

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - A MAN AND WORSHIP

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Over the years I have become fascinated with, and quite interested in, Formula One racing. There are a lot of reasons for this. Perhaps the main reason, though, is the person of Michael Shumacher, the highest paid athlete in the world. His base salary is \$38 million. But not only is he the most highly paid athlete in the world, he, I would argue, is the greatest competitor in all of history. This year, so far, he has won nine out of twelve Formula One races. Formula One is the racing league that is the pinnacle. Ferrari, for example, will put \$300 million into the racing program. This year he drives for Ferrari. To win 75% of your games is quite an accomplishment if you are only competing against one other team, but you have to remember, there are 22 drivers out there all trying to win. So, it's like 22 teams all trying to win, and to win 75% of the races against 21 other drivers is a remarkable accomplishment.

As you know, when you get interested in something you get deeper and deeper into it. Some guy came by the house to do some work, and he mentioned that he and his friend were also really into Formula One racing, and that they had a Play Station II. They had the Formula One, 2002 video game. I don't know what happened to me, but I decided I would check it out. So I went up to Best Buy just to see what it was. The next thing I know I am trying to explain to Patsy why I have a trunk full of Play Station toys. I tried to explain to her that since I have a ministry, and since I am writing the book, *The Young Man in the Mirror*, I need to be able to understand the culture. Business research expense I do not think my accountant will allow, but just to be honest with you guys here, if you can just keep it within these walls, that I just really find it exciting. I love speed, and I love competition. I've always loved speed, and I've always loved competition.

So, last week I'm out on the Play Station, and I've taken Michael Shumaker's car, and I'm running the French Grand Prix of Magni Cours???? The race is almost over, and would you believe in Shumacher's car, I am winning the race? I'm on a straightaway going over 180 miles an hour. Mind you, you're there. The whole world has disappeared - no distractions. You are there and I'm going 180 miles an hour, and my wife opens the door and says, "John's on the phone. Your son John is on the phone." So what do you do? So I pushed the pause button, right, and I went and talked to John and came back, and pushed the pause button. Do you have any idea how hard it is to control a Formula One racecar going 180 miles an hour when you've lost your context? Anyway, I was spinning out of control in every which direction, and I spun over the finish line and ended up in sixth place. So I lost, but I was winning the race, and I was going to be number one.

What I want to talk to you about this morning is a book by Neal Postman called, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. He makes an interesting comment in here, and I don't want to give you the thesis of the book because it's beyond the scope of the point I'm trying to make. But he quotes Huxley as saying the Civil Libertarians and rationalists who are ever on the alert to oppose tyranny failed to take into account mans almost infinite appetite for distractions. What he does is juxtaposes Orwell's 1984 with Huxley's *Brave New World* and makes the point that what Orwell told us is that what Orwell feared is that what we hate would ruin us -big brother and all that - but that Huxley's fear was that what we love would ruin us. The thesis of his book is really the possibility that it's Huxley, not Orwell, who is right.

The transition from there then to Doug Copland's book, he's the fellow who wrote *Generation X* and popularized the GenX term. He wrote a book later called *Life After God*. The relationship of my daughter and I is that we love to discuss theology. Yesterday she called me on the phone. She was reading the book of Ecclesiastes and getting depressed. Then she had read half of *Life After God* right after that at the Border's Book Store, and then she was thoroughly depressed. She wanted to call and talk about what does Ecclesiastes mean, what's going on with Doug Copland and so forth. I had read the book *Life After God*, too, and so the amusement, the insatiable appetite for distraction really culminates in a guy like Copland who probably plays video games, too. Reading from the dustcover of the book (are you tracking with me

so far because I'm taking you somewhere), "As suburban children we floated at night in swimming pools the temperature of blood, pools the color of earth as seen from outer space. You are the first generation raised without religion," he's writing to his young reader. "What happens if we are raised without religion or belief? As we grow older the beauty and enchantment of the world temper our soles. We are all living creatures with strong religious impulses, yet where do these impulses flow in a world of malls, TV, and jets? How do we cope with loneliness? How do we deal with anxiety, the collapse of relationships? How do we reach the quiet, safe layer of our lives?" Then he goes on to tell many stories in the book but on the next to last page he writes these concluding words, "Now here is my secret. I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again. So I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God; that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem capable of giving, to help me be kind as I no longer seem capable of kindness, to help me love as I've seen beyond being able to love."

We look at a world awash in amusements and amusements are fine, they're fun, they're good. We even need distractions from time to time, but after a period of years we realize there is a hunger, a deeper hunger in our soles that cannot be satisfied by mere amusements. Entertainments they can be, and they lead the soul into a longing, a longing for who or what? As Copeland points out, he discovered that his longing was for God.

