

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
BIBLICAL MANHOOD - A MAN CREATED TO WORSHIP
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Happy Memorial Day Weekend to everybody. In my case, I have no plans, and that's best plan, so whatever you're going to do, I hope you have a great weekend.

I want to mention Project Fathers' Day one last time. I think this has been extended now for five more days, so if you haven't ordered a case of 48 books, \$50, you can order as many cases as you want for your church, or for the trunk of your car. I keep a case in my trunk to give out. I have this idea in mind a book a week, that's one case a year, kind of an interesting idea for those of you in selling. Where can you get good Christian literature for a buck a book that you can distribute and use in ministry?

Let me invite you to turn to John: Chapter 4, and we will begin at Verse 20. If you want to twist your seat around, go ahead and do that as well. Are there any other announcements? It's kind of a light day - good.

John: Chapter 4. We are doing a series on Biblical Manhood. Last week we did a session on the Holy Spirit, and today we're going to do a session on worship, "A Man Created for Worship." One of our newest leaders told me, in fact, this is one of the things that really attracted me to him as a potential leader. He said, "My daily prayer is that I will not be lukewarm." So what is the opposite of lukewarm? Hot - on fire. So, he wants to be on fire. Let me tell you a little caricature, I think, of how I think a lot of men worship. Frankly, it would not be any of you men here worshipping in this way because you're here. But here's how I think a lot of men worship. By the way, we'll talk about what worship is here a little bit, too.

A man comes to church on Sunday morning. He sits in the same place every week. He brings his family. They argue on the way. As soon as they get out of the car, they all put on their smiles because they want to look like they're overcoming rather than overcome. Then they go into their standard pew, and they sit down. He breathes a sigh of relief, and he's thinking, "Okay, Pastor, here I am," and he's thinking one of two things either fill me or amaze me. So the Pastor preaches, the congregation sings, there is time of prayer, there is time of meditation, maybe the Lord's Supper, so by the time the worship service is over, the man is beginning to feel a little life come back because he's gained a little Jesus, a little renewal through this process of worship. Then he leaves church, and let's just say he's not "on fire," but let's say he has a pretty good blaze going, and now he has enough Jesus to at least begin his week. Monday comes, and he's up there at 7/8 of a full tank, you know, and by the end of Monday he's down to 3/4 of a tank, then he motors through Tuesday's problems, and Wednesday's challenges, and he's down to half-full. He gets to Thursday's opportunities, and he finds that by Friday morning he's down to less than a quarter of a tank. By Saturday morning, he actually has hit empty. So he got through the weekend, he got enough Jesus for the week, but he gets to the weekend though, and he's on empty. He kind of mopes around on Saturday, then on Sunday morning, he loads the family up into the car, and he starts off to church, and he's now just basically, completely out of fuel, out of Jesus, and so he is able to get within sight of the church building and completely runs out of gas. At least he has a little momentum so he's able to coast into the parking lot where he parks, gets out the car, trudges into church, looks around for his normal seat, then he goes and plops down and once again he says, "Okay, Pastor, fill me, fill me, Pastor, or amaze me." A lot of men go through this kind of worship cycle that you might call "weekly worship." You could say "weekly" or "weakly" whichever version of that you like.

Now here's the big idea that I want to work with this morning. Here's the big idea for today. (Blank) worship - you get to build your own kind of worship this morning, leads to (blank) renewal. We just looked at weekly worship leads to a certain type of weekly renewal. I sure wish I wrote more pretty than that or more handsome than that - not pretty - more handsome than that, but that's the best I can do. So, most men really, I'm not suggesting any of us here, but if you were just talking to men that are involved, you realize that out of 98 million men, only 26 million men are involved in worship. That means that the

balance, 72 million, are not involved in any kind of weekly worship and 26 million that are. But, most of them, I think it's safe to say, that the little caricature that I just gave you, the "weekly" model of worship is the model that most men are under. You get to decide the frequency of your worship, and you get to decide the frequency of your renewal. The frequency of your worship will actually determine the state of renewal you are in.

The Biblical model for the renewal of worship is basically found in three different passages. We're going to talk about worship, and I want to talk from John: 4 and Daniel: 3, and Revelation: 4.

Let's take a look at John: 4, Verse 20 together. This is the story of the woman at the well, and she said, "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Then Jesus said, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews." There's a very dense saying. Then the part I want to talk about, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship Him in spirit and truth."

