

The Journey to Biblical Manhood

Challenge 5: Discipline

Session 3: Stewards of the Mysteries of God

Unedited Transcript

Brett Clemmer

Don't you love how Christians talk like, "You're blessed to have me"? Don't you feel blessed? Yeah, I was thinking something else, too. Hey, it is great to be with you guys this morning, thanks for coming. I'm going to switch things up a little bit. Anybody here for the very first time? Raise your hand if you're here for the very first time. Back here, over here. Let's give these guys a welcome, thanks for coming, guys.

We're going to have a little discussion time around the tables. If you guys want to, you can do your discussion at your table, or you can come up to this card table up here, where I will deal you in to Texas Hold'em. It's a little new fundraising thing that we have, because I'm really good. No, come on up here if you'd like to, I'd love to give you the lay of the land, or you can stay with your guys in discussion.

Yeah, so we are on our Journey to Biblical Manhood. We're on the fifth session and we're talking about being a spiritual, disciplined man. You know, we've got guys ... you guys know this, we've got guys all over the country, all over the world, that are following along with us as we do the Bible study. I showed you guys the website last session, but we had another group. These are guys, COST - Christians Ongoing Successful Transformation, a group of men who are using a video Bible study on Saturday mornings, led by Anthony Jarencio, and they're in Round Lake, Illinois, I put a map up this time. They're in Round Lake, Illinois, so you can see Chicago down there in the bottom, and then Round Lake is up near the Wisconsin line, sort of half way between Chicago and Kenosha.

As always, we are looking for field team guys out in that area, so if you're in that area, and you're interested in helping church's Disciple Men, give us a holler, or check us out online, we'd love to talk to you about that.

We are talking about the disciplines, becoming a spiritually disciplined man. This is the third session on this topic, the third and last session that we're going to talk about this topic. I just want to reinforce at the top, that as we talk about spiritual disciplines, we are not talking about doing things that put you in right standing with God. That spiritual disciplines are not about your proving your righteousness to God, they are in fact really about developing your righteousness as a child of God, as a son of God. Becoming more righteous, these are the ways that we do that. We're going to talk today about how our faith really needs to be put into action, and the disciplines related to that.

If you've got your Faith and Life Objectives cards on the tables. Grab those. If you haven't already gotten one, I want you to take this with you, but here's our faith and life objectives. "As we come near to God, He comes near to us," James says in James 4:8. At the end of this leg of the journey, we want to

understand how spiritual disciplines are a means of grace ordained by God to help me grow. That's kind of what we covered in the first session. Then we're going to talk about being committed to engaging in the disciplines as a part of my daily life, and reading the Word, praying, worshiping, and doing other disciplines on a daily basis, on a regular basis.

This week, we're talking about being spiritually disciplined. We're talking about being stewards of the Mysteries of God. Do you guys remember this? This just happened recently. There's a company that makes the EpiPen, anybody need an EpiPen? Anybody need one of those? You maybe have a child that needs one of those. What happens? You eat peanuts when you're not supposed to, you get bitten by a ... bitten ... stung by a bee. Man, if the bees start biting, we are really in trouble. You get stung by a bee, and you have some kind of reaction to it, you take the EpiPen, and you stab yourself. Sounds great, doesn't it? You get a shot of epinephrin, and that counteracts the bee venom, or the symptoms of the reaction to that. The EpiPen people made news last year, they didn't really want to, but they raised the price, or it came to light that from 2007 to 2016, the price had gone up from \$100 to over \$608 for the EpiPen. People went, predictably, crazy about it, right? They were angry.

Another company called Turing Pharmaceuticals, they had this drug called Daraprim, which was very widely used to treat parasitic infections, and they thought ... So Turing Pharmaceuticals bought the patent for the drug, or bought the drug, I don't know how that works, and the pill was 13.50, and then they decided the next day that it should cost \$750 for a pill, a pill. What do people do? They went crazy. Why do people go crazy? I mean, we're capitalists, right?

If you have something, and you own something, you should be able to charge what people will pay for it. That's sort of that mindset anyway, that they had it. But here's why people got upset about it, because people need these drugs. People need these drugs, and the people that own them, we have a higher expectation for something like a pharmaceutical, than just like if you had the latest and greatest toy, or video game, or video game console. You can charge whatever you want for that, but for a drug, there seems to be something that's a little bit different about that right?

