

Work and the Man in the Mirror

Finding Work That Makes You Feel Alive

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11. Let me take a moment just to wish you a happy Easter. I hope everybody has a wonderful weekend this weekend.

Let's begin our day by doing a shout out. The shout out is going to go to the Saturday Morning Men's Group that's led by Frank Emrich. There's seven men meeting at Frank's house for about six months weekly at 7:00 AM on Saturdays. They're doing the study with us. They're at the Valley Bible Church in Pacific, Washington. Frank Rice, that's a combination of both younger and older men. It's a church plant, a new church start, and they have a vision and a passion to build a men's ministry that will focus on reaching the men of the community and men's discipleship. With a great vision, I wonder if you'd help me welcome them to The Man in the Mirror Bible study with a great and rousing welcome. One, two, three, Hoo-rah. Welcome, men. We're glad to have you with us.

Today, we're going to talk about work and The Man in the Mirror. Third in the series. Today, finding work that makes you feel alive. I had a visitor to the first-timer table one day. We had a visitor to the first-timer table one day. He told this story. He said that he was at a Bible study with another man, an attorney. The attorney said, "Haven't I seen you in my office building before?" With a little twinkle in his eye, he said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, you have. I am a disciple of Jesus disguised as you janitor."

Our city, by the way, for those of you who are watching online, in your city too, cities all around this world, there are men like that who are absolutely filled with joy as they go about doing their work. Passionately doing this work for the glory of Jesus Christ. They're fixing computers, they're driving delivery trucks, they're hammering nails, they're running small businesses, they're practicing law, they're picking up trash. It's because that they understand the things that we've been talking about in this series that every vocation is holy to the Lord. Our work is not just a platform for ministry, it is ministry. As David talked about last week, answering the question, "If work is a blessing, why does it feel like such a curse?" Because we know that even though we can be joyful in this work, that we are doing our work while managing against the fall, we do our work while feeling the prick of thorns. That doesn't mean that we can't have great joy and can't feel alive.

Now, maybe you are one of these men. I praise God if you are experiencing joy, not without opposition, but you are experiencing joy in your work. Maybe you used to be like that but something has changed and you can't quite put your finger on it. Maybe you've never really gotten to that place where you found a type of work that makes you feel fully alive in what you're doing. You see other guys, maybe some of the men here at the Bible study, and you say, "That's what I want. That's what I want." But somehow it just continues to be elusive and you don't know how to get it.

This morning, we're going to talk about how you can satisfy that need and continue to satisfy that need, to feel alive in your work, depending on your situation.

First up, not happy here, not happy anywhere. This is a generalization. As you've heard me say before, we use generalizations because they're generally true. Not true in all cases, but I would say most cases. As men, if we are having trouble at home, we can compartmentalize that and go off and do our work, but if we are having work problems and are unhappy in our work, generally speaking, we are unable to compartmentalize that. We bring it home, you see. Work is this very pervasive thing just because of a man's wiring diagram, the fact that we're made to do work. We're made to feel useful, made to serve. We're made to contribute to the greater good. That's for us, as men, women too, but especially men, it's one of the things that really makes us feel alive. We said that work is part of God's nature and he's built it into our nature as well.

A question I was asking this week, "Is there a truth so profound that, if fully understood and truly believed, could make you feel fully alive in your work? Is there a truth so profound that, if you really believed it and understood it, would make you feel fully alive in the work that you do?" The answer to that is yes. We find it in Ephesians 1:11 by example, many other places. Reading from Ephesians 1 verse 11, "In him, we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him," God, "who works out almost everything in conformity with the purpose of his will." Almost everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. Doesn't say that, does it?

You know, my greatest comfort is the sovereignty of God. That's probably an exaggeration. You know, it's probably one of five things that are my greatest comfort. God loves me. I just thought of that. That's comfortable too, you know. God's sovereignty is certainly one of the things that brings me my greatest comfort. If God is not in charge, I'm sleeping in. If all of this is just really random and there's not some master plan, larger perspective, bigger purpose to it, why bother? This verse tells us that what is happening is not random. God is working out everything in accordance with his plan to bring into conformity with the purpose of his will. God has a will. He has a work will as well.

