

Walking with Jesus in a Weird World

How You Can REALLY Make a Difference

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men. Welcome to Man in the Mirror, men's Bible study, where we come together once a week to enjoy each other's company and learn from God's word. If you're visiting with us this morning, we want to welcome you. We do have some men in town for training. Steve Basht, over here, from Maryland, and who else do we have? Damon Hawkins from Deland, Bill Dodge from Jacksonville, and Braden Randall from Arkansas, who is actually in town for training, but training to be a trainer. I wonder if you'd join me in welcoming these men. Good to have you with us, guys.

If you would, please open your Bibles to 1 Peter Chapter 3. We'll be beginning at Verse 8. Let's go ahead and do a shout-out before we get started. Isn't it such a blessing that every single week we have a new group somewhere in the world that we're able to welcome as part of our Bible study? I'll always be grateful to John Barber for having the vision to put this Bible study on the internet. Today's shout-out goes to 18 men. They've been meeting at their church for several years at 7:00 am on Tuesdays. They call themselves Iron Men at the Tomoka Christian Church in Ormond Beach. Mark Dwyer is their leader. By the way gentlemen, John Williams is your area director over there. Hope you've had a chance to meet John. I wonder if you'd join me in giving a rousing and a very warm welcome to Iron Men from Ormond Beach. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome, guys. We are so glad to have you as part of our Bible study.

We're doing this series called Walking with Jesus in a Weird World. I had something pretty weird happen to me this week. On Monday, we were coming back from camping. We are leaving our camper in Asheville, North Carolina at a storage facility. I rolled up the door on the storage facility, and I was starting to do my work, and lo and behold, out of the track where the door slides up and down slithers a four-foot long black snake and then coils up and looks at me. I'm looking down at this black snake, and I say, "Well, this can't stand. This guy's going to have to move."

I bought some trekking poles. I did the research on these hiking sticks, and I ended up getting the telescoping kind and the carbon fiber and the cork handles. Just because I waited a year and a half before I bought anything to make sure I was really going to keep hiking, but then I said, "If I'm going to do this, I should probably go ahead and do it right." I didn't know how to use trekking poles, so I went on YouTube, and I watched about a half a dozen videos on the proper technique of using trekking poles and the right angle and what you do and so forth.

One of the videos that I watched was this ... You can go on there and find her, I'm sure. She's this kind of like ... Let me just say, dizzy blonde. She had all these great ideas about how to use trekking poles, and then she said, "Oh, by the way, they're also good for lots of other things too. For example, if you come across a bear, you could just use them to make yourself large and scare the bear away!" Then she said, "If you're walking along and you see a snake on the trail, you can just reach over and flick the snake

away!" As though she had ever actually seen a snake on a trail, because they're there so often, you know?

I remembered what she said when I saw this black snake coil up staring at me. I ran over to our truck and I got one of the trekking poles, and I walked over to the snake, and I went down like this to start flicking it away. Well, the snake wrapped itself around the end of my trekking pole! Now, I can't get rid of this snake! Now it's starting to snap at me because I've irritated it! Then the snake actually started wrapping around it and coming up the trekking pole and it got up to about here! I dropped the trekking pole and ran away! The snake didn't run away. I ran away! No, Patsy does not have video.

That was weird. That was weird. Walking with Jesus in a weird world. You know, I was thinking about it. I said, "You know, a lot of people that we meet are like that." You've heard the saying, "Mean as a snake." This guy was snapping at me and coming at me relentlessly. We meet a lot of people like that. Now, we've been doing this series, Walking with Jesus in a Weird World, and we started out by showing how Peter was acknowledging that the world was pretty weird back then too, but that we are chosen. We are chosen to be strangers and aliens in this world. We talked about, in the very first session, about how we are called to be a thermostat, not a thermometer. We're the ones that are called to set the temperature to create the environment, not to respond to the environment.

We also talked about we are to walk in the world like priests, and there are a lot of us. There are many of us. The last time I spoke, we talked about how the world today has been Romanized and we talked about how we can live our lives in such a good way. We can live such good lives. This is what we're called to do, to live such good lives that people will know where to turn when their Rome burns. It's going to burn, because that's the way that God has ordered things.

Then, we started building the list, the list of how we live these good lives and where. The first places we looked at were with regard to how we relate to authority, governments, and then how we relate to employers, and then Pete Alwinson last week talked about how this works in marriage. Now today we're going to look down the list a little further, and we're going to look at how we relate to all these snakes, these people out there that are snapping at us, that are coming at us. We're going to see how God has embedded us in this weird world to be a fifth column for the benefit of those people who are even enemies.

