

The Journey to Biblical Manhood

Challenge 5: Discipline

Session 2: Cutting Through the Noise

Unedited Transcript

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Hey, good morning, guys. It is great to be with you this morning. Thanks for joining us. I'm excited. We're still embarking on this Journey To Biblical Manhood, this series that we're doing that's walking us through 12 challenges to our manhood, 12 areas of our lives that we want to develop. We're in the Disciplines challenge.

Before we jump into it though, let's do our shout out. We've got FBC Men, First Baptist, somebody tell me how to pronounce that city name, Cantonment. Nine guys watching the video Bible study on Sunday mornings at 9:00, which is pretty cool, and then applying it to their lives and Jack Boutwell. Let's give them a Man in the Mirror greeting. One, two, three. All right, very good. These guys are in Cantonment. Where's Cantonment? Pensacola. So, we've got a guy in Tallahassee, we've got some guys in Alabama, but we do not have any guys in Pensacola. We need guys in Pensacola to be field team members. If you're watching this from that area, go on mimfieldteam.org.

Let me show you another website, this is the Bible study website. How many of you have been on the Man In the Mirror Bible study website? Have you guys looked at this? You go to mimbiblestudy.com. All of the Bible studies are listed. The guys that are watching online right now, this is what they're watching on. They're watching on this site. Then the guys that are watching on the site, they can click this little button here. You guys can go on here and click this little button if you want to help support the Bible study.

How much do you think it costs to run the Bible study every month? \$22. We are making a killing if it costs us \$22. Yeah, it costs about \$10,000 a month, believe it or not, to run the Bible study for everything, which includes all the web stuff that we do, all the preparation time, all the staff time that goes into it, but that's reaching at least 10,000 people a month. I figure \$10,000 a month, 10,000 people a month. That's \$1 a person. That's pretty good, right? Very economical. Pat likes to call this the largest men's Bible study in the world. We'll let him call it that. Who knows? Pretty big. A lot of people watching every month. We're excited for all the people that are watching it. Thank you to all of you guys who are coming here and throwing a few bucks in the till. Thanks for you watching online. That's helping us to keep the Bible study running. We appreciate it. We're looking to change lives. There's no better way to change lives than to get guys into their regular study of God's word. That's our goal.

Let's talk about the Journey to Biblical Manhood. We're in challenge five on the disciplines. Everybody's got these faith and life objectives cards. They should be on the tables. If you don't have one, grab one. These are the faith and life objectives for this challenge. As we come near to God, he comes near to us.

That's from James 4:8. At the end of this leg of the journey, we will understand how spiritual disciplines are a means of grace ordained by God to help me grow. That's the understanding part, the head. We'll be committed to engaging in the disciplines as a part of our daily lives. That's the heart. We will read the word, pray, worship, and do other disciplines on a regular basis. That's our activity, our hands.

Let's look at our outline for this morning. Last session, Pat talked about sort of an introduction to the spiritual disciplines and he talked about the looking at God in his creation. He looked at looking at the creation.

Today we're going to talk about the word and the whisper of God. We're going to talk about how do you cut through the noise, cutting through the noise. We'll talk about how many times we're walking around living an unaware life. Then we're going to talk about what's the answer to the unaware life. The answer, Jesus says, is to abide. We're going to talk about what abide looks like. Then listening for God's whispers on purpose will be our third point.

Let's talk about living an unaware life. How many of you remember this movie called The Truman Show? Do you remember a movie called The Truman Show? If you don't remember it, what The Truman Show was, it was really one of the very first movies about what's become commonplace today, which is sort of following a person around in their everyday life and filming every moment of it. The premise of The Truman Show was that everybody was in on it except for the guy that it was about and he had no idea that there was a 24/7 camera feed of his entire life. Since he had been a little child, this camera had been following him around. There was this TV show called The Truman Show, but he had grown up in front of all these people and he did not know this.

This is a scene in the movie, The Truman Show, sort of at the very beginning where things are beginning to kind of fall apart on this show around him. Eventually, by the end of the movie, not to be a tremendous spoiler, but you can probably imagine the movie's about him figuring it out. This is at the beginning of the movie as he's sort of in his everyday life.