This text, I think, some, they wanted to argue it narrowly with talk that it has to do with salvation, but I would say it also deals with sanctification and work is sanctified. Every vocation is holy, that means sanctified. It's a whole life for us. God is working out your whole life, my whole life, in conformity with a purpose of his will. This is a truth that is so profound that, if you can't fully understand or even mostly understand it but truly believe it, can have a tremendous impact on the way we think about our work, can make us feel fully alive in this work.

Here's the Big Idea today. **I will feel alive when I truly believe God gave me this work for a reason.** I will feel fully alive when I truly believe that God gave me this work for a reason. The text says he's working out everything in a conformity with a purpose of his will, that he has a plan. God has a plan. God gives us particular jobs at particular times and he does it for a reason, because he's working out everything in conformity with a purpose of his will.

Now, you don't have to feel good about that every moment of every day. That doesn't mean that you have to love everything that you do. I remember Bill Bright one time, founder of Campus Crusade, now Cru, telling me he said Patty said, "90% of the things that I do, I don't enjoy." Is that amazing? Is that amazing? I don't know if it's really true or not because it seems to me like he's having a pretty good time. Anyway, that's what he said.

Next up, I want us to look at some scenarios. For example, should you stay or should you go. The first scenario is you decide to stay where you are. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 17. 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 17. By the way, if you're not a Bible wiz, you can just listen along. You might want to maybe on the handout, just underline these verses so you could look them up later. There is something from a learning theory perspective, it's good to not just hear but to also see. By the way, this 1 Corinthians 7, the principle topic in the chapter is marriage and all the different ways to handle a marriage. If you have a friend that needs some marital advice, this is the single chapter if you had to choose one. Verse 17, "Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him."

You're going to see in a moment he's referring here back to marriage but you're going to see also he refers to three things: marital status, circumcision, and then whether a person is a slave or free, in other words, related to their work. He says, "This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called, he should not become uncircumcised." How would you do that anyway back then? "Was a man uncircumcised when he was called, he should not be circumcised." Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Then, here it is, keeping God's commands is what counts.

Here it is again, "Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him." Now, there's marriage and circumcision which is the relationship of God. Then also, verse 22, reading verse 22, "For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freed man. Similarly, he who is a free man when he was called as Christ's slave, you were bought at a price. Do not become slaves of man. Brothers," this is it. "Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to."

Three times. It's very unusual to see something repeated in the scriptures three times. Two times for emphasis. Three times, ironclad. Holy, holy is the Lord. No. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord. Three times of repetition in scripture, as most theologians agree, very important. You see it here. Three times. Boom, boom, boom.

Norm Miller became a Christian at the age of 24. Norm Miller became a Christian eight years later. He prayed, "God, I will do anything you want me to do." He said, "But the only thing that I knew was batteries." He worked for Interstate Batteries as a salesman. He said, "The only thing I knew was batteries so I decided to stay in batteries." Eventually, he continued to move up in the company, became the CEO, eventually the owner of the company. Just think about the platform and the impact that this man, Norm Miller, has been able to have through Interstate Batteries because of his willingness to say where he was when he was called, to just basically do what it talks about in these scriptures. That's scenario number one.

Now scenario number two. What if you don't like your job? When it's all said that way, you just don't like your job. Okay. Look at this same chapter 1 Corinthians 7 but verse 21. "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you. Although if you can gain your freedom, do so." There's a principle in there. We don't have anybody in slavery here but the principle is if you're in bondage to something that you don't like to do, if you can free yourself from it, by all means do that.

One of my favorite stories, Viktor Frankl, author of Man's Search for Meaning, psychotherapist in Vienna, had a diplomat, a United States diplomat come to his office and he was very depressed. He didn't like his work as a diplomat in Vienna. He had been under the care of a psychiatrist for five years. For five years, he hadn't enjoyed his work. For five years, his psychiatrist had been hammering into him

and says that what you need to do is free yourself and reconcile yourself from your bad father relationship. Because you have a bad relationship with your father, you're projecting that onto the authoritarian US government and that's the reason that you don't enjoy your work so you need to be reconciled with your father. Frankl met with him a few times and he said after a few visits, he said, "You know, it really doesn't seem like you like your work very much. Why don't you just get another job?" He did. Five years later, he was a very happy person.

