

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

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Good Morning, Men!

Open your Bibles to John 3

So last Sunday morning I brought my wife a cup of coffee, which I always do and then she gets up and ready for church, but I came back in 20 minutes later and she was still in bed. So I said 'honey what are your intentions about going to church this morning? Do you plan to go?' She said 'no.' I said 'do you want me to be a spiritual leader this morning or let you do your own thing?' 'Just let me do my own thing', she said.

We are doing the series on a Man's Guide to the Bible. This morning we want to do our shout out to the men of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Oregon. Six men that have been meeting since October of 2008 on Sunday evenings at 5; Pastor Jerry Casey told me that sometimes when there is silence in the video they can hear the women down the hall do the Beth Moore series. Welcome men!

This is the series a Man's Guide to the Bible; I think I have figured out what the 12 messages will be. We are on the 8th message this morning, which is on the content of the Bible. What makes the Bible different from any other book? Then we will talk about the message of the Bible and then we will get into living the Bible.

What makes the Bible different from any other book? Is it the needs, problems and opportunities that the Bible address, is that what makes it different?

I don't know what you want more than anything? But this is what I want more than anything else in life, it is probably representative of most people, I want somebody to love me, to accept me just the way I am, without having to pretend to be someone I am not, where I don't have to perform to make someone love me. I have done sinful things and I am ashamed of those things and I have guilt about those things and I need a place to take those things and get rid of them, to get that burden off of me.

I have a hole in my soul, something missing, and something I didn't get from my mom or dad. There is a longing for something to be put inside of me that isn't there. I want my life to have purpose and I want there to be significance in my life. I feel like I have a lot to give, I have a lot of love to give.

I met a young woman recently, she is overweight, and isn't able to get connected with a young man in a love relationship because of her weight. My heart ached for her, because I could see

that she had a lot of love to give and I have a lot of love to offer. I have a lot I can contribute and I want to do that. I want my life to matter, to make a difference that I have walked the face of the planet.

These are the things I want more than anything else, and they are probably the same kind of things that you want more than anything else.

What makes the Bible different than any other book is that the needs, problems and opportunities addressed are things that we want more than anything else? Not really, because all religions, all philosophies, all world views are promising to meet these needs, solve these problems and give you these opportunities. There is nothing unique about the needs, problems and opportunities that the Bible is addressing. I have said it before: Christianity and secularism are not trying to solve different problems; they are trying to solve the same problems in different ways.

That is not what makes the Bible different from any other book. This week's perspective is: the Bible is a unique book, different from all books in what it claims and it is recording a special kind of history, redemptive history and is cataloging the beliefs that set men free to lead an abundant life.

John 3:3 and let's look at the several remarkable things we find in the Bible.

This is Jesus with Nicodemus in the night and the religious leaders have come to Jesus and Jesus says

3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. "

Now there is something very remarkable about the Bible, it claims to be truth.

Now turn to Ephesians 2:1

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

I got an email from a man who is distraught because he is in a church and his pastor committed infidelity and also two different elders in the church were unfaithful to their wives and left the church. Then several other members in the church have been unfaithful to their wives. He said all of these men know the scriptures and all these men were serving the Lord. How can this happen? How can this be?

Among other things that I responded to him I said, often what happens is in the church we allow men or even encourage them to pretend that they are good, that they are righteous. In churches all around this land you have men, because they are allowed to pretend they are better than they are, whose sin is given a place to fester and become infected and pollute other areas of their lives too.

We see here in this scripture you won't read this in any other book, in fact the world will tell you that you are merely unfortunate. The Bible says that you are a sinner and you need to repent of your sin.

This book is unique because it is not just history, it is redemptive history, there is a problem that man has and God wants to redeem men from this problem and so he gives us a catalog of things we should believe so we can be set free and live an abundant life.

The big idea this morning is: The Bible is the grace of God offering more than we could ever think to ask. All the things I said I want more than anything else, to love, to be loved, purpose and meaning, God in the scriptures offers so far much more than we could ever think to ask, but because of his great love for us God who is rich in mercy made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions. It is by grace we have been saved.

John 10:10

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Jesus is offering an abundant life, far more than we could ask for.

For the big idea I almost put up Bill Bright's famous saying 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life'. But you can't pretend to be better than you are.

Let's look at this redemptive history; we have a chart in your handout that has this outline.

The Bible has a special kind of history, the history of creation and the history of redemption.

You can look on your handout and see the different epics. The history of creation ended with the flood. You have creation in Genesis 1 and 2, the fall in Genesis 2 and the flood in Genesis 6-9.

Everything from then forward is God redeeming what has gone asunder. You have the history of the Jews, Jesus, the Church and then this new heaven and new earth; that is all I am going to say about that, but you can look it up on your own.

