

The Journey to Biblical Manhood

Challenge 7: Mission

Session 2: A Puzzle Needs All Its Pieces

Unedited Transcript

Brett Clemmer

One more time. Good morning! Very nice. At least three of you went to boot camp. That's good!

Hey, great to see you guys this morning. I am so glad to be here. We're doing this series on mission, so I'm going to give you, we're going to do the second session in the week on mission. Before we do that, we've got a group of guys to welcome. Here's the guys from Living Water Church Men's Bible study, 20 guys that meet on Thursdays at 6:00 am in Elk Grove, California, where right now it is four o'clock in the morning so they're not meeting. Brian Farnsworth is out there. Those guys are trying to strengthen relationships in each other and grow in their relationship with Christ. How do we get these shout outs? We get these shout outs because people go on mimbiblestudy.org, they sign up to be a leader, and then they can give us information about their group. After a few weeks or a few months, it shows up in the Bible study. Let's give these guys a big rousing welcome. Brian Farnsworth and the guys at Living Water Church Men's Bible study.

All right. We are in week two of Mission, of the Journey to Biblical Manhood Challenge number seven. We are seven challenges in, and we are talking about mission. We're on a course to finish up this series by the end of the year. There's 12 challenges. We're doing three sessions on each challenge, so we should finish up by the end of the year here live. Then folks out there are using these studies in their churches as they are looking at these different topics in their church.

Here's the faith and life objectives for mission. "Committing to a personal ministry. God has given us purpose and gifts to use for Him. At the end of this leg of the journey I will understand my abilities and gifts and how they can be used for God's glory." So understanding, that's your head. "I will prioritize my life around a prayerful sense of mission and purpose." That's your heart, prioritizing your life. Then, "I will find an outlet that lets me use my gifts for Him on a regular basis." That's your hands, that's your action. Head, heart, hands, what we know, what we're passionate about, our emotional engagement, our belief system is our heart, and then the way that we live that out is our action.

Let me ask you a question. How many of you woke up this morning? Check the first box. Yeah, some people are like "I'm only on my second cup of coffee, I haven't woken up yet." How many of you woke up this morning and were just ready and rarin' to go? Great. How many of you woke up this morning and went, "Do I really have to get out of bed this morning?" My hand's up all right. You wake up like that some mornings where maybe something's going on, maybe you're under some stress in your life, maybe there's some relational issues going on, maybe you're just not feeling good, maybe you're fighting off a bug or something. Maybe you're feeling under some spiritual attack. Especially on a morning like this

when we're going to get up and we're going to meet together as a group of guys, and we're going to study God's word. That's the time I think a lot of times where you get that spiritual attack because Satan wants nothing less than for men of God to get together and study His word like we're going to do this morning.

We're going to take a minute and pray, and I'm going to pray for you, but I'm going to invite you during this time, if you would, I'm going to ask that you pray for me too silently. Then we're going to dive into His word because this is an important thing to talk about. I really want God to speak to each of us this morning. Let's pray.

Father, we come to you this morning as men who desire to be the kind of men that you created us to be. We come to you this morning Lord as men who are struggling. Struggling in a world where everybody's screaming at each other. Struggling in a world that has values that seem to contradict each other constantly. Where there's no solid ground to stand on morally. Where many of us, Lord, are working harder, maybe feeling like we're working harder than we've ever worked before, and struggling to accomplish the things that we feel like we're made to do. Lord we live in a fallen world.