If you don't like what you do, get another job. I mean, we're not talking about marriage here. On the marriage deal, we won't be talking like that.

Scenario number three, maybe you have what you would call a menial job. Dr. Michael DeBakey made the cover of Time Magazine, did the first open-heart surgery in the United States. Many call him the greatest surgeon who ever lived. Worked down at Methodist Hospital in Houston. One day, like a reporter was following him around and Dr. DeBakey was speaking to an elderly janitor and asking him about his family and his children and then reminding him that his work was very important because, apparently not the first time he had said this, but reminding the man that your work is very important. It's critical to the success in what we do here because the work you do prevents the spread of germs. Later, the reporter saw the janitor and asked him, "Tell me about what you do here." He said, "Well, Dr. DeBakey and I work together here and we save lives. We fix hearts. That's what we do here, Dr. DeBakey and I." He understood the principle that there is no menial job in terms of the contribution.

You know, the guys that pick up my trash and your trash as well, we may have somebody here who does that. Actually, probably not because this is usually the time it's happening. If you remember some of the pileups from decades ago in New York City when the garbage workers went on strike, it is an extremely important function that lubricates the ongoing of community, the ongoing of everyday life. If you think you have a menial job, maybe in the world's eyes, it would be considered to be menial, there are no menial jobs. That would be scenario number three.

Hey, I've got too many scenarios to go through, I think, here. I'm going to cut out a couple. Let me pick on that I think is important.

What if you're retired? What if you're retired? Heidegger, the existential philosopher, which I'm not sure if this is even appropriate to talk about an existential philosopher in here. It's an atheistic world view. Heidegger studied boredom and he makes this astonishing conclusion, has this astonishing insight. He says that boredom is the awareness of time passing. Isn't that fascinating?

Some men who get retired find this boredom creeping in. In fact, you don't have to be unemployed or retired to feel this boredom. I have some work being done at my house right this week and the boss man, El Hefe, he had to go over to Home Depot to get some stuff and one of the guys, Jerry, was left at the house. I happened to go out just to say hi and see how it was going. He was sitting there smoking a cigarette and he said the boss went over to Home Depot. He then said, "I hate it when I don't have anything to do. I just hate it when I don't have anything to do." He's a man. He's made to work.

If you are retired, I want to encourage you as we go into this next section to think about the idea that just because you are not working for a paycheck doesn't mean that you don't have the opportunity to work and to feel the life that comes from serving and working. The big idea today: I will feel fully alive

when I truly believe that God gave me this work for a reason. If you're retired, that God gave you the time to do the work for a reason.

Finally, let's give you four pathical ideas if you're not sure about your calling, what you should do. I'll just go ahead and put the list up here so you can write them down if you'd like to. Motivated interests, natural abilities, acquired abilities, and spiritual gifts and then offer a little word about each, a short word about each.

First is the motivated interests. Edward Crosby Johnson, his father was in the retailing business and his grandfather was a missionary doctor. As Mr. Crosby grew up, he watched their lives and he noticed the intense pleasure that his grandfather, the doctor, got out of the work that he did and he observed that his father really loved his hobbies but found no pleasure in his work. It was sort of a drudgery to him. He made up his mind that he was going to find something that not only he could be good at but that he loved to do, that motivated him. He started out as a lawyer. That didn't work out. Then, he got the management contract for a small mutual fund startup in Boston, Massachusetts called Fidelity Investments which he grew into this mammoth organization on the mission that he wanted to give the small investor the same opportunity that the big investor had. That little idea gave him purpose for his life, gave him animation, made him feel fully alive. Not only so that he was good at it, but it was something that he could do because he was motivated in that area.

