

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY

Biblical Manhood

A Humble Heart

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I have been reading a book recently called *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Some of you may have already heard of this book or have heard of its predecessor *Built to Last*. *Good to Great* is built on 15,000 hours of research. There are a number of principles in the book, but the principle thesis is that there are some companies that after 15 years of average performance, a transition occurred that led to sustained growth that beat the general market performance by at least 300% for the next 15 years. In other words, there was a flat line performance followed by some transitional event and then 15 years of very strong growth. Companies out of the Fortune 500 were selected and looked at and only eleven companies made the cut. Some of the very good companies that missed the cut were Coca-Cola, G.E., Intel, Motorola, and Wal-Mart. The author and his research team looked at different industries and took a comparison company which had good performance but did not have a rise and then they looked at that side by side with a good-to-great company. There are many wonderful principles in the book and one of them has to do with the leadership style of the eleven C.E.O.s of the good-to-great companies. Collins had the presupposition going into this when people see a problem they attribute that problem to an error in leadership. When his research team reported the difference in the chief executives of these companies, Collins dismissed them. But the consistent data finally won. The good-to-great executives were all cut from the same cloth according to Collins. It is interesting, he notes, that a lot of the comparison companies there were some dynamic, charismatic, bigger than life, leaders, but in all of the good to great, companies, without exception, the leaders were found to men of compelling modesty and humility.

In contrast to the very eccentric style of the comparison leaders, we were struck by how the good to great leaders didn't even talk about themselves. It wasn't just false modesty. Those who worked with or wrote about the good to great leaders continually used words like quiet, humble, modest, reserved, shy, gracious, mild-mannered, self-effacing, understated, did not believe his own quippings, and so forth. Isn't that fascinating that the very best, most excellent performing companies in the entire country, and there are only 11 of them that even made the cut, in every single case at the helm of the organization was a CEO who was a humble man.

We are looking at the subject of biblical manhood and we are trying to build a vision of what it means to be a biblical man. We are going to be exploring who we admire in the bible and why and what do they have in common. When we start looking at men like Noah and Moses and Abraham and Joseph and Daniel and Peter and Paul and others, one of the things that I have been noticing that they have in common in what is going on in their hearts that renders them to be humble men.

Jesus tells a parable. We could paraphrase the parable like this. There were two men who came to a Bible Study one Friday morning, One man's name was Phil. Phil is a very moral guy, scrupulously honest, has never cheated on his income taxes, fasts on a regular basis, tithes to his church and sometimes does more. He's a Deacon, doesn't cheat on his wife, doesn't drink, doesn't smoke, doesn't look at the Victoria Secret's catalog and even asks his wife to screen out the swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated* when it comes. And, he helps little old ladies cross the street and helps the Humane Society get lost dogs adopted into nice homes. So, Phil came to the Bible Study one morning. I know that some of you are identifying with Phil. Phil walks in the door and he looks around and he sees Bob. He thinks to himself, I'm glad I am not like Bob. I know for a fact that Bob has not been paying his bills on time lately, and I find that disgusting. In fact, there's Peter over there, and I happen to know that Peter is always in trouble with the Internal Revenue Service. He's had an IRS debt that's been lingering over his head for a dozen years and he's never really taken care of it and doesn't even seem to want to try. Not only that he smokes cigarettes. I'm glad I'm not like Steve over there. Steve has a son who's gay. I'm glad I'm not like him. I'm glad my son's not like that. Then he gets a cup of coffee and he's standing next to a guy named William. He says he doesn't want to talk to William cause he can't get a job. I don't want to get near him because something like that might rub off on me. Besides he hangs out with a lot of non-Christians and they cuss a lot. I know because I've heard them before. Then I'm glad I'm not like Paul. Paul has marriage problems. If a man can't keep his wife in line- heh, heh? I'm glad I am not like that. I'm glad that I'm a good church man, I'm glad that I'm a Christian, and I'm glad that I have my life in order.

Then there's the other guy, Paul, the guy with the marriage problem. Paul walks into the bible Study and he's shattered by what's going on in his life. He did it his way. "I did it my way. I got exactly what I wanted. In the process I have neglected my wife, and she had an affair and now she's left me. I'm trying to get her back and she's taken my kids, too, and I don't know whether I can get them back or not. I don't know if I even have a chance here." He could barely talk to the men in his group without coming to tears. He's desperate for reconciliation with his wife, but he's even more consumed with a desperate and spiritual hunger for God. Phil looks at him and says, "I can't believe Paul has so many problems. It's his own fault. What did he expect, he was getting what he deserved."

Luke 18:9-14 says: "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable. Two men went up to the temple to pray; one a Pharisee and one a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself, 'God, I thank you that I am not like all other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. No, I fast twice a week and give one-tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man rather than the other went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The big idea for this morning is: Even if you are right, you are wrong if you are not humble.”

