

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
Series: A Mans Guide to the Bible

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June 11, 2010

Good Morning, Men!

Last week I took a little vacation.

Every Friday morning I use technology to get me up a little early. I get up at 3:30 am to put the finishing touches on this talk. In my iPhone I was able to find an app that set my alarm to recur every Friday at 3:30 am. Last week on my vacation, at 3:30 am I was woken up. And was thinking about you guys.

Today our shout out goes to the 'Hillcrest Men'; a group of twenty men that meet from 6-7 am at the Hillcrest Baptist Church in Pensacola, FL. In March, a little more than a year ago, a man came to visit the Bible study; he liked what he saw and went back to Pensacola and started a video Bible study. Welcome to Hillcrest Men that Dale Simmons started with the help of Joe Acosta; twenty men that meet from 6-7 am at the Hillcrest Baptist Church in Pensacola, FL.

Turn to John 14:8, 9

Just a little review, we are in the series a Man's Guide to the Bible. First part is Knowing about the Bible; Second part is Knowing the Bible and we will eventually get to Living the Bible.

Today we are going to talk about major themes; the recurring subjects that unify the Bible. There is a very famous illustration, no one really knows where it came from, but the idea is that the Bible is like a body of water in which infants can wade and elephants can swim.

Here is an interesting graphic, it seems that the Bible uses these few recurring themes and just repeats them over and over again. They are so simple that even a child can grasp them and yet so profound that no scholar has ever been able to plum the full depths of each of these different themes.

This is the perspective of the week: a handful of major themes that unify the scriptures; reinforced and nuanced by constant repetition. So simple a child can grasp them yet so deep no scholar can plum their depths, each and every page illuminating and amplifying a different facet of God, His salvation and our discipleship.

When I started working with men, I would ask myself what men need. I would come up with long lists; after working with men for a few decades I have whittled my list of what men want down to three. I have kind of done the same thing with the themes in the Bible. I have whittled them down to God, His Salvation and our discipleship.

That is what we are going to look at this morning. It doesn't mean they are the only themes. Here is a caveat; you can take this book and come up with an infinite number of ways to describe it. You might come up with many, but I have summed them up into three. I encourage you to do your summary according to your tradition. You can use different words and more themes to come up with your summary. This is one concrete way of understanding what the themes of the Bible are.

What is a theme? It is the subject or idea of the work. Some songs have a theme of love. Other songs have a drug, sex and rock and roll theme.

Here is the Big Idea: the three major themes that unify the Bible: God, His Salvation and Our Discipleship.

Let's dive in and talk about God and the nature of God. The Bible at its very core, the theme that is the greatest is God.

I remember as a young business man, I had a plan for my life and knew where I wanted to go, what I wanted to do and accomplish and then I became a Christian. However I still knew where I wanted to go, what I wanted to do and accomplish. Let's talk about the nature of God. The Bible at its very core, the theme that most over arches the Bible is God. My Christianity was getting a different result than some of the guys I knew. So I called this time out and spent about two and a half years staring at my navel trying to figure out where I was off base. I was reading Matthew 13:22 one day (the seed that fell among the thorns is like the man that heard the word but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of money choke the word and make it unfruitful). So I made a very significant commitment to God. It was sort of like God felt I was serious but the problem was I didn't have much to work with so He had to start over with me.

I have shared this before but I want to share it again, there is a God we want and there is a God who is, they are not the same God and the turning point of our lives is when we stop seeking the God we want and start seeking the God who is. Does this make sense?

I am sitting around saying 'Morley what are you doing? Did you think that any amount of wanting to reinvent God in your imagination to be the God you wanted him to be was going to have one iota of impact on his unchanging nature and character?' I realized I had been trying to fit God into my box and He wanted to change my life.

The first theme of the Bible that we find out is about the Nature of God. That the problem the Bible solves is that it helps us understand this God who is is.

I was looking at some systematic theologies, Calvin, Grudem, Burkhoﬀ, Frame, and Hodge and all talk about the nature of God. We are only going to talk about the nature of God to state that it is the major motif of the Bible.

When we talk about the theme of God we are referring to His identity, character, and attributes.

In John 14:8,

Philip said, "Lord, show us the father and that will be enough for us." 9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

Notice how Jesus answers Philip, don't you know me? You want to know the Father, I AM the Father. This is the mystery part of the trinity. The Father and I are one.

Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke to our forefathers to the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Continue to hone in on the fact that the Bible is about God, it is not about me! It is about the revelation of God. Special because we couldn't know this any other way accept God revealed it to us through his word; this amazing mystery of the Trinity for example. I would encourage if you don't have enough time to read Calvin or Grudem, just study Jesus, because he who has seen me has seen the Father.

The solution for the problem of seeking the God we want vs. the God who is, first of all to come as a child and then to understand the reading of scripture. Say you have read the same passage ten times or more; it's like watching a favorite movie over and over again. What happens? Every time you watch the movie you see something new, you see an ironic twist that you never noticed before. Or you are able to draw an inference over here of something you saw over there. You are able to make connections that you are usually unable to make.

I love Jason Bourne; I wish I read my Bible as much as I have watched those Bourne movies. That's not true, but you get what I am saying. They get more and more interesting when you see the little twists. Just read it!

I wrote something on the relationship between the sovereignty of God and prayer; I had a guy write me up on this. I suggested that I had written more on this, read this part of the book. I got an email and he wrote me up the other side of the street. I started thinking this guy was stupid, either that or he didn't read my book. If he had read the book he would understand that what he is saying was simply not the case. I wonder if God thinks that way sometimes: is he just stupid or has he just not read My book? There is such think as a stupid question. If the information is readily available and if you would do what you are supposed to do then you ask the question that discloses that you didn't do the simple thing that is a stupid question.

