it however, whatever works for you, okay? Hebrews Chapter 4, verses 12 and 13.

Daily preparation is food, all right? That's the food of discipleship. And the food of discipleship, it all is built around the word of God. The word of God is our food. Jesus Christ is the bread of life. For the word of God is living, and active. Sharper than a double edged sword. It penetrates, even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Nothing! Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account. In the Bible it's the sword of the spirit, it's a lot of other things too, but it's the sword of the spirit. If you want to change your life, the starting point is the word of God. It's the Bible, it's the word of God. Henry Ford was once regarded as the smartest man in the world. That was, kind of, the moniker that people attributed to Henry Ford. Then one day a Chicago Newspaper called him an ignorant pacifist. Henry Ford decided to sue the newspaper.

He sued the newspaper, and there was actually a trial. In the trial, the attorneys began to ask Henry Ford questions. They asked him complicated questions. He could not answer a single question that had been asked of him in court. Then, finally, when he had had enough, he said this, and I'm actually going to read what he said. A friend of mine just wrote a book, and he put this in there as an illustration, I just thought that this was very interesting. "If I should really want to answer the foolish question you've just asked, or any of the other questions you have been asking me, let me remind you that I have a row of electric push buttons on my desk. And by pushing the right button, I can summon to my aid, men who can answer any question I desire to ask concerning the business to which I am devoting my best efforts. Now, will you tell me kindly, why should I clutter my mind with general knowledge for the purpose of being able to answer questions, when I have men around me who can supply any knowledge I require?" I thought that was pretty clever. Way to go Henry, maybe you're the smartest man in the world.

My friend who wrote this book, Robby, said this. He said, "What he was saying, in essence, is, 'I'm not the smartest man in the world because I know the answers, but because I know where to go to get the answers.'" You know where to go to get the answers. Go there! Eat the food! John Maxwell runs corporate seminars. He's a former pastor from California, but he took the leadership space in the Christian world, and now he's expanded out into the corporate world for the last decade or two. Corporations will hire him, he'll come in and he will teach leadership to the middle managers, and they're just sopping it up, because they've never heard this stuff before, and he says that inevitably, at some point during the day, some young, ambitious, manager will ask, "Mr. Maxwell, where did you get all of this wisdom? Where did you get all of this information?" He'll say, "Ah, you don't really want to know."

Then that of course piques their interest, and then he presses him and then soon, several people are pressing him. He'll play with them for a few minutes, and then he'll say. "Well, everything that I have taught you all day long, every single thing I've taught you all day long is found in this one single book. Everything I taught you today I got out of this one single book." Then at the end of the day, when he has his optional session where he offers to introduce people. "You don't have to stay, but if you'd like to stay, I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine." 95% of the people stay. That's the deal he makes with

the corporation is before he comes in. Kind of interesting, don't you think? This book, this book. This book is our food. This book is our food.

Water. Turn with me to John 7:38. Jesus says, "If a man is thirsty, let him come to me, and drink." Verse 38, "Whoever believes in me as the scriptures has said, streams of living water will flow within him." By this he meant the spirit. Whom those who believed in him were later to receive, and which you and I have received. The food that we eat is the word of God. We live by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have living water within us. We can drink from it constantly, but we can also turn the spigot off by a lack of concentration. So, on a daily basis, just live in the power of the Holy Spirit and let the living water be within us. Then, friends. I was in Indianapolis the last couple of days and I spoke to ... They have 150 legislators in Indiana. 100 in the house And 50 in the senate. They have a chaplain his name is Mat, and he showed up as a young father with three young children. Ten years ago because God, he'd read in 1st through 2nd Timothy about how we should pray for kings. God called him at that moment to go and pray for kings. He went to the state house with his wife and three young children in tow.

He did not know a single person in government in Indiana. He showed up and he began to tell people how he was called to pray, and now, 10 years later, he is the chaplain of the Indiana state house and they have a Bible Study that meets on Thursday mornings. They asked me if I would come and speak to Bible Study. It's not uncommon for them to have 20% of all the legislators in Indiana at the Bible Study on a Thursday morning. Thirty people out of the 150 will frequently show up for the Bible Study on Thursday mornings, so they asked me if I would come in and speak to them and so forth. It was so interesting because they've been under a lot of pressure this particular session, and they're beat up. They're beat up. They're discouraged. They've been crushed, they've been reviled, and they've been persecuted for taking stands on the sanctity of family, basically. The upshot of it is, the thing that has allowed them to survive. The thing that has kept them together is that they have been in relationships with each other. They have not been isolated, so they've not been able to be picked off. They've been able to stand strong because they've been able to stand together.