I love Acts 7, because Stephen gives a recitation, a history of the Jews from Abraham to David, then Paul in Antioch gives the history from David to Jesus. In the Bible we get the history of creation and the history of redemption.

I was watching a Bruce Waltke video (he is a great professor of the Old Testament) just from the standpoint of identity, he said 'if I got amnesia I wouldn't remember where I lived, where I was born; I wouldn't remember that I was married or the work I do so my identity would be loss.'

There is some sense that who we are is who we were. Reading the Old Testament is such a fantastic exercise because it helps us understand who we are and also to see this incredible God. Remember the plot of the Bible, Loving Father who relentlessly pursues a relationship with his children. That is what you see in the history of redemption.

The Big Idea: The Bible it is the voice of God offering us more than we would every think to ask for; and a catalog of what to believe.

In the handout there is a sample statement of faith. Every church has a statement of faith; why do they do that? It is a way for them to declare what they believe.

This happens to be a statement of faith of someone who works at Man in the Mirror. If you can't sign this you can't work at Man in the Mirror. You have to believe these things to be a part of the Man in the Mirror team.

First is about the Bible, second is about the Trinity, third is about the Deity of Christ, fourth is more about Jesus, the atonement, resurrection, ascension and so forth, fifth is the singularity of Jesus Christ's work as an atonement for sins and that we are saved by faith alone. The sixth and seventh have to do with the Holy Spirit and the eighth has to do with the resurrection, nine has to do with church and ten has to do with the great commission.

How many of you have signed a statement of faith? What that is then it is meant to be a catalog of your beliefs. That is one of the things that the Bible offers us.

I forgot to bring the book; J Gresham Machen in 1937 was fighting liberalism in the church, the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man, let's hug and have an experience. He was saying that Christianity is based on an event, it is based on the atoning work of Christ and his resurrection and if you don't believe in that then you have missed the point of the book because what makes the Bible different than other books is first this story of redemptive history and secondly the specific things that happen in history that have content and meaning. Machen said this 'Jesus died that is history; Jesus died for my sin that is doctrine; they are very different'.

We have this event, Christ's death that lots of people believe in. That Christ died for my sin is a doctrine, a belief it is theology and that is what the Bible gives us.

The Bible says that it is the grace of God and is offering each of us more than we could ever think of asking. There is a great story, I am sure you have heard it, about a man who worked hard all his life, had never done anything exciting but had dreamed about taking a cruise on an ocean liner. He saved all his money and bought passage on a cruise ship, he took a knapsack which he loaded with wine and cheese, so he would have sustenance on the cruise.

The first night he sat out on a deck chair, inside in the dining room he could see all these people have a great time and eating succulent foods. He just had his cheese and crackers. This went on for several days and he began to long to go into the feast. One evening a steward came and asked what he was doing. He said 'I am eating my dinner'. The steward said 'didn't you know the food was included in the price of the cruise'. He didn't know what he had and he didn't ask what was included.

What is it that you want today more than anything else?

Sometimes I ache because I want to be loved. I just feel so lonely and all on my own. Then I turn to the voice of God and I begin to hear him speak to me and he says your sins are forgiven, I have loved you with an everlasting love before the foundations of the earth were poured I had already determined that you would be part of my royal family for all eternity; you are not alone I am with you always even to the end of the age. It is the voice of God.

I would be happy just to get rid of the bad feeling, but instead he wants to forgive the sin and give me abundant life.

I Corinthians 15:19

19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

If this is all there is in life, we are to be pitied more than all men; the Bible offers so much more. But in order to know these things that he has for us we have to read the book.

It is great to have a statement of faith to declare the things you believe however it is like when you hear someone explain what it would be like to drive a racecar. But when you actually sit in the racecar and personally get to feel and experience what it is like it is an entirely different experience. It is one thing to listen to someone talk about what the Bible says and it is a completely different experience to be in the Bible for yourself and hear the voice of God; offering more than you could ever possibly ask.

What is it you want this morning? And do you know where to get it. I would say as a way of challenging you: you don't have time to not read your Bible.

Let's Pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you that you have given us, in the Bible, the history of redemption and the catalog of things we should believe. When we actually engage your word we can hear your voice. The thing that makes your work different from any other book is that it is your voice and you are speaking and telling us of your great love for us. How you are offering us more than we could ever ask on our own. I pray that each of us would treasure and love the word so deeply that it would not be an exercise of duty, but we would be moved to your word by your Holy Spirit and we would engage you in that conversation, where you want to explain to us how much you have for us beyond what we would think to ask. We pray this in Jesus name, amen.