

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
BIBLICAL MANHOOD – A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW
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I have been boasting about how I am at my college weight – 184 pounds. Well, that's because every morning I get on the scale and measure my weight and try to eat well and exercise and try to keep it down to 184. Sure enough this morning I was 184. I wanted to make sure that's what it was this morning seeing as I was going to mention it. However, my wife has been telling me for years and years and years that the scale is wrong. I wanted it to be right, so I said, "Don't worry about it." This week she went to the doctor and she got all ready to go, got her purse and whatever it is that women have, all the clothing and everything, and she stepped on the scale at the house. Then she went right down to the doctor's office where they weighed her in and she stepped on the scale again. When she got home she said, "Our scale is nine pounds off." It can't be!

It's interesting how you can go for years and years and your core assumptions about life can be wrong. But that's not all. She really needed me badly because she said, "You know, our scale is nine pounds under. I wonder how many pounds over your college scale was?" There is no mercy. Then she said, "What if your college scale was nine pounds heavier, you could actually be 18 pounds heavier than your college weight right now?" Thanks a lot.

If you get core assumptions wrong, a lot of things go wrong. We're doing this series now on Biblical Manhood. I'm asking the question as I prepare, who are the men in the Bible that we most admire and why, and what do they have in common? Then I'm trying to find some common themes that we can talk about together. I've tried to do something for you that is not the standard "Read your Bible more, try to be a good person, stay out of trouble and good luck." It's a little bit more than that.

This morning I want to talk to you about a subject that I think many of you probably have considered at some point, but I want to come at it at a different angle. All of the years that I have been working with men which is a total now of nearly 30 years, but vocationally for 11 or 12 years on a regular basis, basically, several times a week, all of my adult life, I have met men to who are in bondage to different things. I am going to talk about a few examples here, but I want you to know that even though some of you are going to think I am talking about you, I have intentionally chosen examples that are men who are not part of this Bible Study. Although I also know that a number of you have similar situations.

One man is in bondage to his wife. She is dysfunctional. She is abusing his children, and he feels like he is in some sort of a prison because his wife has a pent-up rage and anger and it comes out all the time. He walks around on pins and needles and tries to manage that. He's in bondage.

Another man I know, because of 911 and the recession, has business problems that are eating him alive, and he's in bondage. He's a slave, really, to his business. In fact, he just lost a piece of his business, 20%, in just one phone call. One of the reasons it went away was because he wouldn't pay a kickback to the purchasing agent.

Several men I know are struggling with health problems that are long-term illnesses. They will never be well. One man, a young man in his 30's, Crohn's disease, constantly in a state of fatigue, will never be well, humanly speaking, unless there is some kind of healing. He's in bondage to a physical infirmity. Many of you, of course, are, too.

Another man I know has been in long-term depression ever since I've known him, and I've known him for over ten years. The entire time I have known him he's been long-term depression. There is a practical term for this. You can go on Google.com, put in long-term male depression, and you'll find thousands of things about this. Part of the root of this bondage that he has is the relationship with his father where he is constantly trying to make his father happy. No matter what he does, he can't make his father happy.

There are many other kinds of bondage as well. Why are so many men in bondage, and what can we do about it? That's the topic. If you would, let's look at Luke: Chapter 13, Verse 10 and following. If you don't have a Bible, I want to encourage you to look on with somebody. This is a wonderful passage. As we read this, the approach I want you to use, and the question I want you to ask yourself as we read this Scripture, "Is this true? Is this story really true, and is it for us today?" I want to get at why so many men are in bondage.

"On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years." Crippled by what – the spirit? "She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.'" What did Jesus do? He set her free from her infirmity. "Then he put his hands on her and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, 'There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.' The Lord answered him, 'You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years...'" Who has kept this woman bound for 18 long years? Satan. "... be set free on the Sabbath day from what has bound her?" When He said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things He was doing."