There he is, just living his life. Everything's normal. Comes out every day, says hi to his neighbors. The perfect family across the street just waving back at him, "Hi, Truman." The dog next door. Which, by the way, the first time you see the dog was a Dalmatian and then the second time you see the dog, it was a Great Dane, but you're not supposed to notice that. Two different dogs.

Getting in his car, going to work, living a normal life, and a light falls out of the sky. Now, obviously it's a stage light, right? It freaks him out for a minute but then where is he? Two minutes later, he's in his car and he hears a plausible explanation on the radio, which is of course a ruse. They're controlling everything about this man's life and even talking him out of ever flying, right? Because he can't leave because he's in a giant studio. He's in a giant dome, unaware. They have to keep him there. They have to keep him confined in this life that's completely controlled that really has no purpose other than other people's entertainment. Within a few minutes, they're just playing nice pleasing music, talking him out of ever going anywhere, getting him right back into his normal routine again so that they can keep the show going.

I think a lot of us, if we're honest, we can get caught up in these same kind of ruts. We live in lives of unawareness, of just going through the motions, of just doing what we're supposed to do. When extraordinary things happen, we don't notice it. We don't pay attention to it. We don't give any

credence to the idea that maybe there's something supernatural going on, that maybe there's a world that we can't see that is invading into our lives on an everyday basis. We just explain it away. Well, a plane was flying over and dropped a part on my street. As weird and ridiculous as that sounds, sometimes we'd rather take those explanations than take the explanation that there's a real God who's intervening in our world on a regular basis. We accept dull explanations for extraordinary circumstances when we're not in tune with the God of the universe. This is one of the things that spiritual disciplines helps us do.

It helps us to stop leading these boring distracted lives where we either go through the motions or complain when things don't go the way we want them to go. We complain long enough that we can feel like, "Well, you know, I've said my peace. Now I can move on." Life goes on and nothing changes and our lives are unfulfilled and the world doesn't change and we make no impact. Then we're just another day closer to the day we die. What a horrible, horrible life. Yet so many of us are stuck in that rut.

What's the answer? Well, Jesus says that the answer is to abide.

If you have your scriptures, turn to John 15 and let's look at this passage. Now, some of you, if you've been in the church very much, you've heard this passage before, so I'm going to read through it. It starts like this, "I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit." I don't know about you, but sometimes I get stuck on the word vine. When I think of a vine, I think of like the Kudzu that kind of spirals its way through our trees here in the South sometimes. The word vine is correct but a better word for me is the word trunk. The vine is the trunk. Then the branches come off of the trunk. In a grapevine, you have the vine that sort of the inner spiraling trunks that go up and then the branches that come off. Jesus is saying, "I'm the trunk. I'm what the branches have to be connected to."

Then what comes off the branches? Fruit. If you're a vine dresser, what you do is you go through the vines and you look for the vines that aren't producing fruit and you cut those off and you look for the vines that are producing fruit and you prune them so that the fruit that they produce is even better. There's a pruning process that happens. Without a pruning, you just have a wild grapevine or a wild plant that produces sour fruit or substandard fruit. If you'll just take care of the vine and take care of the branches and do a little pruning here and there, pay attention, then your branches will create these amazing fruit. What is the fruit? Well, let's keep reading.

"Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this, my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full."

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you will do what I command

you. No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends for all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. You didn't choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you so that you will love one another."

What's the fruit? Let's do a little table exercise. I'm going to split the room right here. This part of the room, I want you to read, at your tables, verses 3 to 11 and come up with a list of what you think the fruit is of abiding. Then this part of the room, you read verses 12 through 17 and you come up with a list of what you think the fruit is. You should come up with between three and five fruits per section. You got four minutes to do this. Four minutes. Verses 3 to 11. Verses 12 to 17. Go.

All right. What did you guys come up with? You guys have the first half of the passage. What were some of the fruit of abiding that you came up with? Just shout them out. I'd love a verse too though.

Okay, joy. Who said joy? There's joy. Joy was a fruit. Oh, I didn't have that one. Sorry. What else? Peace. Love. These are all in the passage. This is called a Bible study. You study the passage in the Bible, not make stuff up or grab stuff from other places. We're trying to figure out what this passage says to us. What did you find from this passage? Joy is in this passage.