You remember Jesus, Jesus said, "What good is it if you love those who love you?" That's easy! He said, "What I'm asking you to do, you've heard it said, 'Love your friends, or whatever. Love your neighbors. Then hate your enemies.' I'm telling you, love your enemies." This is Peter taking that and then applying it to everyday life. The first thing I want us to take a look at here today. Title of the message is How You Can Really Make a Difference. We're going to talk about the Christian way of doing things.

You should now have your Bibles open to 1 Peter Chapter 3, Verse 8. The list continues, so let's take a look. He's wrapping up this list. Finally, if you are in that special class of really mature people who have now become spiritual giants, then live your lives in harmony with one another. I think there is this tendency for sometimes us to read the Bible as though there's this spiritual giant class that this is really speaking to, and what we're doing is we're trying to catch up. We're behind, and we're reading this so that we can catch up, but that is not the way the Bible is written. The Bible is written to all of us, to all of us who have embraced Jesus, no matter how big of a baby you are!

Finally, all of you, every one of you here, there, everywhere, all of you live in harmony with one another! You hear that? Be sympathetic. Those people out there, they're just snapping at you, why are they like that? Why are they like that? They're in pain! They've lost hope! They don't know where to turn! They're living in darkness, and they can't see what you see! They can't! They just can't see it.

There's this very famous experiment where they ask people to watch a video of six people passing a basketball between each other, and then they're asked to press a button every time that the ball's passed, received by the other team. This has been repeated many times. Then they have a woman walk across the court in a gorilla suit. Inevitably, only about 50% of the people that are watching this video ever actually even notice the woman in the gorilla suit walking across the court. They don't see it, because that's not what they're expecting.

These people, these weird people that we're talking about, the weird world ... Well, let's face it. We're part of the weird world a lot of the time too, but those people that we're talking about here, these people that are they, just don't see it. Don't see what? Be sympathetic, it says. Love. Love as brothers. Be compassionate and humble. Watch this, do not repay evil with evil, or insult with insult. That might mean some of you need to get off Facebook. With how? With blessing. Repay insult with blessing. Repay evil with blessing. Bless those who curse you. Why? Because this is what you were called to do. To this, you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

From Psalm 34, one of my very favorite Psalms. I read it often. I've got the entire Psalm underlined, which takes away the purpose of underlining, to draw attention to something special. "Whoever would love life and see good days," that's us, right? That's not just us. That's them too. "Whoever would love life and see good days," you know when I walk around the gym and I see these people, and you can just tell. You can see in their eyes that they've got some grave problem that they're dealing with, or it's at the car dealership getting the car washed, or whatever, and you see the vacant eyes, the lack of hope, if you will. They want good days too. They want the love life too. "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech."

We've got to stop this. Not them, they don't have to stop it. They're just doing what they have to do because they have such pent up anger, such pain. People who are doing that who are not believers in Jesus Christ, they're doing what they're supposed to do. Christians who do that are doing what they're not supposed to do. That's what this is about. This is calling us to a higher standard. This is the Christian way of doing things. "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayers."

The Lord is attentive to your prayers. Somebody asked me on the way in how I'm doing. I told them, and they agreed to pray for me. I had a little something go on this week. I know that his prayers will be attended to, because he is a righteous guy. Righteous in his own strength and his power? Absolutely not. Righteous, clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. "The face of the Lord is against those who do evil." First 13, "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" Those snakes are going to harm you, even if you're eager to do good!

Most of the time, when you do good, it's going to be appreciated, but a lot of times when you do good, people are going to harm you anyway. Listen to what it says. Listen to what it says Verse 14, "But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed." You are blessed. Even if you suffer for doing right,

you're blessed because of that, not in spite of that, because of that! God blesses. Carrying on in the verse, "Do not fear what they fear and do not be frightened." Wow!

Who are these people? Who are these people? Some of them are strangers. When we were camping, very unusual experience. We had a nice view of the mountains, and four drunks pulled up and wanted to look at the view, so they walk right into the campsite and started cursing. They were nice, happy drunks, but they were using the F word and all this kind of stuff. My wife is freaking out, and I wasn't freaking out because I'm a trained killer, so I'm not worried about that. You think I'm kidding? I am. I mean, I'm a trained killer. I mean, when I was in the Army, I learned how to use the bayonet and the M16, and the hand grenade, and the grenade launcher, and the rocket- All these things, okay? Unfortunately I didn't have any of those things with me at the time, but I am a trained killer, so I wasn't at all worried.