The Big idea today: the three major themes that unify the Bible: God, His Salvation and Our Discipleship.

Second theme is salvation. The principle business that God is about is the business of soul making. I love Mother Theresa, in her calling from Jesus; Jesus said to her I am thirsty for love and I am thirsty for souls.

I am thirsty for love: the great commandment, love you neighbor as yourself.
I am thirsty for souls: the great commission to go and make disciples of all men.

She understood when Jesus was on the cross and said I am thirsty, that he was not speaking of physical sustenance, but was speaking of being thirsty for love and thirsty for souls. Here is mankind going about their business and we all had this problem of being alienated from God by our sins.

You may be caught up now in some sin; I am astonished that so many men are caught up in pornography. I hope and pray that the men who get up early for Bible study would make the percentage smaller, but no doubt some of you are caught up in that and it leads to futility. So our dear God has created a pathway to salvation through the covenants, through this line of the messiah he has created us a way to escape that and to embrace eternal life.

Augustine said, thou hast made us for thine self and the heart of man is restless until it finds its rest in thee. Because of the fall, while we are out here doing our work while feeling the prick of thorns and God has introduced these futilities into the world, why has he done that? He has done that as a merciful, holy, all knowing, omni benevolent God, the way he has chosen to allow us the privilege of recognizing how futile, miserable and empty life is apart from Him. Apart from God life has no meaning and through these futilities we recognize that and turn to God of our own free will because He has made it so miserable to live without Him.

For this theme the solution to everything is the new creation. Turn to John 20:30.

In 2 Corinthians it says if any man is in Christ he is a new creation.

John 20:30

It says, Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are now recorded in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.

So what is this book about? It is about showing you that a good positive mental attitude if you could just believe anything you wanted to believe, that you can do anything you want and make lots of money and be prosperous! Honestly a lot of people try to think that is what this book is about. There is certainly a reality that God does want to prosper and bless his people, but that is such a secondary or tertiary thread to the Bible. What does it prophesy a man to gain the whole world but forfeit his soul? It is about salvation, it is about God and his salvation. It is his salvation for all eternity, for the millions and millions of years that we will live with God forever. It is not about this little inch that we live on right now, although He is not disinterested in the inch, and for us (when you become a Christian) this inch gets longer and longer the more you read and study God, His character and nature. And the result is the new creation and transformation. Don't you just love the way your life has been transformed. I mean how often, really, do any of us stop and reflect on how miserable we were before Christ?

Do you remember the anxiety, the dreads, the fears, oh my gosh I hated my life. Solomon said, so I hated my life, meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.

Now, righteousness, peace, joy and the Holy Spirit; Jesus said, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Men, that is the maximum amount of love that is available in the universe. As the Father has loved me Jesus said this is the mysterious relationship of the trinity. As the father has loved me, so I have loved you. That is what salvation is.

So, there are three major themes that we are talking about that unify the Bible: God, His salvation and our discipleship.

Discipleship is the mission we have once we are given the gift of salvation. So what is the problem?

We have some people we know, who are Christians, and my wife and I talk about them probably too much, but it is so sad to us that they know Christ but are just marking time. Literally everything they do is about them, to make life more comfortable or luxurious. They are so sad, they think that God did all of this for them. He did but he also did it for everyone else to.

2 Timothy 3:15 show the themes of discipleship which includes: calling, equipping and sending. *And how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* What is a major theme that unifies the Bible? Salvation through Christ.

16 All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, why? So you can be happy, have peace, make money, be successful? The reason those things happen is (17) so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. The equipping is so that our lives will count. I am amazed at the number of men, over the years, that I have met that feel like their lives don't count and they don't make a difference; but they do nothing that would constitute their lives counting or making a difference any way. If you want your life to count and make a difference, then do something to make your life count and make a difference. Doing your work well is something that will count and make a difference. It is part of the mission.

In John 20:19 and following

Jesus appears to the disciples in the upper room, he says, *peace I give you.*

Again in verse 21 *peace be with you as the father has sent me so I am sending you. And then he breathed the Holy Spirit on them.*

As the father has loved me so have I loved you. I have loved you so much but I am thirsty for love, for the love of men everywhere and I am thirsty for souls. There is no more love to give, I have squeezed every last drop of love out of the universe. Out of all creation and everything beyond I have squeezed the very last drop of love and I am giving it to you. I have loved you that much.

As the father has loved me, so have I loved you.

As the father has sent me, so I am sending you.

This love is not just for you.

So He has given us this mission to go and make disciples. God has a plan; in Him we were chosen, predestined according to the plan of Him who works everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. Ephesians 1:11. God has a plan, we are the plan. As the father has sent me, so I am sending you.

He appointed some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be teachers, some to be preachers, some to be evangelists, why? So that the body of Christ might be built up and come to full maturity. The mission is discipleship. That is the reason we didn't get beamed up on the day of our salvation. Because He had a mission for us, so we have to do something about that. You can't hear this and not do anything about it.

Joyce Meyers said God can't drive a parked car. You are going to meet someone today, a waitress, coworker; what is the plan, what is the mission?

The major themes that unify the Bible are: God, His salvation and our discipleship.

Let's Pray:

Lord, Jesus, first of all, thank you that when we have seen you we have seen the Father. You and the Father are one. You are the exact representation of His being and the radiance of God's glory; you are all of God in human body. Help us to follow that thread through every part of our lives and also your salvation, for which we are so grateful. If any man has not embraced your salvation, let this be the day when he cries out to you. When he cries out to you in repentance of sin and puts his faith in you. If that is your situation I encourage you to do that now. And then the mission of discipleship, Lord we want our lives to count, we don't want to just be marking time. Lord let these themes be the themes of our lives too, not just the Bible. In Jesus name we pray, amen.