Do we know how they work? Not really. All right, we don't. It's kind of a mystery, right? But these drug companies, we look at them as stewards. We have a higher expectation of them, because they're stewards of these drugs that save people's lives, and we hold them to a higher standard. When they seem like they go out of their way to take advantage of somebody, or to make a profit that we don't feel is fair, whether it is or not, we get up in arms, society gets up in arms, because a steward has a higher standing, has a higher expectation than a capitalist, right?

So we're going to talk about, why is that different? We're talking about being stewards of the Mysteries of God, and if you look at 1st Corinthians, 4:1, this verse says, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ, and what? Stewards of the Mysteries of God." We are stewards of the Mysteries of God.

As we're looking at our role as stewards, just like those pharmaceutical companies are stewards of those drugs that save people's lives, we're stewards of something that also saves people's lives. We're stewards of the gospel, right? It's been given to us, "The Mysteries of God have been given to us," Paul says, and so we're to be stewards of that. Here's what we're going to do, we're going to talk about being stewards of the Mysteries of God, and we're going to start talking about, "Why do the right thing? Why should we ever do the right thing?"

Then we're going to talk about an empty faith, and we're going to talk about a meaningful faith. Let's start with, why do the right thing? There's lots of reasons, there's lots of models for why people would do the right thing. Let me talk about three of them really quick. The first model that you're probably very familiar with, is the eastern model. It's called Karma.

Why do you do the right thing? Because there's this thing called karma, there's like a cosmic bank account, right? If you don't put stuff in the cosmic bank account, then it's going to come back and bite you, right? You need to do good, because if you don't do good, then nobody will do good for you, or the universe will somehow conspire against you.

I don't know if you remember the movie Karate Kid, but it's a very original movie, Karate Kid. What goes around comes around. Played a prank on a guy, and the guy beat the snot out of him, all right? Bad karma, okay? That's an eastern reason, why do you do the right thing? Well, so that you'll benefit from it. That's eastern.

Then there's the ancient Greek, stoic philosophers had a different reason. Why do you do the right thing? Because as a person, you are more fulfilled. You become more of what a person is, morally and ethically, by doing the right thing. They called these things virtues. You have a fulfilled life, you're a fulfilled person if you do the right thing. Maybe a better step than karma, but still not the gospel.

I would say then, the bible gives us a third reason that we do the right thing, and we do the right thing out of a sense of stewardship, that we have been given a trust, that the gospel is a gift that was given to us, and so we're supposed to take care of it. There's certain ways that we would live our lives as stewards of the gospel, as stewards of the Mysteries of God. What does that look like?

If you look at this verse ... Let's go to Verse 2. "This is how I want you to regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the Mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful." As stewards of the Mysteries of God, how can we be found faithful? If you have a bible, turn to James, Chapter 2, and we're going to look at what James would call empty, or dead, or meaningless faith.

So James 2, Verses 14 to 26. Now, this passage is a difficult one. If you run through it really quickly ... Let me read it to you, and then if you don't understand why it's difficult, we'll talk a little bit about why it's difficult. So James 2:14, "What good is it my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed, and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warm and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? Also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' You believe that God is one, you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder. Do you want to be known, you foolish person ..." Excuse me, "Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham, our father, justified by works when he offered up his son, Isaac, on the altar?

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works. The scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness, and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works, and not by faith alone.' In the same way, was not also Rahab, the prostitute, justified by works when she received the messengers, and sent

them out by another way?" These were when the spies were in the city, and they were being chased, and Rahab, the prostitute, lowered them down out of her window, on the outside of the city, so that they could get away safely, instead of turning them in, which would have been safer for Rahab to do.

Verse 26, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead." Let's pray about this passage, and then let's jump into it. Father, thank you for bringing us together today here, whether we're meeting here live on a Friday morning here in Orlando, or guys around the world meeting in groups around computers at coffee shops, and church classrooms.

Lord, we are so grateful that you created us in a way that we crave being together, that we want to learn your ways, but we want to do it in the company of our brothers. So Father, would you teach us this morning, through the power of your Holy Spirit, would you show us how to rightly divide your word, and interpret this passage in a way that builds our faith, and helps us understand the truth, and that helps us live it out every day? In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Why do you think this passage is difficult, anybody want to hazard a guess? Why is this passage difficult? Anyone?