So Father this morning would you give us, first of all, would you give us strength to overcome that Lord, put trust and faith in you as the source of our strength Lord? Father I pray that you give us courage to lean in to what you would teach us from this scripture this morning. I pray Lord that you would give us courage to lean in to our relationships with our brothers, and with other brothers and sisters in Christ outside of this room Lord, and that you would give us courage to lean into a world that doesn't love the same things that we love. So Father, send your spirit into this room with us this morning. We know He's here Lord, but we want to experience Him in a new way through the power of your word. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

All right. We are talking about mission. Let me give you a little outline of what we're going to talk about. The title this morning is A Puzzle Needs All of Its Pieces. A Puzzle Needs All of Its Pieces. We're going to talk about having a unique fit, how do I know my mission, and then what Paul calls a still more excellent way. A still more excellent way. So a unique fit. Any puzzle guys in the room? Any guys like to do jigsaw puzzles? Somebody raise your hand that likes to do jigsaw puzzles, and I'm going to call on you. All the guys, all the hands just went down. No seriously, somebody that does puzzles. I've just got a couple of questions for you. All right, quick question. What's your name?

Josh: Josh.

Brett Clemmer: Josh. How are you doing Josh?

Josh: Good. How are you?

Brett Clemmer: Good to see you. I'm good, thank you. You put a puzzle together, you got a strategy?

Josh: You've got to go to the outsides first.

Brett Clemmer: Ah, you've got to do the outside. That's what I do. You find the four corners ...

Josh: Yeah.

Brett Clemmer: Start with the four corners right. Put the corners in, and then you do the edges. Now why do we do that?

Josh: To makes it easier.

Brett Clemmer: Yeah it's easier. It has a flat side. We figure out where all the corners are. Now let me ask you a question Josh, have you ever done a puzzle without looking at the picture?

Josh: No.

Brett Clemmer: No, that's stupid, right? That's what they do in movies to show that somebody's like an idiot savant. Oh, he put the puzzle together upside down. That's nice for him, but for the rest of us we're looking at the picture. Every piece in that puzzle fits somewhere in that picture. If you don't have every piece of the puzzle, then the picture is incomplete. Every puzzle needs all of its pieces. If you don't have all of the pieces, then you end up with a hole in your puzzle, and your puzzle is incomplete. This is exactly how the church is.

The church is like a puzzle, and it needs all of its pieces for the picture to be complete. That's how God designed it. The church is not some sort of amorphous thing out there, the church is us. We're the church. If we're not doing our part in the church, if we're not bringing everything that we have to bear, that God made us to do, and putting that to work in God's kingdom, then the picture isn't complete. Now God can fill in the picture if He wants to with some other piece, but he made you and He made me each with a unique place in the puzzle. When we fill in that place in the puzzle, then the picture is complete.

What are the pieces of the puzzle, or what does the picture look like? Let's look at 1 Corinthians 12. If you have a Bible turn to 1 Corinthians 12, Chapter ... Excuse me. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, Verse 12. I'm going to read this passage. I know some of these passages read in the last session, but we're going to review just this one passage we're going to look at today.

1 Corinthians 12:12. "For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one spirit we are all baptized and into one body. Jews or Greek, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one spirit." Now why is Paul saying this? Just a little cultural context here. Paul is speaking to Corinthians. Corinthians are not Jews. Paul didn't minister to the Jews, Paul ministered to the Gentiles. This sect, is how it was thought of in the day, it was thought of as a sect of Judaism, comes out of Israel. Kind of understandably so a lot of the Jews that were distributed around thought that when they became Christians that Jewish Christians were maybe first among equals. Maybe a little higher than everybody else.

So if you look at Paul's letters to the Gentiles, one of the common themes that you will find is that it's one God, one spirit, we're one people. Nobody's better than anybody else. Nobody's above anybody else. Just because you happen to be Jewish where Jesus came from, Jesus was an Israelite, was a Jew, doesn't mean that that makes you better than the other people that now are hearing the good news, hearing the gospel and believing. We're all on the same footing. So that's a common theme for Paul. "For the body does not consist," verse 14, "The body does not consist of one member, but of many." Then here's where he gets kind of funny. I mean he's sort of, he pushes the analogy hard for the next couple of paragraphs here.