In California these redwood trees, they grow to be giant. What, a thousand years old and 3 or 400 feet high, but their roots only go a few feet deep. How in the world do these redwoods not get toppled over by high winds? The reason, what happens to the redwood trees, is they intermingle their roots together. All their roots are intermingled together, and they're able to stand so tall because they stand together. That's exactly what's happening in the Indiana state house. They have become friends and brothers together. It is these three that form the corpus or the main essence of discipleship. That's how we change our lives. Discipleship equals changed life. Discipleship, food, water, friends, equals changed life. If you will just focus, if we will just focus on these three things, we'll do other things too, but if we make these three things sort of the centerpiece, the three legs of the stool, so to speak.

To consciously think about, "Okay, I want to change my marriage. I want to change the way I handle money. I want to change my integrity. I want to change the way I make decisions. I want to change from fear to courage. I want to change from pride to humility." Whatever it is that I want to change, I'm going to change that through discipleship. I'm going to change that through effort. I'm going to change that through daily effort. I'm going to change that by keeping in mind on a daily basis, consciously, I need to have food. I need to have water. I need to have friends. I need to have the word of God as my food. I need to have the Holy Spirit as the living water. I need to have some friends, some brothers with whom I can do this. We talked about, if you were here for the last session, accountability. You just, you saw the power and the effect when brothers help other brothers walk. Now, I realize that some days, you just

don't feel up to doing this, all right. That's okay. That's okay. Like for example, reading the Bible. I read the Bible through, cover to cover, once a year.

I use the one year Bible. I don't get hung up on whether or not I'm doing the Bible reading every day. I'm not trying to do it by human effort. I'm not legalistic about it. For example, this morning, I'm not going to be reading the one year Bible this morning. I'm reading the Bible passages that I want to talk to you about this morning, so I don't do it. The point is that I'm going to do it. I'll make it up. So, by the end of the year, I will have read through the Bible, but I won't have done it bit by bit by bit. Sometimes it'll come in chunks. Give yourself some grace. The point is to on a daily basis, be thinking, "You know, I want to be a disciple of Jesus, I want to follow Him. I want my life to be different. I want to change my life. I need to change my life. I can't change my life through human effort or desire. The Holy Spirit in me, but, self-reliance is not going to do it. But, by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit within me, by faith, through Jesus Christ, I can change my life. I'm going to have to put forth some daily effort too." Sometimes I have to substitute discipline for lack of natural interest. Worth writing down. Sometimes you have to substitute discipline for lack of natural interest.

This is true about going to the gym, okay. Sometimes you have to substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest. Making cold calls, sometimes you have to substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest. If you don't make that cold call, you're not going to make a sale. You go ahead, and you do what you need to do so that you can become what you want to be. That's what we're talking about here. Not as Galatians 3:3 said, "Having started in the power of the Holy Spirit, now trying to accomplish salvation, if you will, or sanctification by human effort ..." No, no, no, no, no, no. But substituting discipline meaning that I'm going to turn and rely on the Holy Spirit. To empower me to do that which I want to do anyway. All right? That's how we change our lives. We change our lives through discipleship.

Now What?

We're bringing this series in for a landing now, so now what? Now what? Where do we go from here? Twenty years ago, when we were beginning the national coalition for ministries to men, we were looking around and we were trying to identify, "Okay, what is the bottleneck that is holding up men's discipleship accelerating? What would lead to an acceleration in men's discipleship?" We zeroed in on the idea that there was not enough good curriculum for men. Well now, 20 years later, you look around and what do you see? You see a plethora of good curriculum for reaching men. That's because a number of us 20 years ago began to encourage men, leaders, to go ahead and begin developing curricula for men. So now there's a lot of really good curricular and it has led to an exponential acceleration in men's discipleship. There are more Christians now than there have ever been in our Country. There's more that's happening against them, perhaps, than ever before too, but there is a tremendous surge that has taken place in men's discipleship over the last 20 years.

