

The Journey to Biblical Manhood

The Goal of Biblical Manhood

Unedited Transcript

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Good morning, men. We are going to start a new series today, The Journey to Biblical Manhood. Please open your Bibles to Romans Chapter 8, Verse 29. The goal of this series is to become a certain kind of man. You wake up. You get ready for work, go to work, come home, eat a little dinner, watch some TV, maybe read something, go to bed, get up, get ready for work, go to work, come home, have a little dinner, watch a little TV, play around with the wife, go to bed, get up, and then do that all over again. Why? Why do we do that? So you can retire early and take it easy. Well, there just has to be more to life than this, right? Solomon said it well. He starts Ecclesiastes, "Meaningless, meaningless, utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless a chasing after the wind."

Before we move into the text, I want us to do the shout out. Gosh, I kind of just totally ruined the rhythm of the morning. I meant to do this earlier. The shout out today, we have twelve guys who are meeting over in Lithia, Florida. Eddy Fabelo is the leader. They're meeting on Tuesdays at 6 AM at the church, Fish Hawk Fellowship Church in Lithia, Florida. I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm and rousing welcome to these men this morning. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome, guys. We're glad to have you here.

This whole idea that there's got to be more to life than just this endless repetition of routines. We're going to begin this morning with an introduction to the Journey to Biblical Manhood. We're going to talk about the goal of Biblical manhood. Here's the problem. The problem is, apart from God, life has no meaning. Apart from God, life has no meaning. This endless repetition of things, it's pointless. You live, you eat, you die. Billy Sunday once ... Billy Sunday was the great evangelist of a hundred years ago. He wrote to the mayor of this city where he was getting ready to do one of his crusades, and he asked for the names of some people who needed prayer and help. He was a little surprised when the mayor sent him the phone book.

I was talking to a man this week. As I am apparently gifted to do, I just keep probing with men and keep asking questions. I like asking questions. I like getting to know men. Invariably, I've been around doing this long enough, I know that there's always more to the story. I talked to the happiest man I ever talked to in my life this week, until about my seventh or eighth question, when I was asking him how could I be praying for him, and he said, "Well, to be honest, I have no joy." He's the happiest man I ever talked to, in terms of his personality, but at the end of the day, he says, "I have no joy."

I know what that's like! I'm a great pretender. I put my game face on every morning just like everybody else. I remember my days in business. When I would answer the phone, I'd say, "Morley." Somebody'd say, "How are you doing?" I'd say, "I'm doing awesome! I'm doing great!" I would be over the top with that. Even if my kid is flunking out of school, and I can't make my mortgage payment, and my wife hates my guts, I'm doing great! How are you doing?

I remember when I was driving down ... I was in the army. I did everything possible to make it look like I wasn't in the army. I lived off campus, off base in Fort Bragg. You had to have a little sticker on the back of your car in order to get on and off base. I put my sticker on a piece of galvanized tin and hinged it to the bottom of my bumper so I could fold it up so that nobody would see it and know that I was in the army when I was off base. I was just so lost. I was just empty. I was just so angry. I was just so everything.

I remember driving down Bragg Boulevard one day and going into a little clothing store. That was one of the ways that I could satiate, or satisfy, or do away with, or whatever the right way to say it is, this angst that was just eating away at me because my life didn't feel like it had any meaning. I remember I bought a mustard-yellow double-breasted blazer. It was a great-looking piece of goods. It really was. Honestly, at the time. Today, it would look a little silly, but back then, it was really, really cool. I remember driving away from that store with tears rolling down my face, just wondering, "What is going on? What is going on? Why am I even here?" Everything seemed so meaningless and so purposeless. Now, my favorite picture happens to be of my then fiancé Patsy and I kissing when I was wearing that yellow blazer, so life has a way of turning around, but the problem is that without God, there just doesn't seem to be any meaning to this whole thing.

You've heard me say many times, and you will hear me in the future say many times, that when I do meet with men, and when I'm sure you meet with men, you find the same things to be true, but I've narrowed it down to these seven symptoms, these seven inner aches and pains, that when a man begins to talk about what's really going on in his life ... Not everybody is in this situation, but 90% of us are in this situation. 90% of men have some major struggle in their life, so try to be a little bit nicer to people, okay? 90% of the guys you meet today are struggling with some major problem, so be nice!

I wish the eight young men who thought going camping meant having a rousing, drinking party all weekend long and late into the night would have understood that 90% of us have a problem and would have given me a little bit more of a break over the weekend. Anyway, I love them now, but boy, I didn't love them on Saturday night at 12:30 AM, I'll tell you that. Where was I?

"I just feel like I'm in this alone." "I don't feel like God cares about me personally. Not really." "My life feels random like there's no purpose." "I have these destructive behaviors that keep dragging me back down." "My soul feels dry." "My most important relationships, they're not healthy." Finally, "I just don't feel like I'm doing anything that will make a difference and leave the world a better place."