"If the foot should say because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member where would the body be? As it is there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. Nor again to the head, nor again the head to the feet I have no need of you. On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weak are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts," You know what he's talking about. There's no super Holy meaning here. He means exactly what it sounds like he's talking about.

"Our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which are more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body giving greater honor to the part that lacked it that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it." This is the key verse for this morning. In fact, if you want to memorize a verse this week, memorize this verse. "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it." Do you see the dichotomy that Paul is building here? He's saying that this is the great thing about Christianity. Is that we talk about the community, the church, but you're not like just a faceless number in the church. You're not some soldier that we're going to send in to some battle, and we're going lose 40% of you, and oh well we're still going to lose the battle.

No, you are individually a member of it. God knows the numbers of hairs on your head. He knows. Remember Jesus said, "If God knows when a sparrow falls, how much more does he care about you?" How much more does He love you if He knows when a single sparrow falls? This is why our mission is so important because God knows each of us individually, and has given each of us individually a purpose, a calling, a mission. So for you not to, for me not to really pursue our mission and figure out what it is and then live it out is basically repudiating that individual attention and love that God has for each of us. He loves you personally. He knows you personally. He made you for something. So you are the body of Christ, but individually members of it.

God, verse 28, "God has appointed in the church," and then he lists some of the gifts. They really are chronological. First, apostles, then prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, and ministering, administrating in various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? What's the answer to those questions. No, okay, "But earnestly desire the higher gifts." You could do a whole sermon on what he means by the higher gifts. Some people think he's referring to chapter 14 what's coming, and he's going to talk about a few more gifts. Some people think he's talking about the gifts that he just listed above in the chronological order, and some people think he's talking about what the next chapter is about. But earnestly desire the higher gifts. Then you see this last sentence. We're going to come back to this, and I will show you a still more excellent way. We're going to talk about that at the end. "You are all members of the body," Excuse me. "You are the body of Christ, and individually the members of it." There's a picture. It's not a white puzzle where everybody looks the same.

I tried to find a picture that had a puzzle piece missing, and all anybody would post on the internet was "Hey look there's a piece missing from this puzzle, but I made it so you can't tell." I'm like no, no, no, I need a picture where you can tell to make my slide look better. All I could find was white ones. So I have

to use the anti-example. This is not what the body of Christ looks like. It's not just a white empty template. It's a beautiful tapestry. It's a beautiful picture. If you don't have a piece in it, then the picture is incomplete.

Now you could say, "Well you know some parts of the puzzle are cooler than others. I mean those corner pieces they've got it going on." We do that, don't you. Don't we look around the church and go man, that guy's gifts. That's amazing. That guy's calling, that's a super important ... I mean somehow we think that the guy up on stage behind the pulpit is more important than the person in the nursery who loves the babies every week, and takes care of them, and makes it a place that a little child looks forward to going to. Or more important than the guy out in the parking lot that's helping visitors find a parking space and make their way into the church so they don't feel so uncomfortable when they walk in. Or the person up in the sound booth that's tweaking the knobs. The 90% of sound booth people that have no idea what's going on. They turn everything up. But that's what they learn. If that's what they're called to do, if that's what they feel like God wants them to do, then they learn, and they do it better.

All of those things are important. Yeah the corner pieces look cool. They look more indispensable, but the fact of the matter is that every piece of the picture is important or the picture is incomplete. No gift, some gifts may look cooler. The eye may look cooler to the ear than the ear looks to the ear, but like Paul said if everybody was an eye you couldn't hear anything. If everybody was a preacher, nobody would do anything. If everybody was working in the nursery, then there'd be nobody to teach the adults. It all fits together. Every single piece is important. That's why it's so important that we find our mission, that we figure this thing out.