In verses 9-12, we see that it is possible to do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. In our day and time we think of Pharisee as a pejorative term. But remember this was the type of man that everyone saw as the most religious of the day. The scripture also says that Jesus looked at him and saw all the right things but also saw some problems:

1. The Pharisee had misunderstood the gospel. He thought that he would justify himself as a Godly man by doing works of righteousness, or by “doing the right things”. Doing the right things are worthwhile but not if you are doing them for the wrong reason, such as trying to gain the approval of God. Instead we gain our approval from God and then we do works as an expression of gratitude.
2. The Pharisee had a problem with pride. C.S. Lewis described pride as ‘the great sin.’ There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. The more we have pride in ourselves, the more we dislike it in others. Pride leads to every other vice. It is the complete anti-God state of mind- Pride, Disparity, looking down on other people. “ So Phil when he walked into the Bible study said, “ I don’t want to be associated with that guy. He’s doesn’t earn as much money as I do.” Phil and the Pharisee were looking down on other people and was full of pride.

I think part of this is the distinction between justice and mercy. We would like to qualify for God’s justice, wouldn’t we? But we don’t. We would like to not need God’s mercy, wouldn’t we? But we do. It is pride that keeps us in denial and from seeing our great need for the grace of God.

Now that you have all figured out that this doesn’t apply to you, let me ask you this question. Can you worship God in a bar drinking a beer and smoking a cigarette? Be careful before you answer thinking that I’m looking for a particular answer here. It’s up to you, but I do know this, C.S. Lewis’ preferred place of worshipping God was in a bar drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. I’ve been there over in Oxford, England. That’s were Lewis met with Tonkin, Author of *The Lord of the Rings* and they would have their meeting every day, and they would drink beer and smoke cigarettes. Could anyone be arrogant as to suggest that C.S. Lewis is not a Christian because he drank beer and smoked cigarettes? You might want to ask yourself if you have a little Pharisee I you this morning. I am not going to ask myself because I don’t’ want to know. I’ve learned enough already this week about it.

No matter what you have done, you can be forgiven. Verses 13 and 14 say: “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man rather than the other went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” God opposes the proud but gives grace to the

humble according to the scripture. Before his downfall, a man's heart is proud. But humility comes before honor.

Well, we have a little problem here because Paul really was a sinner. The tax collector here really was a sinner. The thing was that he really knew he was a sinner so he wasn't trying to pretend that he was something he wasn't; in fact, he admitted it. Luther's famous question is, "how can I, a sinner, be acceptable with a righteous and Holy God?" Here's your answer. God have mercy on me, a sinner. Then when we say this, and this is the act of repentance, this is the grace of God invading our lives bringing us to repentance and faith. When we do this, what happens? By the way, for the person who was never a Christian, but also for those of us who are Christians, we are all sinful, we all have this pride, we are all looking down on other people. We would all, hopefully, like to be humble men. But the only way to do that is to say, "Lord have mercy on me a sinner," because even if you're right, you're wrong. If you're not humble even if you're right. You can have your theology a 100% correct, you can be the most orthodox person in Orlando, in Florida, you can be the more orthodox person in the entire nation, you can do everything scrupulously right, you can cross every "T" and dot every "i" and you can tithe. You can say all the right things, and you can spend your time in all the appropriate ways and still be wrong if you're not humble. So which of these two guys got justified. The who said," Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." That was the answer to Luther's question. That's how we find our acceptance.

I have been looking at a few books this week that make some very good points. In *Humility*, by Andrew Murray, humility is described as 'the inseparable character of a Godly man.' He says, "In their spiritual history, men have had times of great humbling and brokenness. But what a different thing this is from being clothed with humility and from having a humble spirit." I started this week out totally wrong on this. I was planning on talking to you about being broken this morning as the first big step in this series. We do need to be broken. But what Murray helped me see is that you can be broken in a moment and be humbled and still have a proud heart. Or you can be humbled for a season until things start to get better and then you get back to your old ways. There is a difference between being broken and having a humbled heart. Watson, who is another Puritan writer, says "I distinguish between being humbled and humble. A man may be humbled and not humble. A sinner may be humbled by affliction. His condition is low, but not his disposition. A Godly man is not only humbled, but humble. His heart is as low as his condition."

1 Peter 5:5 says, "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Luther said this; "If you see yourself as a little sinner, then you will only think you need a little Savior. But if you see yourself as a big sinner, you will understand that you need a big Savior."

Even if you are right, you are wrong if you are not humble.

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, I don't want to be a big sinner. I want to be a little sinner, but Lord, I am a big sinner. And every time I come here, I see it more clearly. Every time I go to my church, I see it more clearly. Every time I read your word, I see it more clearly. Every time I am talking in a group with other brothers, I see it more clearly. I am a big sinner, Lord. Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner. Lord, I don't want to get it wrong. I want to get it right. Lord, help me not just to be broken, not just to be humbled, but Lord, give me a disposition to be humble. Amen.