Why was she in bondage? She was in bondage because of an evil spirit sent by Satan. Can you handle that? She was a woman walking around hunched over, crippled over, physical infirmity for 18 years because she needed a Chiropractor. Maybe she did need a Chiropractor, but that's not why she was hunched over. She was hunched over because Satan had sent an evil spirit to cripple her and keep her in bondage. Can you handle that? Is it true, and is it for our day? Are the Scriptures like this for us today?

What are some other reasons that people are in bondage? People are in bondage because you have the devil, you have the world, and the world is a fallen place. We have to manage against the fall day-to-day and the flesh. We have a sinful nature. Those of us who have Christ in our lives have available to us the spirit, the spirit of God is in us, the Holy Spirit. We can respond to our life situations in the power of the Holy Spirit if we make that choice, but we also know that we can choose to respond in the flesh out of our sinful nature and that leads to bondage. So, there are many ways we can come to bondage.

Now, why was this woman healed? Did she ask Jesus to heal her? In this particular example, no, she did not ask Jesus to heal her. She was healed because Jesus wanted to heal her and, in fact, in the Greek translation and a couple of the other translations, Jesus said, "It was necessary that I heal this woman and free her from her bondage."

It's actually necessary for Jesus to free you from your bondage. For some of us, we will experience that here. All of us will experience it at the last day. Every one of us in this room, whatever bondage you have, it could be any kind of addiction, (I'm hoping you'll overcome this before then), but whatever addiction, whatever sinful weakness, whatever temptation pattern you have, whatever it is, whether it's a marriage that is just really difficult or children who have embittered you because of their poor behavior as they've become adults? I know that many of you have a lot of child pain. For Jesus to be Jesus, it is necessary for you to be free from this bondage, either now or then. Now the reason she was healed was because Jesus wanted to and because her worldview allowed it.

Francis Schaeffer, whom I quote from time to time, is one of my heroes. I like to quote dead people. The reason I like to quote dead people is that it is a lot safer especially when you go to tape because they can come back at you. The reason I really like to quote dead people is that you've been able to see how they've lived their whole life and what their record is at the end. It's interesting Christians are the only people, and I've studied last words for several years, how many pagans recant. I've never heard of a Christian recanting. A lot of pagans say ----- W. C. Fields was caught on the set reading a Bible and was asked what he was doing, and he said, "I'm looking for a loophole."

This is the complete works of Francis Schaeffer that I have right here. He's written over 20 books. I have the hard volumes here, the set. I have many of these books as single books. That is how I really read them myself. Then I have many of these also in my computer library. If you asked, "Where does Francis Schaeffer say thus and such?" I can tell you that fast by just by plugging it in my computer library.

What's interesting about the complete works of Francis Schaeffer is the sub-title that is selected for this entire collection of over 20 books. It says, "The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, a Christian Worldview." So if I were out there, and I were you sitting there, and I saw that one of the great thinkers of all times had chosen his entire works to be dramatically put under the big umbrella of a Christian Worldview, I would hope it would occur to you to say, "A Christian Worldview, that must be something pretty important. Maybe I need to pay attention this morning a little bit more carefully. Maybe this Christian Worldview would be good for me."

Listen to what Schaeffer had to say about a Christian Worldview. "Men tend to act ultimately with remarkable consistency to their presuppositions, their worldview. Now some of you are probably wondering why I am spending so much time here in this series on the heart instead of the behavior. Well, that's because you can't behave yourself out of something you've believed yourself into. Does this make sense? Maybe you have a child or know of someone who's gone to a drug rehab center. How successful do you think that drug rehabilitation would be if the only thing they did the whole time was try to modify the behavior of the patient? Let's just say the person was in there for 90 days and, basically, all they did was work on behavior modification, and did nothing to change the belief system, the way the person thinks, the worldview, if you will, the system by which they are operating. How successful do you think the drug rehabilitation program would be? The _____ would be 100% because the person is not thinking any differently about drugs, gets out, and soon gets involved again.