Here's the other part of this though. Just like the puzzle needs every piece, every piece needs its puzzle. If you're floating out there, and if you don't have a body that you're a part of, if you're not part of the church. If you're ... There's this movement out there right now that frustrates me, and it's men, and it tends to be successful men. They're like, "Well I don't like the church. I don't like the institutional church." Well I don't know, do you like the Bible? Because the Bible is pretty adamant about people being in a church, being part of a local body of believers. I don't ever see Paul going, "To the group of guys in Galatia who are hanging out on a front porch on Thursday nights, you know jamming about scripture, here's some stuff for you to think about." No. The body of faith grew through local churches that were planted in individual places. You had structure that people had to plug into. When you have structure, you need people to play roles. You need people to accomplish their mission.

Paul went out and traveled, but then what he did was he placed pastors in each of these places. He raised up elders in each of these places to care for the flock that was there. Everybody had their purpose, but everybody needed those things. You need a place to plug in. I mean if you were walking around like a puzzle piece, and you're like, "Oh look at me, I'm a pretty cloud." Well who cares. You've got to find a picture of a sky to plug into so that you can make that sky complete. So just like every puzzle needs all of its pieces, every piece needs a puzzle. There's a uniqueness to your fit because God made you individually to fulfill your own purpose, your own calling.

Then how do you know your mission? How do you know your mission? Well let's look at the story of Nehemiah. I'm going to encourage you, if you want to read a great overview of the story of Nehemiah and nine other guys, Pat's book *How God Makes Men* goes through these 10 different men in the Bible, and sort of how God makes men in their story. In Nehemiah, the story of Nehemiah really does talk to us about a person with a passion and a calling. So if you look at Nehemiah 1, you don't have to turn there, but if you do turn to Nehemiah 1. You see at the beginning of the ... I'm not going to read through this

whole thing, but if you see at the beginning of the chapter Nehemiah basically identifies himself as the author. Then he tells this story.

The story is the Jews are in exile. They've been scattered, and some friends of Nehemiah come to where Nehemiah is. He's the cup bearer for the king. Some friends come to him, and he says, "Hey I know the Jews were scattered, but I also know that some of them got away and they went back to Jerusalem, so how are they doing?" They said to me, verse 3, "The remnant there in the province who has survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates destroyed by fire. As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of Heaven." The first thing that we see when you're determining your mission is if you have no idea what you're made for, if you have no idea what your purpose is for, let me ask you this, what breaks your heart?

When you look at something out there in the world ... I mean there's tons of stuff that can break your heart. There's no shortage of that, but something breaks your heart more. You can watch two weeks of Oprah and she'll give you 10 different things that are wrong in the world, but one of them really grabs your heart. What is that? Maybe it's guys with addictions. Maybe it's illiteracy. Maybe it's hunger. When you hear about starving children in our country, or maybe it's homelessness. But what is it that really grabs your heart? With Nehemiah, trust me he already knew that the Jews had been scattered and some of them had gotten back to Jerusalem. I mean it's probably not really a surprise that this people, who basically had their city destroyed and carried off at the end of a war, that they were not in great shape. But when Nehemiah hears it his heart is broken.

Then what he does next is fascinating to me. He fasts and prays. Then down in verse 6 he says, "Confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I in my father's house have sinned." That heartbreak led to repentance. When I look at homelessness for instance, which is something that's grabbed my heart during my life, I can't just look at it sort of rationally and unemotionally, and go "Well this is a terrible problem. We have homeless people." No, it drives me to repentance. Like what I have done to foster a society that lets people live on the streets, that forces people maybe even to live on the streets. What have I ignored, or what have I not done, what have I ignored?

There's something about that, if that grabs your heart then it's not just like oh that's terrible for those people. It's personal. You realize your part in it, and you realize your brokenness. Because let me tell you, if you don't find your mission out of brokenness, you're not going to be a fun person to be around. You're not going to be a fun person to be around. You're going to be driven rather than coming at it from an attitude of being a servant. Then as the story goes on, Nehemiah realizes what he has to do. The mission becomes clear, the mission becomes clear, and then he takes action. Pat's going to talk about this next week. So heartbreak leads to repentance leads to mission, which leads to action. This is how you figure out what your mission is, and then take action on it.