Anyway, these four drunks, they show up, and it's just so obvious, they're weird. They're part of the weird world. I talked them down. They were insulting, and they were crass, but I kept my head, and that was that. Sometimes these people are strangers, but more often they're not. More often, they're people you know. In fact, more often they're people you really know closely. They're your next door neighbor, your next door neighbor who snickers at you because you believe all of that nonsense, and goads you with it, and maybe has been doing that for years. Or it's a coworker, or worse, it's a boss. Talked to a guy this week whose boss is ... Didn't talk to him, I talked to somebody who had talked to him this week whose boss is riding him. It could even be your spouse, you see. Or a child. Oh, man. How many of you have children who are doing things? Peter Ustinov said, "Parents are the bones upon which children sharpen their teeth." Boy, that'll resonate.

That's who these people are. They're in pain. We know something that they don't know. Here it is. Here it is. Apart from Jesus Christ, life has no meaning. We know something that they don't know. Apart from Jesus Christ, life has no meaning. Jesus, through Peter here, our Father through Peter here, is helping us to understand that we are priests. We're aliens and strangers. We are priests of reconciliation. Christians are priests, and priests are healers. We are healers who have been embedded in this weird world with a mission. Do you see it? Do you see it yet? We'll get there. If you don't see it yet, we'll get there.

What I want you to know, the most important thing I want you to see from this text that we've read so far and the rest of it when we get there, is that to be a Christian is to love everyone and want God's best for them. That's what it means to be a Christian. It means to love everyone and to want God's best for them. In fact, it's bigger than a big idea. It's one of the uber ideas of the whole Christian faith, but we'll just use it as the Big Idea today. **To be a Christian is to love everyone and want God's best for them.** Oh my goodness! How convicting is this! How convicting is this!

I don't love everyone! I actually despise some people, and I don't want God's best for some people! I want them to die because they insulted me or they took my parking place! Die! In the name of Jesus! This really is one of the uber big ideas of the Christian faith. This is what Jesus said. This is what Jesus meant. Some say love your neighbor and hate your enemy. I say love your enemy. Love everyone! For God so loved the good people that He sent His only son Jesus. For God so loved the whole world, everyone, every single human being has been knitted together in their mother's womb by a God who loves them. He does! God loves everyone.

Now, I know all of the other arguments too because I have reformed theological training, seminary training, so I know all the arguments, okay? There's nothing in reformed theology that contradicts this

statement. Nothing. To be a Christian means that we're to love everyone and to want God's very best for them. Boy, if we could just get this message communicated. You just take this one message. Remember it's an uber big idea. If we could just inculcate this one message into all Christians and present this as a unified front to the weird world, wow! That would really be astonishing. That would really change a lot of perceptions, you know, but the angry people who are doing what the weird people do. We have Christians doing weird things, and that's why this message gets diluted, but this is a very important message!

Now, this doesn't mean that it's not normal to size people up before you give them your hearts and become vulnerable with them. This doesn't mean throw out your common sense. I mean, the first thing I do when I meet somebody is I'm sizing them up. I wonder if I can take them, you know? That's normal, and that's healthy. To be responsible, to protect yourself, to protect your family and all that kind of thing.

A couple came up, this was another camping story. A couple came up to our camper on Sunday afternoon, this last Sunday afternoon, and really startled me, just totally startled- You know? Then I could see that they were normal people, seemingly normal people and harmless, but I was still suspicious. What do they want? That's normal. That's healthy. Then as I got to know them a little bit, I could tell. I could tell they were people that I could at least provisionally trust. You know what I'm saying. There are impediments to this. There are culture differences that there are people who are actually adversaries, and so you have to deal with them a little differently. There are people who drive you batty as you get to know them. Big idea is that God is calling us to love them all and want what's best for them.

Got a little technical problem here, but the next rubric I want to talk about is, so what's the problem? What's the problem? Here's the problem. You and I already know everything I just said. You've known this for a long, long time. That's a real problem. How do we deal with that? Well, Paul said in Romans 7, he said, "What I want to do, I don't do, and what I don't want to do, that I keep on doing." He says, "Who is it that is going to deliver me from this body of death? This body of death that keeps me from loving everyone and wanting what's best for them? Who is going to deliver me from this body of death?" He said, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. It's Jesus Christ, our Lord."