What is a worldview at all? I am going to read to you from Ron Nash's book, "*Worldviews in Conflict*." Actually, I am going to read you a quote that's on your question sheet. Ron Nash says, "A worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life." He talks about things as God, mankind, reality, knowledge and morality. "It is a conceptual scheme into which we fit everything we believe and from which we interpret and judge reality." Basically, everything we do comes out of our worldview. It is a set of beliefs that we have about why the world works the way it does, what's important, and it's out of this worldview; it's out of the heart. This is where it all takes place in the heart. Everything we do comes out of the overflow of what's going on in our heart. That is what our worldview is. Okay, enough of that.

Let's turn to Romans: Chapter 12, Verse 2 and let's look for a solution. So what is the problem we're trying to solve? Here's the problem I'm hoping we can inch toward this morning. Because of our worldviews, because of the worldview that you have, because of the worldview that I have, it is very difficult to accept this Biblical reality that we're talking about here week after week after week. It's very difficult to accept the truth of this. I understand that we feel good about it and we walk out of here into a world where we are bombarded by messages that are _____ It is very difficult to believe this but what about our own experience? In our day it is quite common for Christians to interpret their Bibles by their experiences when the Bible admonishes us to interpret our experience by our Bibles. Given those two things, they create lots of problems. So the problem we're trying to solve is because of our worldviews, many of us just can't accept what the Bible says is true.

Here's the solution. Romans: Chapter 12, Verse 2. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." Let me read to you a couple of other versions of that. "Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking." Another version. "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world." "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." What happens when we do that? "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Here's the big idea for this morning. I will let Jesus be Jesus in my worldview. I am going to, as an act of my faith, as an act of my will, I am going to let Jesus be Jesus in my worldview. I am going to invite Jesus to come into my life. I am not going to conform any longer to the customs, the beliefs, the patterns, the systems, the worldview of this world, but I'm going to let Jesus be Jesus in my worldview, and I'm going to invite him to transform the way I think. I'm going to renew my mind. I'm going to open my mind to the possibility that this is true, that this Bible is reality, that what I'm going through day-by-day is that my core assumptions are wrong because the scale is wrong. This is the scale of dead reckoning. The other scale I've been using is off. The core assumptions are off.

You've heard it said before, Christianity is a mile wide and an inch deep. You've heard this. Some of you have heard this. You've heard it in many different contexts. American Christians they're a mile wide and an inch deep. Christianity is a mile wide and an inch deep. They know everything there is to know about God and the Bible but they won't even speak to their next-door neighbor. The bigger problem is that 90 million out of 98 million men in the United States are not involved in any kind of Bible Study like this. Eleven out of 12 men in the United States are not involved in a Bible Study like this – no spiritual development. I think it would be more accurate to say that instead of Christianity being a mile wide and an inch deep, that it's an inch wide and an inch deep. That's what Christianity is for most men in our country because they have a worldview that doesn't let Jesus be Jesus.

A friend of mine tells a story. The executive team of Nordstrom's invited the executive team from J. C. Penney Company to come and visit them. Nordstrom's, that is moving here, has a tremendous reputation for being an excellent retailer, one of the best in the world. As they were sitting around, the executives from J. C. Penney, as the story goes, said to the Nordstrom's executive team, "You know, you have this incredible reputation for being one of the greatest retailers in the world. What's the secret of your success? How do you do this?" The Nordstrom people looked at each other a little oddly. One of the guys got up, went into the other room and came back with a book and laid it down on the table. It was a book that was over 100 years old and was the original operating manual of the J. C. Penney Company. He said, "We do everything it says in that book."

If you want to renew your mind, if you want to let Jesus be Jesus in your worldview, just do everything in the book.

Let's pray:

Father, Christian Worldview – I pray for these men who will leave here today and be bombarded by so many other worldviews, worldviews that not only contradict Christianity, but cause us to question the truth of Christianity. Lord, I pray that you would help each of us to not be conformed, but to renew ourselves to be transformed and that you would help us, Lord, be able to say, "I will let Jesus be Jesus in my worldview. Lord help us to believe this book." Amen

/cjb 4/13/02