

**Man in the Mirror Bible Study**  
**Spiritual Disciplines- A Man and Service**  
**Patrick Morley 9/20/2002**

Men want to feel significant. Men want to do something with their life. They want to be somebody, right? So I'm here to tell you this morning, that some of you are here because you would like your life to count and to make a difference. I want you to know that God wants you to be happy, healthy, and wealthy. That's his greatest desire. I'm going to talk to you for a minute about how you can become a great man in this city- how you can accomplish all of your dreams and be well respected in this community, and be well thought of.

Really, you can do anything you want to do if you just set your mind to do it. This is my advice, if you really want to be somebody. Today and over the next several years, you should devote yourself, all of your time, as much as you can, to making as much money as you possibly can. You should do this honestly, of course. Then I want to encourage you to find the most expensive neighborhood you can afford and move into that neighborhood. Why? You should do this because God loves you. It's all about you. God loves me. It's about me.

Then, my advice to you would be to get the fanciest possible car that the bank will give you a loan on because prestige really comes on the heels of possessing the benefits of success. In fact, fake it till you make it. Go ahead and stretch it a little bit and get a better car than you really ought to be purchasing based on the amount of income you have. No doubt the income will surely follow in the future. Then you need to get involved in civic and government affairs and make a reputation for yourself, because if you become well known in the community and well respected, then you get to have a lot of people at your funeral, someday. It's not a bad idea to have a big funeral. I'm hoping to have one myself.

Next, you need to take exotic vacations. If you really don't have enough money to do it, this is why they make mastercard and visa. I really wouldn't be too concerned about it because you have many months to pay for it and it's really important to go on exotic vacations as opposed to normal vacations. You want to be able to tell your friends about it, both before you go, so that they can anticipate and be jealous of you. Then of course, when you get back, so that you can make them feel like slugs. I don't want you to overlook the fact that God loves you and wants you to be happy, healthy, and wealthy.

Don't do anything that would deny your children any of the latest designer labels. Kids need these things to be successful in life; and you want your kids to be well thought of. You don't want your kids to be the brunt of other kids' mean cruel jokes. You should also make sure you buy your wife expensive jewelry because if your wife looks good it makes you look good. Then lavish gifts on other people. It even says in the Proverbs that a gift ushers the giver into the presence of the great. You just need to go do the things that make you happy.

There are several men who come to mind when I think about this paradigm of success. These men have worked hard to achieve their goals for success and have come to a point where they are able to have pretty much anything that they want.

The essence of God's blessing is that he takes care of us right? Can I get very personal with you? I think that you ought to play it safe. Go lukewarm in the kingdom, that's okay, the main thing is that you play it safe because you want to have a lot of people at your funeral. Now, what's the problem with this whole scenario? I have obviously done a little parody on this, but what's the problem here?

There are several problems here. Not the least of which, this is actually, humor taken away, the message that we mostly hear in Christian life today. Am I wrong? Am I embellishing it? Yes. However, is this message not the essence of the Christian message that we here today? "It's about me." So that's one problem. This is the message that we actually hear. What are some other problems with this?

It is a worldly message. The only difference is that we have tried to sanctify it by introducing God into the equation.

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophies which depend upon human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

There is an even greater problem from a practical standpoint. This message does not work. These things will not make you happy. In fact, it will make you miserable. Many of the men that I made reference to, that had it all, so to speak, received and were incredibly unhappy. One man said that his problem was that he needed to give. Another man, that said he was able to do whatever he wanted to do, is now dead. He spent the last several years of his life sitting in a chair depressed doing what he wanted to do. Another man who is the managing partner of one of those firms with the long name, just finished doing a service project building Christ into the lives of a group of men. He said, "Pat, I don't know what it is but I feel happier in my life right now than I have in a long time."

I want to talk to you about the spiritual discipline of service- the idea of having a ministry. I want us to look at the example set for us by our own Lord Jesus. I want to talk to you a little bit about where the motivation comes from to actually serve Christ and then look at some applications.

The problem that I would like to address this morning, one that I have been thinking through this week is: Why is it that some men are highly motivated to serve and others are lukewarm? How do we get motivated so that we don't end up being lukewarm. So that we don't end up running around trying to make money, trying to buy big houses...I'm not saying anything bad about all of those things, but they are so far down the list. They are wood, hay and stubble.