The story of Nehemiah is a great example of that. I really encourage you to go and maybe take a week and just read through that book, and do some journaling about it as you're trying to figure out your own mission. This leads us to the big idea. Nehemiah ... Let me just remind you a thing about Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a cup bearer to the king, which means he was sort of on the official staff. He was on the cabinet if you will of this king. It was a pretty important job. It was the guy that made sure that the king didn't get poisoned. He wasn't just sitting there sipping like a sacrificial pig, let's put the canary in the

mine and see if he dies or not. He was actually overseeing it, overseeing things because trust me, he didn't want to die either.

He's on the staff, so he's ... Think about it this way. In that time, he was being prepared for the task that he was going to do. He was overseeing a ton of people on the staff of the king. He was making sure that this structure worked well to accomplish a specific purpose, regularly, over and over, and over again. God used that to prepare him for what was to come next. Joseph is another great example of this. God uses Joseph's family to prepare him as he's helping his dad run his businesses. He ticks his brothers off. Then he ends up being sold into slavery, but then ends up in another man's house running his household affairs. Maybe a bigger enterprise than the one he had with his family business. Then gets thrown into prison. Then ends up, what, the second most powerful man in Egypt. Every step of the way God prepared him. Every step of the way God prepares us for our mission because it's unique.

Here's our big idea. My mission is my unique fit. My mission is my unique fit into God's people and plan. As God is bringing you through the experiences of your life, He's uniquely preparing you for the mission that He has, for the place that you have in His people and in His purposes. Then the final thing I want to talk about, and this is probably the most ... As we're talking about head, heart, and hands, this is probably the most heart part of it is what Paul calls a still more excellent way. This is right at the end of the chapter. He says, "I will show you a still more excellent way." What is the still more excellent way? Personally, I think it's the next chapter.

Those of you that are familiar with scripture you know that 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 is called the "Love Chapter". Love is patient, love is kind, and all of that. He talks about faith, hope, and love, the greatest of these is love. Why would Paul say that this is the still more excellent way? Here's what I think that he's talking about. As you find your place in God's plan and in His people, as you figure out your mission, there's a couple problems when mission and love are separate from each other. First is this. If you are all love and no mission then you're just platitudes. You know guys like this. I know guys like this. They can quote scripture to you. They can put their hand on your shoulder and be warm and fuzzy. They can say all the right things, but it's just platitudes. They don't actually do anything. It's kind of annoying to a guy like me because I have this next problem.

I have mission without love often. A mission without love is self righteousness. It's trying to be righteous based on my own actions, based on what I do. A mission without love is really not, it's about me. It's about me accomplishing. You know "Lord, you're welcome. Amen." That's not where our righteousness comes from. Our righteousness comes from God, so our mission comes out of our what, our broken-hearted repentance. Then we find our mission. If you don't go through the process of being broken-hearted and repentant, you end up having a mission without love. You don't recognize what God did for you. In the debris field around people who have a mission without love are a lot of hurt people because these people run over people. You see it in the world, you see it in the church. People who have built a mission, but they've not done it from a place of broken hearted repentance. They've not done it with a heart of love, they've done it with a heart of self righteousness. Self righteousness neither brings you true righteousness nor does it build God's kingdom. It diverts it.

Our Big Idea. **My mission is my unique fit into God's people and plan.** I just want to say to you guys a mission from a heart of love is what pleases God. A mission from a heart of love is what pleases God. On your tables, and we handed them out last week, we handed them out this week, we had this spiritual gifts assessment tool that Pat created. We just revised it recently. What we're going to do is last week, this week, next week we're going to really use this as the discussion time tool. Last week I think we

really just took some time quietly to go through it. What I'm going to suggest is that we take maybe about 10 minutes, and if you haven't looked at it yet go ahead, and we're going to take 10 minutes. I'll give you timing notices. We're going to spend 10 minutes in silence.