Second, natural abilities. Another investment guy, John Templeton, when he was at Oxford, he went to Oxford to become a missionary. While there, he met a lot of other young men who wanted to be missionaries too. He came to the conclusion, "I don't have what it takes. I don't have the natural ability to do that," but he learned that he was good at making money. What he decided to do was to follow his natural abilities and make money and then fund missionaries all over the world, the Templeton Prize. Sir John Templeton became an extremely successful person because he followed his natural ability.

Maybe you are good with your hands or maybe you're not. Maybe you're good with numbers or maybe you're not. I love talking about if you're 5'6" and can't dribble, you're not going to play for the Los Angeles Lakers but of course this little kid, Titus, disproves that theory. If you, for example, like to work with numbers and kind of introverted person, then you might have a brilliant career at accounting but you might not make so much in sales, you see. The idea of just these natural abilities.

Third, the acquired abilities or the acquired competencies. One of our guys here at the Bible study when I was racing came to one of my races just to see what was going on, he was into cars a little bit. The guy who ran my race team is a German, German background, so very black and white, cut and dry. My friend from the Bible study here started talking about cars and talking about mechanical things, I don't even know what that is, but talking about mechanical things. My guy said, "Why don't you just stop talking? You have no idea what you're talking about." That's the way Germans do it. He said, "Why don't you just stop talking because you don't have any idea what you're talking about." He was kind of blathering on about all these mechanical things. My guy recognized somebody who had no experience to speak of and really didn't have any knowledge. On the other hand, through experience and training, my guy was extremely competent. He had acquired these competencies, these abilities, so he can tell you anything you need to know. I mean, he's won in class the Rolex 24. He just knows what he's doing. There are acquired abilities that we have.

How many of you are familiar with the 10,000 Hour Rule? Not too many. A few of you. In Malcolm Gladwell's book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, he documents this 10,000 Hour Rule which is very

scientifically attested to. Bottom line is it takes about 10,000 hours of practice to really be excellent at anything. He looks at people that play stringed instruments. He looks at baseball players. He even gives a story of The Beatles, how they didn't just appear on the scene one day but they were going down to, I forget now, Hamburg or someplace like that, and playing little bars like that until they got their 10,000 hours in and perfected their craft. 10,000 hours is about five work years, about five years.

I've always said this anyway. It's been my experience. I've started 60 companies and partnerships. It's been my experience it takes five years for anything to work. It takes five years basically for anything to work. That's the 10,000 Hour Rule. If you really want to find your calling, stick with it. Don't quit at three years. Don't quit at four years. Don't quit at 59 months, for crying out loud. Stick with it.

Then, finally, spiritual gifts. God gives everybody spiritual gifts. I have put the verses. There are four texts in the Bible that deal with spiritual gifts. I've put them at the top. You can look them up on your own if you want to. Eighteen, nineteen spiritual gifts, depending on how you count them. Here's the point. Do you think God who gives every man at least one spiritual gift, do you think God would give you a spiritual gift that was random to everything else he wanted you to do in life? No. These spiritual gifts are highly correlated to your natural abilities and motivated interests and probably what you're willing to invest in to acquire the ability of competence. Learn your spiritual gifts and then just think about how they relate, how they synchronize with these other areas and you'll have a great insight.

Listen, we're just made to work, guys. A friend of mine had a big boat like a yacht kind of a boat. He was living on it. He was talking to his diesel mechanic one day and the mechanic said, "How much of a load do you put on the generator?" He said, "Oh, we try to be very careful. We try to put as little load as possible on that generator. Basically, just the refrigerator." The mechanic said, "No, no, no. You got that all backwards." He said, "That engine is designed to have a load put on it. That engine will work better and last longer when it's under a load." That's how we're made, men. We are made to carry a load. That's when you and I will feel most fully alive. **The Big Idea: I will feel fully alive when I truly believe that God gave me this work for a reason.**

Let's pray.

Our dearest Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you for the work that you've given us to do. Let us pay to volunteer. The work that you give us to do and I pray, God, that you would help each and every one of us to feel fully alive because we truly believe that you did give us this work for a reason, because you're working out everything in conformity for the purpose of your will. We ask this in your name, Jesus, amen.