What does it mean to worship God in spirit? What does it mean to worship God in truth? To worship God in spirit, if you will permit me, is to worship Him from the heart. It's to worship Him with our emotions. Some of you are going "Emotions - we can't have that," and some of you are going "Ah, emotions, what a relief." So the first part of worship is doxology. It's to worship God with our heart, with our emotions, and the totality of our being, then to worship Him in truth. What would truth be? If spirit is doxology, then truth would be orthodoxy. It is to worship Him with our head. We worship with our heart, we worship with our head, we worship with our emotions, and we also worship with our intellect. So worship really involves the totality of our being.

Now you know there are thousands of books that have been written on worship even though it is not necessarily a favorite topic of men. I am going to read to you from "*A Quest for Godliness*" by J. I. Packer. This is a book on the Puritan way of life. He's a modern day Puritan. He quotes all the Puritans. He says, "What is worship? It is essentially doxology, a given of glory, praise, honor and homage to God. In the broadest sense of the word," he says, "all through piety is worship. Godliness is a worship." Then he quotes a Puritan writer who says, "Worship comprehends all that respect which man owes and gives to his maker. It is the tribute which we pay to the King of Kings whereby we acknowledge His sovereignty over us in our dependence upon Him. All that inward reverence and respect, and all that outward obedience and service to God is included in this one word 'worship.'" He says, "Worship is all our direct communion with God, invocation, adoration, meditation, faith, praise, prayer, receiving instruction from His word both public and private."

Jonathon Edwards said this, "The substance of all religions is conscious communion with God." So that's what worship is. It's giving all that we have, all that's within us in adoration and praise of a great God.

Now if you would, turn with me to Daniel: Chapter 3. We will not be coming back to John. You could be here today and be feeling very blessed. You could be filled with Christ to the overflow this morning. You have all kinds of Jesus. You have plenty for yourself and plenty to give away to other people because you are blessed.

Or you could be here this morning, (this whole table, by the way, is on a long weekend together, did you know that?) and be spiritually dry this morning. You could be just so dry you feel like chalk or something. Or you could be like me this morning; you could be desperate. I am in a state of desperation. Now watch this. Just because I feel desperate doesn't mean that I am. Do you understand that? I feel desperate this morning. I have a financial crisis. But just because you're desperate doesn't mean that you are. It's all a matter of perspective. I have worshiped this morning. I am filled up into the overflow with my relationship with Jesus. I am in a state of continuous worship right now. Continuous worship leads to continuous renewal as cyclical worship, which is often what people do, leads to a state of cyclical renewal.

But I am in a state of renewal, a state of daily, continuous renewal right now even though I am in desperation.

That's the power of worship. It brings us into contact with the living God. This may not be theological, but it seems instructive to me. I thought about this last week. I said, "Okay, here's 'P', the problem. Whatever problem it is that's overwhelming you, then here's little old me right here." If this is how you see your problems, little me, big problems, then, obviously, you're going to be overwhelmed. You can't help having feelings of being overwhelmed anyway, but check this out. When we bring ourselves to continuous worship, or daily worship, into contact with a living God, then here's what happens. Here's "P" problem, here's me, and here's Jesus. All of a sudden this changes the calculus of the problem quite a bit. When you're abiding in Jesus, what's happening is you're letting your roots go down into them when you are allowing yourself to be grafted into the Lord then interesting things happen. What happens is you know how things kind of attach, little tentacles, so this becomes more and more powerful.

Here I am over here, and I'm looking at this huge problem, I'm saying what the Pastor of a local church said. They took on a huge debt and almost went under. For years and years and years, they had this big debt problem. Finally, the Pastor said, "You know what we need to do, we need to stop telling God how big this mountain of debt is and start telling this big mountain of debt how big our God is." They paid their mortgage off. So here's a huge idea for you. Continuous worship leads to continuous renewal, and this is the thing that happens. You might be in desperation, feeling wise, but what do feelings have to do with it? The reality is that our God is so much bigger than any problem that you have, it's okay to feel desperate. But just because you feel desperate doesn't mean that you are. Just because I feel desperate doesn't mean that I am. I am not desperate. I feel desperate, but I'm not desperate. The only way you get there though is through worship.

If I were doing weekly worship, I'd be doing pretty weakly now wouldn't I? So you put your own word in here. You can do daily, you can do weekly, you can do monthly, you can do periodically, you can do emergency, you can do any kind of worship you want, but whatever kind of worship you do, it's the kind of renewal that you're going to have. If you want to be in the state of constant or daily renewal, then I urge you, in the name of Jesus, to be involved in regular, continuous, daily, constant worship.