Take a look at John: Chapter 4, Verse 23, and we'll see where I want to take you. Jesus is speaking to a Samaritan women and he said, "The time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshippers must worship Him in spirit and truth."

Jonathan Edwards observed that man is always worshipping something, so whether it's an amusement or some idol or even self, man is always worshipping something. What I'd like to suggest to you this morning is that God tells us that He is seeking worshippers. There are two pictures out here in the academic world. In one idea, the picture would be that man is out with a lamp searching the universe looking for God who is hiding from man. That would be one picture. Another picture would be a man who is eating, drinking and being merry, and yet God continues to send spokespeople, prophets and preachers to them and the man will not listen. Two very different pictures, but the Scripture tells us that God is seeking worshippers. God is not hiding from man. God is very, very large; very, very big, and He is actively seeking worshippers.

This morning I want to talk to you about three different kinds of men. One man is hurting. Some of you here would be hurting. The second kind of man would feel hollow, and I would say the author of *Life After God* might feel a little hollow. A third kind of man this morning would be happy. The big idea for today is the deepest hunger of the soul, whether hurting, hollow or happy, is to worship God. The deepest yearning, longing, hunger, thirst - I'm so thirsty right now. You've been thirsty where you just can't even focus you're so thirsty. The deepest thirst of the soul is to worship God. What are some of the reasons that a man would be hurting?

Let's just talk about Charles. Charles is hurting this morning. Why is Charles hurting this morning? He could be hurting because there's a lot of evil things going on in the world such as standing around minding his own business and overtaken by evil. Or he could be in a place where God is pruning him, or maybe he is suffering from sins consequences. God was not enough for Charles. He just felt like he needed something else to be happy. God was not enough so he found a woman, and he ended up in a relationship with this woman. He made an idol of sex, and he had every reason to do this in his own mind because his wife had emotionally disconnected from him 20 years ago. There was no warmth in the relationship. Every day for 20 years he was living with a woman and getting nothing back; nothing behind the eyes-nothing there. So he had an incredible thirst and hunger for lust. Instead of finding that in his relationship with God, he chose to find that in a relationship with a woman.

This hardly needs mentioning, but God will remove all idols, and it is gracious of Him to do so. Now Charles is still hurting but for a different reason. Now he's hurting because he's been found out. He's being chastened and disciplined. What is the greatest need that Charles has? What is the greatest need that a person who is hurting has? Let it hang; let it hang there.

Bruce feels like life is hollow like it's pointless, meaningless. Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless - what my daughter called me about yesterday. You know, for Charles life is not working. But Bruce has a different problem. His problem is that life is working, but so what? Everything is going along fine it seems, but everything seems pointless to him. He has every reason to be happy, but he is not. How do you get in that position? What are the temptations when you get there? All you have to do is live a little while in the world, and you begin to observe the utter futility of so much of what's going on. So the temptation is still there. This is all a joke. This is a cruel joke by a cruel puppeteer, so unbelief begins to enter in. The temptation over here is to find a distraction. Over here the temptation is just to sort of back off a little bit and really maybe continue to go through the motions of Christianity, still go to church, still pray, still read the Bible. But at the core, this hollow core say, "You know I'm not sure I really believe all this."

The third kind of guy is like Dan. Dan is happy. He has every reason to be happy. His professional career is going well, he's got a great marriage, he's loved, and his relationship with God is awesome. The three things that every man needs and wants he has satisfied. He has something to give his life to, he has someone to share it with, and he has a system that gives a reasonable explanation for why life is so difficult. His life is pretty good. Of course, he has his own set of temptations then, and the temptation is to take all this for granted, to become a little complacent or, even worse perhaps, to make an idol of success, but even worse than that, to take credit for it.

As anyone whose known me for any period of time knows that C.S. Lewis is my favorite author. In the collection of messages in one of his books called *The Weight of Glory*, Walter Hooper, who was his secretary at the end of Lewis' life, and was the one who put together all his unpublished works, tells a story in the introduction. He comments that Lewis was the most modest person he had ever known. He said, "Lewis was a truly modest man. If his books came naturally into our conversation, he would talk about them with the same detachment as in discussing some stranger's works, but he had no interest, as far as I could see, in his literary or theological position in the world. One evening this came up rather naturally. We had been talking about one of our favorite books, and I mentioned how disappointed I sometimes felt when Sir Lancelot went out to deliver a helpless lady from some peril or other. Then, just at that point where you can't admire him enough for selflessness, he explains to someone, as though it was the most natural thing in the world, that Lancelot is doing this to win worship, that is to increase his reputation." They then collectively, in their conversation, agree that that was an inheritance from paganism. Then Hooper said this, "Without intending any embarrassment, I asked Lewis if he was ever aware of the fact that regardless of his intentions, he was winning worship from his book. Lewis said in a low still voice and with the deepest and most complete humility I've ever observed in anyone, 'One cannot be too careful not to think about it. The house, the garden, the whole universe seemed hushed for a moment.' Then we began talking about it again."