Participant: The whole faith works thing.

Brett Clemmer: Yeah, the whole faith works thing. What were you going to say?

Participant: It causes us to look at ourselves clearer to see whether we're really being obedient.

Brett Clemmer: Perfect, so those are the two reasons right there. This passage can be convicting, should be convicting to us, right? But there's a little problem if you don't interpret the passage correctly, because what do you have? You have Paul who said, "For by grace, you are saved through faith not as a result of works," and then you have James who says, "You see ..." I'm sorry, in Verse 24, "You see that person is justified by works, and not by faith alone."

How do you reconcile these two things? Paul and James seem to be saying different things, but they're really not, they're really not. The way that you know that, one of the ways, is you have to go to the very first verse. In Verse 14, he says, "What good is it my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works. Can that faith save him?" The key word here is, "That," okay? Can that faith save him?

What he's saying is, is that if you have this faith that's pure head knowledge, that's just right doctrine, but not right action, who cares? He actually gives four examples in this passages, two bad examples, and two good examples. The two bad examples he gives are ... The first one is, if you have a brother or sister who's hungry and cold, and you don't give them food and clothing, but you say, "God bless you ..." That's basically what he's saying, "God bless you," but he says, "What use is that?" You don't really mean ... You're there to bless them on behalf of God, and you're not doing it. You're don't really have faith, somebody can't look at you and say, "Wow, look at that faith, look what that faith compelled him to do." You just waved, and said, "Have a nice day."

Then he goes even a step further. He says, Verse 19, "You believe that God is one," so why do you believe that God is one? What is that? Well, that's the Shema, that's from the Old Testament. "A hero is real, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." He's basically saying, "You have the faith of our forefathers, you

have Abraham's faith." Then he's actually going to use Abraham in a minute here as well. He's like, "Big deal."

You have the tradition of the Jewish faith, "Big deal." Even the demons believe that, and they shudder, but it doesn't change their standing with God. They're still not following him. Yeah, they believe it, they believe in the same things that you do, but they don't follow God. It's not knowledge, this is the thing that James is trying to say. He's frankly, he's speaking to the Presbyterians among us, that it's not just doctrine, okay? It's not just doctrine, it's action. You could put a lot of denominations in there, I just happen to be Presbyterian, so.

It's easy for us, especially if you're wired intellectually, it's easy for us to get caught up in doctrine, in the tenets of the faith, and not actually do anything about it, not actually live that out in a way that really shows that that faith is changing our hearts. That's what James is saying. He's saying, "It's not enough to say, 'God bless you,'" it's not even enough to have the right doctrines, even the demons have the right doctrines. Faith, meaningful faith, has to be lived out.

Then he gives two examples, right? Abraham. When he's talking about Abraham, believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, he's referring to a verse or two before, is the fact that Abraham was willing to put his faith in action, and obey God even to the point of offering his son, Isaac, up when God told him to do that. The ultimate test of Abraham's willingness to put his faith in action, was he willing to sacrifice? Not just sacrifice, "Oh, I gave some money to the church." Not just sacrifice, "Oh, this is a little inconvenient, because I'm helping somebody out." "No, are you willing to sacrifice your son for me?"

And Abraham said, "Yes, I'm willing to sacrifice my son for you," is willing to put his faith into action. And of course, God being a righteous God, didn't ultimately let him do that. Or Rahab, you know, at great risk to her personal safety. She didn't count her own safety as being above being obedient to a God that she barely knew. She knew in her heart that it was real, and that she had to save these people. She listened, and she was obedient to God.

James gives us these two examples, these two negative examples, and two positive examples. When James says that, "Faith without works is dead," Verse 26, "Whereas the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead," again, we're using English words to translate concepts that are written in a different language, but this Word is also used to be like empty, or meaningless. Is your faith meaningless? Is your faith empty? Sometimes do you feel like your faith is empty?

I would guess that a lot of the times when we feel like our faith is empty, it's because we're not living it out. We're not putting it into action the way that God calls us to put it into action. It's important to realize that our actions, our works, don't justify us before God. They don't bring us salvation, but the outpouring of our salvation, the outpouring of our faith, the way it affects us as men, is that we then out of that, we serve. Out of that, we live out our faith. Martin Luther said famously, "People are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone." People are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Your faith has to be lived out.