Shadrack, Meshach & Abednego - we're not even going to read about these guys. I'm just going to tell you about these guys. These guys were involved in worshipping God. They were involved in a state of renewal. They were filled to the overflow and Nebuchadnezzar said, "If you don't worship his idol, you're going to die." So they said they wouldn't do it. Nebuchadnezzar was enraged by this, and he said, "You bow down, and if you don't bow down, you're going into the fire."said, "Hey, Nebuchadnezzar, we're not going to bow down to worship you or your idol, because our God is going to save us. But even if he doesn't, oh King, we will not bow and worship you. We only worship God." One of the things that happens in continuous worship is that you have continuous renewal and you have the strength to resist worshipping all these other Gods that are out there all the time. Big idea, big idea --

If you will turn with me to Revelation: Chapter 4. Now, why do we worship? We worship for a simple reason. We worship because He is worthy of our worship. We see in Revelation: Chapter 4, Verse 8, there were these living creatures with six wings. You have all of these funny-looking Biblical animals, or whatever they are, beings is probably the best word. It is a lot easier to visualize these now that we have Star Wars, but it says, "Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'" Down to Verse 11, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things...."

Chapter 5, Verse 9, "And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy...'" In Verse 12, "In a loud voice they sang, 'Worthy is the lamb, who was slain...'" We worship our great God because He is worthy of our worship.

Now what I want to do is shift gears and give you ten practical suggestions for a richer worship life that you can have. I'm going to run through these pretty quickly. Some of these you, no doubt, already do, some of these may not ring your bell at all, and so this is not a magical list of things you can do to worship God, but some things that will give you more of a continuous or daily type of worship experience and, therefore, renewal. This probably is the most abstract of the ideas, but it's the word "prepare."

When I was talking to David Delk, from the Man in the Mirror, about this talk, I said, "What do you think are the most practical things I could suggest to these men? (Trying to get some research in) He said, "I don't care what else you tell them, but just tell them to take two breaths before they start." This is the idea of preparation. Is there just a magic posture that you have to have to worship? It's not a specific place that you have to be in, although that can be helpful to have a place maybe where you read the Bible. But when you're lying in bed before you roll out in the morning, prepare yourself for the day. Turn your thoughts to God and maybe say a prayer. Before I get out of bed every morning, I do some type of praying to God just dedicating the day to Him or whatever it is, whatever is on my heart. I don't have a formula, but before I get out of bed, I do something to prepare for the day. On your way to church, before you leave the house, think about what you're going to do.

Richard Foster, in his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, which I highly recommend, has a chapter on the Discipline of Worship. One of the things that he suggests, and I read this book 20 years ago, and I've been doing it ever since, when I arrive at church, I look around, and I look for people who kind of have drooped shoulders walking, and I pray for them. I pray for the Pastor, I pray for the worshipers, I pray for the experience. It's interesting how much I get up for worship by helping others get up for worship. Anyway, that's the idea of to prepare.

The second suggestion is creation. You could use a lot of different words for this, but this is the idea of contemplating God's creation, His general revelation. If you've been here for any time at all, you know how I love to sit out in the back yard before day break and look up into the cosmos to the starry hosts and just imagine God, "When I consider your heavens the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have made, what is man that you are mindful of and the son of man that you care for Him." So God took His hand and dipped it into a bowl of liquid light and flicked His fingers against the curtain of the night and erased all the cosmos, and how do you understand that? Well, I fall down and worship. Worship in the *Old Testament*, the Hebrew word means to bow down or to prostrate yourself. In the *New Testament*, the Greek word means to kiss, the way a dog licks its master's hand. By contemplating God and creation, just the majesty of creation it can lead one to a numinous moment to a sense of awe and reverence of this great God.

Third is Bible. If creation is God's general revelation, the Bible is God's special revelation. The Bible is where we gain knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, of faith and repentance and obedience, and how we might live our lives. You might consider having a regular place in your home where you go and you know that when I you go to that place, I am going to meet with God there because I am going to look into His word. I am going to study, and I'm going to allow Him to speak to me in private study through His word.

Next is prayer. There are all kinds of ways to pray. There are set prayers, and there are spontaneous prayers. I would encourage you to have a running conversation with God. Most people have a running conversation with themselves. "I wonder whether I should go to that party tonight. I wonder whether or not I should buy this product from this person. I wonder whom I should call next for my next sales presentation. I wonder, I wonder, I wonder. Maybe you could turn those into prayers and have a running conversation with God which would be a form of continuous worship which could lead to continuous renewal, not to mention continuous guidance. There's a thought.