Apart from God, life has no meaning. How does God provide to solve this problem? He so loved the world, He so loved us, that He sent His one and only Son into the world so that whoever would believe in him would not perish but have life, everlasting life, but because of His great love with which He has loved us, God, who is rich in mercy, has made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions. It says, "How great is the love that the Father has lavished on us that we should be called His children, and that is what we are. God is patient with us, not wanting any to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. God, our Savior, wants all men to be saved," even those eight young guys, "all men to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth."

Jesus got out of the boat one day. He looked on the crowds. He saw that they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. He had compassion on them. Jesus said to the disciples, "To us, he said, 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.'" Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me, so has the Father loved you." Paul wrote that "Hope doesn't disappoint us because God has poured out His

love into our hearts through His Holy Spirit." The way that God has provided to solve this problem, that apart from Him life has no meaning ... The way that we get unstuck is through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Here is the big idea for the day. Your worst day with Jesus can be infinitely better than your best day without Him. Your worst day! Your worst day with Jesus is going to be infinitely better than your best day without Him! Because apart from Jesus Christ, life has no meaning. It's elusive. It's always just going to be beyond the grasp. How does this happen? This is the one idea for the goal of manhood, Biblical manhood. This is the one idea that, if you can fully understand and truly believe, really has the potential to change everything.

By the way, this is what I have after my signature on my e-mail. You know how people put a little epigram at the bottom. This is mine. Well, that's not exactly that. Mine says, "My worst day with Jesus has been infinitely better than my best day without him." This is the big idea. This is the one idea that can really change everything, but how does this happen? How does this happen? It happens by figuring out the way that God has provided for us to lead powerful lives transformed by Jesus, leading a powerful, transformed life.

We have a BHAG at Man in the Mirror. We've had two BHAGs. We had one BHAG that we set in about 2000. That was that we wanted to reach ten million men by 2010. In 2009, our board of directors celebrated the fact that we had reached that BHAG of impacting ten million men, but then we needed to reboot now, of course, with a new BHAG. Well, we were all shocked, I know I was, that ... We thought if we had impacted ten million men, that that would change the world. We thought that that would be enough men to be a tipping point in culture, but then the more we thought about it, the more I was thinking about it, I just realized that ... I said, "There's a difference between impacting a man and then helping him have a deep transformational encounter with his Savior that really changes everything."

I was in the Pentagon. I've been there a couple of times. The one time I was there, they had me speaking to two groups of officers, the colonels and the majors, and then the flag officers. I noticed something very interesting. I noticed that there is a strong correlation between command presence and knowledge. In other words, the generals and the admirals that had access to the right information, there was a presence about them. You've heard me say that the Holy Spirit usually does His best work when people know what they're doing. These men had become disciples of military strategy. They were leading powerful, transformed lives in military terms because they had been discipled as military men. Those majors and colonels, they were coming along, but you could tell they weren't there yet. They weren't fully discipled into military life.

Leading a powerful, transformed life is a process. Maybe you're a private, maybe you're a corporal, maybe you're a sergeant, maybe you're a second lieutenant, maybe you're a captain, maybe you're a major, but you can move through the ranks to lead a powerful, transformed life because that's how God has provided to solve the problem that apart from Him life has no meaning. He has ranks that we can move through. He wants to transform our lives.

Let's look at our texts, Romans 8:29. You should be there. If you're not, listen more carefully the next time I announce the verse at the beginning. Just kidding. "For those God foreknew, He also predestined ... " By the way, every denomination has some doctrine of predestination because why? It's in the Bible, okay? It means different things to different denominations. That's not our point here this morning, but it does say that those He foreknew, He did predestine to this. Every denomination will agree with this, that

we are predestined "to be conformed to the image of His son. We are predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His son that He might be the first born among many brothers."

God has provided for us to lead a powerful life, transformed by, not our own efforts, but by His efforts. In other words, He is going to accomplish this in your life whether you cooperate or not. Now, if you don't cooperate, it's going to be what? A little more painful, right? A lot more painful, right? If you do cooperate, it's going to be what? Painful! Painful! Because it says in John Chapter 15, in one of the first verses in that chapter, I can't remember which one, but that every branch that doesn't bear fruit gets lopped off, gets cut off, but every branch that does bear fruit gets what? Pruned! They don't tell you this when you become a Christian. Whether you become one or not, you're going to get cut! You're going to get cut. That's the deal. That's the deal!

Let me tell you how it doesn't happen. It doesn't happen the way that I thought it happened. When I became a Christian, I knew what a sinful life I'd led. I mean, I had no illusions about needing a savior. My illusion was that I couldn't have a savior because I had done so many sinful things, but then once I had finally began to at least provisionally believe that it might be possible, I got saved, and then I knew that I was saved by grace. That there was no possibility of any merit on my part, I understood that, but what I didn't understand was that there was also no possibility of being sanctified by grace. I figured that I was saved by grace but it was up to me to prove that God didn't make a mistake. My early theology was "Saved by grace, sanctified by works," that I had to prove, I had to merit what I had already received. I had to give proof of concept, if you will. It was fifteen years later until I understood, no, no, saved by grace, sanctified by grace.