What else? Being purified. What else? Give me one more from this side. Nourishment. I'm not sure where that was but okay. What about this? What did you guys come up with in the last half of the passage? Love of God. Answered prayer. Obedience. Grace, Sacrifice.

Here's the ones that I came up with. Verse 5, in verse 5, he says, "I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing," which means that when you're abiding in him, you can do everything. Everything that you should do. That's power. Abiding in Christ gives you power to accomplish the things that you want to accomplish in his name.

Verse 7, somebody said this. "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you." Answered prayer.

Verse 8, "By this, my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples." God's glory is the fruit.

Verses 10 and then again in verse 12, "You keep my commandments, you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." Obedience.

Then in verse 12, he says, "This is my commandment, I'm telling you to do this. If you abide in me, you will keep my commandments." Obedience is a fruit of abiding.

Verse 11 talks about, "These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full." Joy comes from abiding in Christ.

Verse 13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends." Love and sacrifice, somebody said, these are the fruits of the spirit.

Then finally, look at this. This is crazy, "No longer do I call you servants. The servant doesn't know what his master is doing. I call you friends." Then the next verse he says, "I picked you." How cool is that? Jesus picked you. When we abide in Christ, we get to be Christ's friends. Cool? I mean, the sovereign God of the universe calls us his friend. That's pretty amazing. What does he want us to do? He wants us to abide. He wants us to be connected. This is the metaphor he's using is a branch and a vine or a branch and a trunk. The metaphor is a metaphor of connection. How do you stay connected to Christ, especially in a world that is so distracting as the world that we live in?

This is going to bring us to our big idea. We've talked about living an unaware life. We've talked about abiding, John 15. How do you listen? How do you stay connected? How do you abide by listening for God's whispers on purpose? That brings us to our Big Idea, that **"You can hear God best when you intentionally create space for his voice in your life."** This is what the spiritual disciplines do, is help you intentionally create space.

Let's talk about some disciplines that do this. Now, I'm getting this out of the book A Man's Guide to Spiritual Disciplines. I am not going to tell you how to do these disciplines. I'm just going to introduce them to you. What I'm going to really urge you to do is to go deeper is to get a book like A Man's Guide to Spiritual Disciplines, Donald Whitney's book Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, Foster's book Celebration of Disciplines, Kent Hughes' Disciplines of a Godly Man. There's great resources out there and I want to encourage you to dive into these so that you can intentionally create space in your life to hear God's voice.

Let me run through eight ways that you can abide. I'm going to go through them really quickly. They are the Bible, prayer, worship, sabbath, fellowship, counsel, fasting, and spiritual warfare. You got it? Let's talk about each of these really quickly.

Why do you need the spiritual discipline of studying God's word? Well, studying God's word leads to transformation. Pat likes to say, "I've never known any man whose life has changed in any significant way apart from the regular study of God's word." Transformation comes from studying the Bible. In Isaiah 55:11, God says, "My word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty." Studying the Bible brings about transformation.

Prayer brings about communion. Jonathan Edwards said, "The substance of religion is conscious communion with God." This is prayer. Paul admonished the people of Ephesus in Ephesians 6 to be "praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication, to keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, for praying for each other." Praying brings us not only in communion with God, but even in communion with each other as we pray for each other.

Worship. Worship connects us with God's greatness. Pat said, "Worship is a personal expression of being overwhelmed by God's goodness and greatness." What was God's commandments to the Israelites in Exodus 20? "You will have no other gods before me." This is what worship is. It's putting God first.

The Sabbath. Sabbath brings about renewal. A man who doesn't honor the Sabbath, who doesn't invest any time in celebrating his place in God's family, will succumb to stress. He will become isolated. He will make poor decisions. In Exodus, God said, "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day, do not work so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household and the alien as well may be refreshed." Renewal comes from having the discipline of Sabbath.

Fellowship puts us in community. Men, we're like redwood trees. You know the metaphor of redwood trees. A redwood tree can't stand on its own. Its root system can't hold it up. The way that redwood trees stand up is that they interlock their roots with the redwood trees around them. This is a great metaphor for us. We need to be in fellowship so that we have people to interlock our roots with. In Hebrews 10, the writer says, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." This is what fellowship is about.

Godly counsel leads to what? Wisdom. Most people don't want counsel. They want permission. You want to make sure that the godly counsel that you surround yourself with are people that will look you in the eye and tell you the truth. Proverbs 15 says, "Without counsel, plans fail, but with many advisors, they succeed." Proverbs 15:22.