For the man who is really happy today, one of the greatest temptations that he faces is that he would try to win worship for himself. So you have these three kinds of men here this morning. Men who feel happy, men who feel hollow, and men who feel like they are hurting like Charles, Bruce & Dan. Everybody this morning, at least once, perhaps more of these categories for various reasons, and all the writers you can ever read, all the old writers, new writers, any writer that is worth reading will tell you in so many words that the deepest hunger of our souls is to worship its Creator. So, the way that a happy man stays happy, the way that a hollow man gets filled up, and the way a hurting man gets healed is probably not exactly the way that most people would think it is.

What is it that makes worship worship? What is it that makes worship different from other spiritual disciplines? You have these needs, these problems, and it is appropriate at times and in places to go to God with these needs and these problems and ask God for help. He's in the habit of giving such help, right? But that's not what worship is. Worship is really something a little different than that which is focused on us. Worship is being so caught up in God that it's like going 180 miles an hour down a straightaway and you're completely oblivious to everything around you. You are completely absorbed up in the person, the Godhead, the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So caught up that if your wife opens the door and says your son is on the phone, say I'll have to call him back.

What happens when we worship? The creature, keenly aware of his creatureliness, comes into the presence of the one true Holy Father and, overcome, communes with, exalts, reveres and praises. We prostrate ourselves before our Holy God. What would you think of a son who the only time he ever gave you any attention was to tell you what his problems were, what his needs were, what he was doing, what he wanted, what his life was all about, and this son never, never expressed any gratitude to you for the sacrifices that you had made, never showed any interest in what you were doing, never said, "Dad, I hadn't mentioned it in a while how are you doing? How are things in your world? Have I told you lately that I love you? You know how much I respect you, Father, how much I appreciate what you are doing, the gratitude that I feel." How would you feel toward a son like that? The deep longings, hungers and thirsts that we have deep within us, we think often these are hungers for distractions or for love or for meaning, or for happiness. I am here to tell you this morning these hungers that you feel, these thirsts that you feel, these things are not really to be happy, merely to have a sense of meaning, merely to have our little broken lives fixed. Although that, too. But these hungers that we have is our soul longing for our God.

Turn with me to Psalm 42, Verse 1. The message this morning is that no matter what stage you find yourself in this morning whether you're hurting, feeling hollow or you're happy, the deepest hunger of our souls is to worship its Creator. "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" Verse 5, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me."

This is a man who knows that the deepest thirst of the soul is to worship its God. How do you do this? You do it anyway you want; you do it in public, in church, publicly here, you do it in private. If you are any kind of a man, you do it every day. If you are a weenie, you probably don't do it everyday. If you are a real man you worship God every day, and you would make it your practice to increasingly worship Him about everything, every customer you are in front of, every complainer toward your business, every employee problem that you have, every person you come in contact with, would be cause for you to worship your God.

There is a message here. You can get it on the website if you want it. When we did the series on Work and the Man in the Mirror, message one was work is an act of worship that we would see everything we do during the course of the day as an opportunity to worship our God, to praise Him, to exalt Him, to revere him. Some of the things we come across during the course of day, at least maybe not physically, but in our hearts, would cause us to want to prostrate ourselves before a Holy God when we see His goodness and His greatness. Worship is the soul to communing with God and increasingly so every day.

Let us pray:

Lord, when things are going really well, it is easy speaking for myself, Lord, to not worship you when that should be the very cause of worship. Lord, when we feel hollow and think that life is pointless, the way out of that must certainly be to bring ourselves into your presence and commune with you. Lord, when we are hurting, Lord, it's interesting, no matter what our circumstances the way we satisfy the deepest hunger of our souls is always the same and that is to worship our Creator. Lord, I pray, I'm not sure what you want to do in our lives here this morning, Lord. I haven't had that sense all week of exactly what it is you want to do, but, Lord, I know you want to do something. So I pray that you'd help each of us respond to the promptings of your Holy Spirit. I pray that you would help each of us to continue to grow as worshippers of the one true God because we know, Lord, you are seeking us to do this. In Christ's name. Amen.