That's what it says right here in this text. "We're predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His son." The truth is power will come upon you when you receive the Holy Spirit. Romans Chapter 10, Verse 20: "I was found by those who did not seek me. I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."

Hey, I just noticed a new problem that we have. We've got sun coming through here, and I have these transition glasses, so in a moment, I'm going to be looking at you through sunglasses.

Jesus Himself said this. He said ... Matthew, Mark, Luke ... Oh, John. I'm going the wrong way. In John ... You don't have to go here. Just listen, but you might want to write this one down. John 17, Verse 19. He says this in his high priestly prayer, "For them, I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified." He's the one who is doing this in us. It's not we ourselves, but what is our part? We certainly do have a part. Our part is to cooperate with His grace instead of resisting His grace. When we do that, and when we will cooperate with what he is already doing, this working to conform us to the image of Jesus, when we do that, then this big idea ... Your worst day with Jesus can be infinitely better than your best day without him.

Then, finally, so how do we do that? How do we actually cooperate? Well, one way to do that is Romans Chapter 12, Verse 2, the other verse on your worksheets this morning. Romans Chapter 12, Verse 2. Let's look at it. Perhaps familiar to some of you. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." This is cooperating. This is cooperation. This is not meritorious effort. This is cooperating with what God is doing. "Don't conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed," or, even better, let God transform you, but "be transformed by ... " What? "The renewing of your minds."

What is the renewing of your minds? It's moving through the ranks. It's moving up from corporal to sergeant to become an officer, eventually, one day, to have your own command, if you would. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, and then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. His good, pleasing, and perfect will." Who wouldn't want that? This renewing of the minds, this moving through the ranks, this is what it means to become a disciple. This is what it means to become a disciple, part of what it means to become a disciple. It's being called to live in Christ, equipped to live like Christ, and then sent to live for Christ. This is discipleship.

Now, I've done a lot of studies in leadership. Most leadership studies, in the early days, they started looking at characteristics of great leaders. Then the whole study area switched to looking more at the roles of leaders, the roles that leaders play. Then today it's more of a blended approach. On your tables are some sheets titled "The Journey to Biblical Manhood, Twelve Challenges." I'd like to ask everybody to be able to have one of these. Oh, yours have pretty red letters. I ran mine off on a laser printer. Here, you take that one. I'm going to take this one.

Over the next 36 weeks, what we're going to be doing is we're going to be spending three weeks on each of these twelve topics: manhood, the Gospel, relationships, fathering, disciplines, work, mission, money, integrity, sacrifice and suffering, leadership, and outreach. You can take some time and look these over. Might stick it in your Bible if you want to. Most of us are using devices, I guess, these days, but anyway, you can maybe carry this around a little bit with you and think about that. Each of these twelve challenges represents one leg of this Journey to Biblical Manhood. That's what we're going to be studying.

Our great hope is that this Holy Spirit, who has been poured into our hearts by the love of God, our great hope is that we will take a quantum leap ... I'm going to promote you. I'm going to promote you not one rank, but we're going to promote you one rank every three weeks for the next 36 weeks. The more you engage in these next 36 weeks, the higher rank you can have. My promise to you is that if you will engage these twelve challenges over the next 36 weeks, every single one of you will be at least a brigadier general in God's army. That is my promise. Your worst day with Jesus, it can be infinitely better than your best day without him.

Let's pray: "Our Dearest Father, Lord, first of all, we are so grateful to you for giving us your son Jesus, and if anybody, any man, either here or online, does not yet have Jesus, then just invite Him right now to be your savior." Pray this: "Lord Jesus, I know I have been a sinful man, I know I need a savior, and I want you to be my savior, and right now by faith I ask you to forgive my sins, and to come into my life, and be my savior, and give me this eternal, everlasting life, and turn my life around, and give me the meaning that I want. I ask this in your name." Some of you praying this prayer right now, welcome to the family.

"Then, Lord, for all of us, those who have just received or maybe recommitted their lives to Jesus, or those of us who are already walking with you, Lord, we want our lives to have meaning. We know that for that to happen we have to have you in our lives each and every moment. We also, Lord, need to renew our minds and grow as disciples. We need to allow ourselves to gain the information that allows us to be promoted so that we can all have a sense of command, and so that we can experience this idea that our worst day with you is going to be so much better, so infinitely better than our very best days without you ever were. Lord, tutor these things now to our hearts over these next weeks. We ask this in

the powerful name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Why don't you just join me and say, "Amen."
Amen.