Fasting. Fasting brings clarity. If you'll look in the Bible, every major leader in the Bible, it talks about just sort of mentions it along the way. There's not even like a Biblical command. They just all did it. They all fasted at various times in their lives. Fasting gives an opportunity to satisfy our spiritual appetite by sacrificing our physical appetites.

Then, finally, spiritual warfare. When we engage in spiritual warfare, we find victory. Temptations may continue repeatedly, but we can conquer them. As it says in Ephesians 6:13, "Put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything to stand."

This is quite a list, right? This is quite a list but it leads us to the life that we long for. I mean, who doesn't want transformation, communion with God, understanding God's greatness, to be renewed, a living community, to have wisdom and clarity and victory? Who doesn't want those things? It's a list, but it's not a to-do list. It's not a bunch of boxes to check off. It's about intentionally, gradually creating space in your life so that you can hear God's voice.

The question is: Will you create that space?

I had a cardiology appointment a couple weeks ago and it was a new cardiologist. The cardiologist that I went to before had moved on. He had actually gone to work at the VA. I had a new cardiologist. I got heart disease in my family so I just get checkups. It was just a checkup. I know you are all concerned, but it was just a checkup. Dad's had five heart attacks, still alive and kicking at 84.

I go to the cardiologist. He asked me what I do. I tell him about Man in the Mirror a little bit. I don't know how it came up, but we're talking and a few minutes later, he tells me, "Yeah, we had this health issue in my family with one of my children. I didn't know what to do so I spent a week fasting and praying." I was like, "Whoa." I said, "Why did you do that?" He said, "You know, I can't really explain it to you, but I just felt like that's what I needed to do. I didn't expect it to cure the issue. That's not why I did it. I wasn't trying to earn points. I just felt like I needed to be able to hear what God was trying to tell me."

Intentionally creating space in his life to hear what God had to say to him. It brought peace to him. Eventually it brought clarity for some decisions that they made and it had a tremendous effect on his child's health. He was willing to take a step back and intentionally create space in his life.

My question to you is: Will you create that space?

We're going to take about 20 minutes. We've got some questions on your handouts. We'll take about 20 minutes or so and I'll pull this back together for the last few minutes and we'll review our answers to those questions. Just remember you can hear God's voice best when you intentionally create space for his voice in your life. We'll break to the tables for questions.

Let me just close with this. You know, we're going to leave this place. We're going to go back out into a world of noise and distraction, of dingy text messages. We're going to go back to a place where temptations, some obvious, some subtle, they're rampant, they're normal. We're going to go back to places where we're encouraged to worship our own strength, like it says in Habakkuk, assume that we can do it on our own. I just want to tell you that even as men who want to be righteous, you're going to be tempted to do better, to conquer your temptations, to strive to be the kind of man that God would want you to be. I'm going to tell you something. You're going to fail. If you're just going to go out and do it in your own effort, if you're just going to go out there and try harder and be better and do it in your own strength, you're going to fail. Stop trying to be good and start trying to know God.

The spiritual disciplines are not about your effort. They're about your heart, they're about your mind, and they're about your soul. They're about knowing Christ and following him and believing in him and choosing him and living for him, not for yourself. Let me encourage you: make some space. Turn the TV off. Put it on your calendar. Go to bed an hour earlier so that you're not exhausted in the morning when you get up and hit that snooze three or four times. Remember that **you can hear God best when you intentionally create space for his voice in your life.**

Let me pray and then we'll be dismissed.

Father, we live in a busy world full of distractions. Lord, extraordinary things happen. Lights fall out of the sky and a few minutes later we act like nothing abnormal happened. You're moving, Lord. Your spirit is at work in the world around us. Most of the time, we don't even see it because we're just too busy. Father, would you help us to create space in our lives? Would you help us to slow down so that we can hear the ways that you whisper into our ears, that you move subtly like the wind through our lives? Lord, you make things happen. Make us aware of those things, Father. Father, would you ignite in our hearts a desire to know you better so that we can abide, so that we can stay connected, so that we can bring you glory? In Jesus's name we pray, amen.

All right, guys. I love you. Have a great week. We'll see you next week.