This is the Big Idea then, that **your faith is screaming to be lived out. Your faith is screaming to be lived out.** You can't hold it in when your faith is authentic, you have to save the spies, you have to be willing to make the sacrifice. You just ... You can't help it. Sometimes we have to practice those things, in order

for them to become more and more real in our lives. As we talk about spiritual disciplines, we talk about the idea that we're going to practice living out our faith.

Here's three ways that we can build a life of faith in a meaningful way, three things that we can do. We can give, we can serve, and we can share. We can give, we can serve, and we can share. When we talk about giving, oftentimes we use the phrase, "Stewardship," when we talk about giving. In 1st Chronicles 29:11, and then Verse 14 says, "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven and in the Earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all, but who am I, and what is my people that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own, have we given you."

When we act as stewards, we recognize that we're not taking what we have, what's ours, and then giving a portion of it to God, like, "Lord, I just want you to have this gift from me." That's not what it is. See, everything we have is already God's. What we get to do, is we get to keep most of it, and the rest of it we invest the way that He wants us to invest it.

A lot of the times you think this is just about money, and it is about money, all right? We've talked about this, there's more verses about money than just about anything else in the bible, because a man's heart ... You can tell the state of a man's heart by looking at his bank account online, and what he spends money on, right? It's not just about money, it's about time. It's about expertise, it's about resources, it's about convenience.

Are you willing to be inconvenienced? Are you willing to make a sacrifice of the things that you want to do to make your life easier and more convenient, for the things that the world needs you to do, so that they can hear the gospel? Are you willing to be a steward of the Mysteries of God, means you're willing to give away the things that God has given you, because you're a steward. What does a steward do? He takes care of somebody else's stuff. Everything we have is God's. Our time, our talent, and our treasure, all God's.

If we're stewards of that, then that means that we're looking for the way that the Master wants us to invest that. I almost used the passage where the Master gives 10 minas to his servants, you know, and one servant turned his five minas into 10 minas, another turned his three into six, and then the one hid it, right? The point of that parable from Jesus was, that the servant's did ... It wasn't their money. A mina's like 20 years labor, 20 years wages, okay? It wasn't theirs, it was the Master's, and their job was to go and reinvest it. When they didn't reinvest it, the Master got angry, got angry.

It's God's, we're supposed to be stewards of it, and so it's good for us to figure out, "What do we have that God has given us, and then how can we invest that in a way that gives God a great return on the investment that He chose to make in us, in the resources that He chose to make us stewards over?" The next one is service, service. John 13, 14, and 15 says, "If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash another's feet."

So they're up in the upper room, you remember this story, right? It's the last supper. They all gather, and the first thing Jesus does, is He takes off his cloak, wraps a towel around his waist, like putting an apron on, right? And he gets down on his hands and knees, and these disgusting, dirty feet, because they were all wearing sandals, you've all seen the Jesus movies, right? They're all wearing sandals. You know, and they're walking around, not on paved roads, but on dusty trails, and their feet are disgusting.

It's traditional to have a servant come and wash the feet of your guests, and Jesus says, "No, I'm the servant. I'm going to get down on my hands and knees. I'm going to wash your feet."

This new Pope Francis that we have, that the Catholic church has, a lot of strange stuff about it, but one of the things I love that he did very early in his popedom, I don't know what you call it, in his reign, but do you remember this? One of the first things he did, was he got a group of poor people ... He was in a situation with a group of poor people, and he got down on his hands and knees, and he washed those feet. He gets this part, anyways, right?

It's not about, "I can serve, I can show up 10 minutes early and set up chairs." That's great, okay, that's great, and we need that, but really, really what we're talking about is, "Are you willing to be sacrificial? Are you willing to be inconvenienced? Does your faith scream for you to put your own needs aside, so that you can meet the needs of somebody else?" That's real service from the heart.