If you haven't had a chance to work on it, you can start working on it. If you have, you can sort of review it and maybe push it a little bit farther. Then in 10 minutes I'm going to give you 10 more minutes to discuss it around the tables. Where you got to, what you struggled with, what you found out about yourself, and then we'll just have a quick wrap-up at the end. So take about 10 minutes to work on this, and then I'll give you heads up. Then 10 or 12 minutes of discussion time.

BREAK TO TABLES

All right. I'm going to read a story to you sort of as a final thought for today, and then we'll be dismissed. This is out of a blog that I found called Better Life Coaching blog. This is called The Cry of the Desert: A Story About Finding Purpose. Paulo Coelho, who wrote the book *The Alchemist*. Have any of you read the book *The Alchemist*? Fantastic book. He also wrote a very good book called *The Pilgrimage*, and 30 other novels. As soon as ... Recently shared this story, and this is in 2012, so he shared it before that.

"As soon as he arrived in Marrakesh, Morocco, a missionary decided he would stroll through the desert at the city's boundary every morning. On his first stroll he noticed a man lying on the sand caressing the ground with his hands, and leaning his ears toward the earth. He is mad the missionary said to himself, but he saw the man every morning during his walks. After a month, intrigued by that strange behavior, he decided to approach the stranger. He knelt beside him and asked in broken Arabic, 'What are you doing?' 'I keep the desert company, and offer solace for its loneliness and its tears.' 'I didn't know the desert was capable of crying.' 'It cries every day because it dreams of being useful to mankind, and turning into a huge garden where people could cultivate flowers and tend sheep.'"

"'Tell the desert it accomplishes its mission very well. Every time I walk here I am able to understand the true dimension of the human being as its open space allows me to see how small we are before God. When I look at its sands I imagine the millions of people in the world who were born equal, and am reminded that life isn't always fair towards everyone. Its mountains help me meditate, and as I see the sun rising on the horizon, my soul fills with joy and I feel closer to God.' The missionary left the man and went back to his daily chores. To his surprise, he found him the next morning at the same place in the same position. 'Did you tell the desert everything I told you?' he asked. The man nodded. 'And even so it keeps crying?' 'I can hear each of its sobs,' answered the man, his head tilted toward the ground. 'Now it is crying because it spent thousands of years thinking it was completely useless, and wasted all this time blaspheming God and its own destiny.'"

"'Well then, tell the desert that despite having a short life span, we human being spend as much of our days thinking we are useless too. We rarely find the reason for our destiny and think God has been unfair to us. When a moment finally arrives in which we are shown the reason why we are born, we think it is too late to change and keep on suffering. As the desert, we blame ourselves for the time we have wasted.' 'I am not sure the desert will bother to hear it,' said the man. 'It is used to suffering, and it can't see things differently.' 'So then let us do what I always do when I feel people have lost faith, let us pray.'"

Then he writes, "I have two prayers for you today." I have these two prayers for all of us today. The first is that you would find your purpose in life and live it with passion and excellence. The second is that you don't mourn that it took so long to find, regret your past, and think that it's too late, but that you are able to rejoice that you have found your purpose, and do all that you can to live the meaningful life that God has planned for you. Let's pray.

Lord I do pray that you would help us to find that unique fit that we have in the puzzle. Lord not just because the puzzle needs our piece, but because we need a puzzle to fit into. Lord I pray that you would take away any feeling of meaninglessness Lord because each one of us has a purpose that you've designed us for, but Lord like the desert in the story don't Father let us fall into regret that maybe we feel like it took us too long to find it. That your timing is perfect. That even that was part of the plan to help us become the men that we need to be for the purposes that you've created us for. Lord go with us now as we leave here. Make us a light to the world. Father help us to build your kingdom and bring you glory. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Love you guys. Have a great week.