Books - you all know that I love books. I am going to read you a quote from Richard Baxter who in 1656 wrote this in the book *The Reformed Pastor*. He's giving advice to pastors. He says, "See that in every family there are some useful, moving books besides the Bible. If they have none, persuade them to buy some. If they be not able to buy them, give them some if you can. If you are not able yourself, get some gentlemen or other rich persons that are ready to do good works to do it and engage them to read them at night when they have leisure and, especially, on the Lord's day." If you want to have new thoughts about God, you can do that through reading the Bible, but also by reading good Christian literature.

Another way is through music. I decided on the way over this morning to put a CD of worship music into my CD player. I found myself in a state of worship as I was driving over here this morning. So between appointments, if you're a lawyer on your way to a deposition, or if you're a computer programmer, you stick it in your headphones in your cubicle, whatever it is, but music that inspires you to worship and praise and adoration of our great God.

I had a horrible business crisis that I've mentioned here before back in the These crisis seem to find me more often that I'd like. Anyway, I had this huge crisis in business, and I had to let a guy go. He was a Regional Manager for our company, and he was a Christian. He wrote me this caustic, asserbic letter. This is a guy I prayed with and we shared. It said, "Dear Mr. Morley." It kind of went downhill from there. Just a victriolic, venomous outpouring of rage and cynicism, and I was pretty wounded by it. I was already having enough problems. If you're having enough problems that you have to let somebody go, you're already having a lot of problems without that, right? As I left work that day, I felt a little root of bitterness grab hold of me, and that was the first time that I had ever felt bitterness. It's just not part of my grit. I have many other problems, but bitterness is not one of them. So I felt this little root of bitterness wrapping itself around my heart, so I prayed as I was leaving the office. I said, "Lord, please, on top of all the other problems that I have, please don't also let me know become a bitter man." Just as vividly as we're talking here today, the voice exploded in my mind, "Praise me." That was not part of my paradigm, "Praise to God," but I happen to have a Maninatha???? Audio cassette tape in my car so I stuck it into the cassette player, and I turned the volume up until the windows started to reverberate or vibrate (whatever they do), you see them all the time now with these big booms, but it was really gone. Just like that it was gone. Instant worship leads to instant renewal.

What else? So we have music. How about a pencil or a pen? I'm going to put pen because I'm running out of room. Take the time, perhaps give it a try, to jot down your thoughts. I keep an annual journal, and I don't have any pattern, rhyme or reason, but whenever I have a thought that I think is worth recording about you or me, I put it in this journal, and it helps me sort out my thinking. A lot of times we have thoughts and we lose them completely - they're gone forever. So writing them down is a great way of doing that.

I'm going to tell you the final three I wanted to mention are public worship, which is in church; family worship, let's not neglect leading our wife and our children into a deeper holiness and experience a worship with God; and, finally, through our work. We did a talk here not long ago on work as an act of worship, but I'm not going to mention that now. So there are some practical suggestions for a guy would like to have a deeper, more rich worship experience with God.

When I became a Christian, I knew that God was bigger than me. I knew He was higher than me. I just didn't think He was that much higher. But, what happens, and you know this is true, when you begin to study God, your view of Him, the more you learn about Him, the higher and higher He seems to get. In fact, it seems there are no limits to how high and holy God is. Then one day as you have studied the greatness of God, you look around and you realize, "You know I'm not really as big of a deal as I once thought I was." Your own estimate of yourself begins to go down. It's interesting, the more you worship the Lord, the more you renew yourself in the Lord. It never stops. He just keeps getting bigger, and I just keep getting smaller, not in the sense of human dignity understand, but I just realize that I am just not that big a deal as I thought I was. Call this the au gap - the distance between our sense of who God is and our sense of who we are. The way we get to this state of not being lukewarm, of being hot, is to bring ourselves into a state of constant, continuous worship. That's what leads to constant, continuous renewal.

So, as you're going off to work today, say a little prayer before you leave, say a little prayer before staff get-togethers, you're going to lunch with somebody, talk to God about it. Somehow take the experience of worshiping God into everything you're going to do this weekend. Take it out for a spin. All of us worship God. What I'm saying is, instead of doing it on a weekly basis, think about how you might be able to do it on a continuous basis.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father, you have created us to worship. We cannot be happy unless we are worshiping you. All men are worshipers, and we worship you. Father, I pray that you would help each of us to think about ways that we might, in a more practical way, worship you so that we are able to experience an ongoing renewal in the Gospel of Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen

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