You've got a neighbor who's riding you. You have a neighbor who's riding you. What's the problem? The problem is that even though you know this, they really tick you off. They really get under your skin. The dripping faucet wife, drip, drip, drip, really gets on your nerves, and you retaliate! You repay insult with insult. You repay evil with evil. You're not compassionate. You don't love like a brother. You're not humble. That's the problem. It's the flesh and the spirit. It's Jesus in the garden with His inner circle of disciples. Said, "Stay here for an hour and keep watch while I go over here and pray." He came back and they were asleep. He said, "What? You can't even stay awake for an hour?" Then He said what? He said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

We have this flesh and the spirit is lusting after the flesh, and the flesh after the spirit, so that we don't do what we want. That's the problem. That's the problem. Honestly, no man is truly satisfied with himself. If you're really truly satisfied with yourself, you're stupid. Every day, there are things about myself that I dislike, whether it's pride of life, maybe because I'm this much better at doing something than somebody else, and so I end up feeling pride of life. Or it's a sexual thing. It's lusting. It's a lack of compassion towards somebody else. Thinking I'm better than somebody else. Not caring about them. Be it materialistic. I'm sure this is just me. I'm sure it's just me.

How do we turn this problem around? We turn it around by turning to the principle that Peter is giving us here, and it's this principle. To be a Christian is to love everyone and want what's best for them, want God's best for them. Finally, let's take a look at the answer. What's the answer? What's the answer? Let's read on in the scripture. We are now at verse 15. This is the answer. This is how you get there. "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." "But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord." Make Jesus, Jesus is not only to be our Savior, He is to be the Lord of our lives. We are to surrender and yield our lives to Him. This is the word where we get holiness or sanctified. Other versions will say, "Sanctify your hearts. Make yourself holy. Make your hearts holy in Christ."

What we do is we're not trying. As Christians, guys, we are not trying to just invent a better version of ourselves. That is not what Christianity is about. Christianity is yielding our lives to Jesus and surrender and asking Him to make us into a different person. What is the verse now? "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. The new has come." It's a transformed life, not a better life. We're not going to get here by just trying to be better and improving on ourselves. It's going to come because of setting apart Christ in our hearts as Lord. Read on. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone, any one of those weird people who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

When are they going to ask you? Why are they going to ask you? They're going to ask you when they're ready, and they're going to ask you because you didn't answer insult with insult. You're never going to have anybody ask you to give an answer for the reason for the hope that you have in you unless you do the big idea. Unless you understand that to be a Christian is to love everyone and to want God's best for them. Take Jesus out of the equation. If somebody gets the impression that you don't want the best for them, are they going to ask you for help for anything? No!

If you really want to make a huge difference in the world, grasp that to be a Christian means that I love everybody. I love everybody. How? You can't love everybody in your own flesh, in your own strength. You do it by faith! By faith. I believe the word of God. I believe Jesus Christ. I love even my enemies by faith. By faith, I want God's best for them. That's it. That's it. That's the answer. That's the answer. In order to do that, we have to make ourselves vulnerable to people. We have to reach out to people who are not reaching out to us. We have to care about people who are not caring about us. We have to not respond in kind.

When a guy was following me around the gym and I went for a piece of equipment, he says, "I've been watching you!" He said, like that. I mean, he was really angry. He said, "I've been watching you!" He said, "You're tying up all the equipment!" Well, I was just doing ... What is it when you do two sets back to back on different pieces of equipment? Superset. Is that it? Yeah, superset. Anyway, whatever you call it. I was using this piece of equipment. I went over there, and so I'm tying up this piece of equipment. I'm not tying up that piece of equipment. Besides, I'm just doing what everybody else is doing too in the gym. I said, "I'm sorry. What's your name?" He didn't want to give me his name. I guess he thought I was going to report him to somebody. I don't know. Then he ragged on me some more. I said, "Well, I'm really sorry," and I put my hand out. I said, "What's your name?" It's been a few years ago now. Now we talk regularly. We're not very far along, but we talk regularly.

Now, I can give you other examples where I'm not the hero of the story. Probably more of those than this one, but I don't know want to be completely vulnerable today. If we will make ourselves vulnerable like that. Watch this, watch this. God will protect us. It says it right in the scripture. "But even if you should suffer for doing what's right, you're blessed." God will protect us. You can do this. We can do this. We don't need to protect ourselves. We can reach out. We can be vulnerable. If we do, it will lead

to a great opportunity that will make a really big difference. Someone will want to know what makes you tick. Big Idea today, **To be a Christian is to love everyone and want God's best for each of them.**

Let's pray. Our dearest Father, Lord, we come humbly to You today. In our humanity, Lord, we know that we do not have the strength to live the Christian life. We also know that we don't have to have the strength to live the Christian life. We can sanctify Jesus in our hearts as Lord. Walk in His power and the power of the Holy Spirit, not perfectly but better than we have been doing. Differently than we have been doing. I just pray, Lord, that each of us, whether here live or online, that You would tutor to our hearts how You would have us respond to this message from Your word today. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.