In Man's Guide to Spiritual Disciplines, it says, "A servant is someone who goes where Jesus would go, to do what Jesus would do." That's a servant. Then the third thing that you can do, is you can share, right? This is evangelism, this is about sharing our faith. Romans 1:16 says, Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." And so Pat says, "Evangelism is just taking someone as far as he wants to go towards Jesus." Evangelism is about taking someone as far as he wants to go towards Jesus. Evangelism is not about memorizing a script, and getting someone to say a prayer, and then going, "Woo, glad that's over with, I'm glad that's done."

No, no, no. Evangelism is being on the journey with somebody. At whatever point God brings you alongside of them, and helping point them more and more towards Christ ... My son told me this story last night. He's working at a climbing gym for the summer, and Jackson, he's 20, a philosophy major in college, and so he was talking to this ... He said to me, "Yeah, I slyly slipped the gospel into somebody at work today."

I said, "What? What are you talking about?" And he said, "Well, this young woman that's on staff was talking about just ... We got into this philosophical discussion about how life is meaningless." And so my son, the philosophy major, says, "Yeah, you know, Kierkegaard was famous for saying, 'Marry somebody or don't marry somebody, you're going to regret it either way.' Kill yourself, or don't kill yourself, you're going to regret it either way."

He was basically like, "No matter what choice you make, you're going to regret it either way." She's like, "Yeah, that's just so hopeless," and he goes, "Yeah, and Kierkegaard's answer to that, was that God would send His son to Earth to die for us, so that we didn't have to live in such hopelessness." And he said, "And then I walked away and went back to work."

He was ready ... Took her, I think, maybe, hopefully, one more step towards Jesus. We had to be ready for those times. Peter tells us to be prepared to give a defense of our faith, doing it with grace and humility, but to be prepared. You don't have to be good, you just have to be available to answer these questions.

This is the thing guys, these three disciplines ... We talked about a bunch of disciplines last session that were more about hearing God, hearing the whisper of God as He cuts through the noise, so now what do you do with that? You have to put that into action, and here's three ways that you can do that. You

can be intentional about the way that you give of your time, talent, and treasures. You can be intentional, and sacrificial in the way that you serve, and you can be ready and prepared to share what you believe with somebody else, by being an evangelist.

So here's what we're going to do. We got some questions on these handouts in front of you, so let's talk about these three examples of living out our faith, in the discussion questions, and we'll take about 20 minutes or so for this discussion time, and then I'll pull us back together for the last seven or eight minutes, and I'd love to hear what you guys come up with at your tables, all right?

Let me pray for you, and then we'll go to the tables. Lord bless the next few minutes as we discuss these three ways to live out our faith. Lord, we know that our faith is screaming for us to do something, so Lord, help us to do the things that are in your will, and in your way. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

So guys look, your faith is screaming to be lived out. The prophet, Jeremiah, in Jeremiah 20, is complaining at the beginning of the chapter, he gets put in stocks, right? And put up for public ridicule. He's complaining to God. He's like, "God, why are you making me tell these people this? They laugh at me, they mistreat me. I don't want to do this anymore."

Then he says this, "But, if I say, 'I will not mention Him, or speak anymore in His name,' there is in my heart, as it were, a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." That Jeremiah is a man whose faith was so strong in God, that it screamed to be lived out. It was a fire in his bones, he couldn't contain it.

You might say, "Well, yeah, but they put him stocks." In this chapter, he goes back and forth with telling God how he has to serve Him, and then complaining about it, and then telling God how he has to serve Him, and then complaining about it. Then you're like, "Why would he keep doing this if he keeps complaining about it?" And he says this, and this is what I want you to think about. He says, Verse 11, "But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior, therefore, my persecutors will stumble. They will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten."

Guys, the Lord is with you as a dread warrior. Chapter 20, Jeremiah 20, "The Lord is with you as a dread warrior." Be certain that the Lord will equip you, that God will protect you, that God will strengthen you, that God will not abandon you, that you can do these things. You can live out your faith in the way that it's screaming to be lived out, without fear, because the Lord is the dread warrior. Serve in confidence, give in confidence, share your faith in confidence that the Lord is with you. Let me pray for you guys.

Father, thank you so much for your Word. Thank you for James, challenging us not to have an empty, meaningless faith Lord, but a full, meaningful faith that changes the world around us. Lord, we want to be stewards of the Mysteries that you have entrusted us with, so Lord will you help us to live that out every day in our life? In Jesus' name we pray, amen. All right guys, have a great week, love you.