Now that we've resolved that bottleneck, what is the next bottleneck? If we can resolve the next bottleneck, we can see another acceleration. If, and this is my opinion, the next bottleneck in men's discipleship is this: it's that those men who have been discipled are not disciple-ing other men. You see what I'm saying? For at least one generation, what we've been doing is we've been helping men become disciples. It's as though the great commission, instead of saying, "Go and make disciples," it's as though the great commission is "come and be discipled." Come and be discipled. That's the great commission, you see. You can't give away what you don't have. You need to become a disciple, but that's not the mission. The mission is to go and make disciples. What we have, is we now have a nation full of spiritual over eaters. We have a spiritually obese body of Christ. We have men who are so spiritually obese that,

well, you get the idea. We're not contagious. We're not contagious because we're not ... We sneeze, and nobody catches what we have, you see? We don't have this vision to be disciple makers.

Now what? I have been discipling you, and you have been discipling each other through this series and all the other Bible Studies that we've done together. The 'now what' is that you've been disciplined. You've been being disciplined. Now it's time for you to turn around and go disciple others. Many of you, of course, are already doing this. Some of you are not. Some of you want to, but have been afraid to take that step. It's not that big of a deal. You can do it any way you want. You can just, for example, and I would encourage you to do that because we all know this book has had a life of its own. Take this book. Buy a couple copies of this book, get three or four guys together, and just go through the book. A chapter a week, over the next ... or you can meet for six weeks, and just do the first six chapters, then see if the guys want to continue. You can make disciples. You need to make disciples. You are called to make disciples. God wants you to make disciples. Honestly, brothers, you're being unfaithful, if you don't make disciples. In fact, my brothers, since it says in the imperative 'go and make disciples,' it is a command. It is a command. And so that means that if you don't make disciples, you're actually being disobedient to what God wants you to do.

Now, if you're not ready, then He doesn't want you to do that. If you're just scared, and you are ready, that's not enough. Being scared isn't a good enough reason not to do it. Just go do it. Just get started. Take the risk. Yeah, okay, it's a cold call, but you'll get over it. You'll get over it. Just go ahead and make the call. Make the call. Call the person up, say, "Hey, I'm forming a group of three or four guys to go through, we're going to do a Bible Study." It could be your denominations hang up, I don't care what it is. We're going to get together, we're going to grow together in Christ, and try to help each other out as brothers. We're going to get food, water and friends together.

I'm going to wrap it up. There are three kinds of men when it comes to change. There are those men whose lives are changing for the better because they're doing the discipleship. They're doing the food, the water and the friends. You know, I have a friend. His name is Lee, and his Grandmother is a beautiful Christian woman. But she did her entire Christian life in isolation, and so when she would read the Bible to Lee, her Grandson, she would mispronounce all the words. She would instead of saying Nebuchadnezzar, she would say Nebuchadnezzar. She just mispronounced all the words. And why did she mispronounce all the words? Because she had done her faith in isolation. It's an interesting little metaphor. She got all of the pronunciation wrong. You can get a lot of things wrong if you're doing your faith in isolation. The importance of doing it together with some others. So, yeah, the first kind of man is the man who is changing his life for the better because he's doing discipleship.

The second kind of man is the man who wants to, but he doesn't know how. Do you realize that, you know how, but do you realize how many men there are in your church, Christian guys, not to mention the guys who are seekers or maybe men from your work. There are so many men out there. They want what you have, but they don't know how to do it. The mission is, "Let's go show them how." Then, there are also, the third kind of men, when it comes to change, are those men who have tried to change but through the tears of many disappointments. "I failed." They've given up. Those are the men that need extra special attention. To go and massage them a little bit, to love them, to befriend them. To care about them. The reason for doing all of this is because they want to change their lives. God wants to change your life, and we are his ambassadors, his agents to do that.

Discipleship. The food, the water, the friends. That's how we get a changed life. Men, let's go out from here, let's go and make disciples. We will see an acceleration in men's discipleship. Changed lives. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father, Lord, thank you so much for the last twenty-four lessons here on these twenty-four problems that men face. I pray, Father, that as we have received, now we would also give. That we would bring your gospel and your discipleship to the men in our lives. We'd start at home, of course, but then also the great need that we have today is that all of these men, all across our nation, who are, many are living as practical orphans, they don't understand what normal male behavior looks like. Lord, help us be the ones to lead the way. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.