In Matthew 20:20 "The mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her two sons and knelt down in front of him saying, " Grant that one of these two boys of mine might be able to sit at your right hand and the other at your left in the kingdom."

Jesus said, "You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink? You will indeed drink from my cup but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

When the other disciples heard about the boys they were indignant. Jesus said to them, "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise their authority over them. Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Turn to John 13. This is Jesus taking off his clothes (cultural deal) putting on a towel, and washing his disciples feet. In verse 12 the scripture says, "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and went back to his place and asked them, "Do you understand what I have just done for you? You call me teacher and Lord, rightly so, because that is what I am. Now that I your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet you also should wash one another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things you will be blessed if you do them."

Richard Foster, in his book, Celebration of Discipline, writes something on this text about the discipline of service:

As the cross is the sign of submission, so the towel is the sign of service. Most of us know that we will never be the greatest, just don't let us be the least, right? Then Jesus took a towel and a basin and redefined greatness. In some ways we would prefer Jesus' call to deny Father and Mother, houses, and land for the sake of the gospel than his word to wash feet. Radical self-denial gives the feel of adventure. If we have to chance to forsake all then we have the chance to glorious martyrdom. But in service we must experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves. Service banishes us to the mundane, the ordinary, the trivial.

So why are some men highly motivated while others are lukewarm? Here's what happens men, Kierkegaard says, "The wisdom of the years is confusing." We live our lives and end up being confused. That confusion leads to despair, and that despair leads us to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That repentance, our surrender to Christ leads to a filling of the spirit. Our lives really do begin to get better. The point is that we really do experience a blessing from God when we genuinely repent. Life really does get better as we come to some understanding of the depth of the riches of his grace, his mercy, our destiny, the holiness of God.

Like Isaiah, every man in here who does know Christ, you have had an encounter with this living God. Similarly, God has penetrated your universe. He has changed you, healed you, and he has put the hot coal on the tip of your tongue. You've heard him say, "Who will go? Whom shall I send?" You have cried out because of your incredible

gratitude to this great God, "Here I am, Lord. Send me." Or you have not. You receive all of these great gifts: this grace, this mercy, but you never grow. You never grow, change, or serve.

It's a choice that you make. The motivation to follow the example of Jesus is to bring yourself into the real presence of this holy God, repeatedly. You will eventually find yourself a very grateful man, overwhelmed with a desire to do something to serve. If you don't feel, right now, the motivation or desire to serve God, don't. Don't waste your time doing something that you don't want to do. I'll tell you what you need to do, what we all need is to go put ourselves in the presence of the living God. We need to search the depths of his holiness, his righteousness, his omnipotence, his benevolence, his grace, and mercy. We must seek the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Transcendent God, the Imminent Christ. Bring yourself into the presence of Jesus, and in due time you will fill up with gratitude and then do something to serve. That's how you get motivated.

Here's your big idea for the day: **Give it away or he will take it away.**

I'm going to read from Whitney's book on spiritual discipline.

The ministry of serving may be as public as preaching or teaching, but more often it will be as sequestered as nursery duty. It may be as visible as singing a solo, but usually it will be as unnoticed as operating the sound equipment, to amplify the solo. Serving may be as appreciated as a good testimony in a worship service, but typically it is as thankless as washing dishes after a church social. Most service, even that which seems the most glamorous is like that of an ice berg only the eye of God ever sees the larger hidden part of it.

Beyond the church walls serving is babysitting for neighbors, taking meals to families, running errands for the homebound, providing transportation for the one whose car breaks down, feeding pets and watering plants for vacationers, and hardest of all, having a servant's heart in the home. Serving is as common- place as the practical needs it seeks to meet, which is why it has to be a discipline. That' s why it has to be a cultivated habit.

**Give it away or he will take it away.** This is from Deuteronomy 8.

Maybe it's not about me, maybe it's about you. God loves me and it's all about you.

Let's pray. Father, thanks for these wonderful brothers. Thank you for helping us to take an unusual look at the usual. Thank you for reminding us that your kingdom is upside-down to worldly values. Lord, help us to practice a discipline of service in our own lives. Show us places that we have been overlooking and show us additional opportunities. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen