

The Christian Man

Session 3: Growth

Becoming a More Kingdom-Minded Man

Edited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12 verse two. We'll go ahead and begin with a shout out this morning. That will go to a group called Longers. This is the name you will not soon forget. What a great name. Acronym for longing to grow closer to our Lord and Savior. Chip Reklis, I hope I pronounced that correctly, is the leader. They're a group from First United Methodist Church in Laurinburg, North Carolina, which I'm a little bit familiar with. A group of eight men. They meet on Wednesdays at 6:00 PM. Chip writes, "We are men wanting to grow spiritually and desire an intimate group setting to share thoughts, struggles, and also wanting to impact families, our church, and community." What a great mission statement. With that in mind, I wonder if you would join me in welcoming Longers to the Man in the Mirror men's Bible study. One, two, three, hoorah. Welcome, guys. We are really honored to have you as part of our Bible study.

The series that we're in is The Christian Man. In talking with the 24 young men who help storyboard the contents for this series and the book that will follow, the number one issue that they said would compel them to pick up and read a book for men would be spiritual growth. The title of the message today is Growth: Becoming a More Kingdom-Minded Man. When we have visitors come to the Bible study and they meet with me at first timer table after the message, I have, over the years, and these are generalizations, you can't really talk without making generalizations. The reason we use generalizations is why? Because they're generally true. Generally speaking, three kinds of men visit the Bible study.

The first kind of man we might call a seeker or an inquirer, somebody who really doesn't know God yet in a personal way through his Son Jesus, but for whatever reason is being drawn to investigate that. The second kind of man we might call a new Christian, a man who recently has made a profession of faith and now he wants to figure out, "Well, what did I just sign up for?" The third kind of man let's call a long time Christian, somebody who has known God for a while, maybe for a number of years, and for whatever reason is sensing a need to get mobilized or remobilized. Maybe he was in a Bible study once but hasn't been in one for a while or maybe he's looking for a place where can build some relationships with like-minded men or perhaps he's a man who did make a profession of faith at a younger age but now he's spent the last five, 10, 15, sometimes more years living by his own ideas. His life has not turned out the way that he had hoped that it would, the way that he had planned. He has realized or is beginning to realize that he either needs to get to or back to more of a Biblical Christianity.

You have heard it said, you probably have said it yourself perhaps, "I knew about God, but I didn't know God." There is this idea in theology the distinction between knowing about God versus knowing God. A lot of men who will come to this Bible study here or online, they do know about God, but they don't know God. They want to get to know God. I have also discovered over the years there is an equal and opposite problem. A lot of men today, they do know God, but they don't know about him. I would say,

and this is another generalization, most men, in my experience, most men only know enough about God to be disappointed with him. What we are doing here is we are helping men sort of turn that around. Now, there are, in our Bible teaching, there are really two aspects of it.

The knowing God part in theology is called the kerygma. That's the Greek word. It's the proclamation of the gospel. It's the what we need to know about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and his call to conversion and repentance. That's the proclamation of the gospel. That's the kerygma. Actually, you know, when you think about it, it's like it's getting to the front door and opening the door, but has nothing to do with what happens once you go in. You're going onto something else. The second part in theology after the kerygma is called the didache or the teachings. There's this sense in which the kerygma is knowing God, the proclamation of the gospel, and there is this sense in which the didache, the teachings, that's knowing about God. Growth, becoming a more kingdom-minded man, I think what these men were saying, I don't want to speak completely for them, but, "I have a kerygma. I have the proclamation of the gospel. I know God, but now I want to know about God. I want to know how to apply this gospel that I have in my life. I want the teachings. I want to be able to apply this to all the other areas of my life."

They come here. Men come here and they want more. This is simply said, but they want more. What do they want? They want to be part of something they feel like is going somewhere. They have come out of a worldview. We talked about these four worldviews that create these four different identities. They're coming out of a secular worldview where their identity was wrapped up in self or they're coming out of a moral worldview where their identity was wrapped up trying to do the right thing or they're coming out of a religious worldview where they were trying to perform to make God happy, to please God. Now they're coming into this crazy Christian worldview where we invite all the wackos of the world to join us simply by admitting that you're not worthy to be part of the group. That's your admission into the group is to admit that you're not worthy to be part of the group. That's all that's required, really, to get into the group. Some of you people are really cool. Some of you are a little weird, but you say, that, "All I have to do to get into the group is say that I'm not worthy to be in the group?" Yeah. That's basically it.

You come. We come. We come from out there where we are, every day, in a battle. You can make all kinds of military metaphors if you want, but it's just a struggle. That's why Jesus says things like, "Do not worry about what you will eat or what you will drink or what you will wear. For the Pagans run after all of these things and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all of these other things will be given to you as well." The idea in growing is to become more of a kingdom-minded man. You should be at Romans chapter 12 verse two. I need to get there myself. Sorry. Romans chapter 12 verse two says this, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world." Okay. That's either the secular worldview or the moral worldview or the religious worldview. Anyway, what's out there in the world, everything outside the world you're going to go into when you leave this room, "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing, and perfect will."

There's a big part of becoming a more kingdom-minded man that is involved in the renewal of the mind, being transformed, and being able to know God's will. I remember after being a Christian for a dozen years, 12 years, and after having been in a period of drought for about two and a half years, trying to figure out what was going on. I was a believer. I had the kerygma. I had a little bit of the teachings, but I didn't have enough to actually be able to say, "This is the day the Lord has made. I rejoice and I'm glad in it." I didn't have enough of that. I was that guy who only knew enough about God to be disappointed with him. I had a breakthrough one day. I was reading the Bible every day. I had a breakthrough in the

parable of the sower, Matthew chapter 13. I think it's verse 22 or 23. The third seed, "But the seed that fell among the thorns is like the man who hears the word," which I was reading every day, "but the worries of this life," and boy did I have them. Wake up at 2:00 in the morning, mind comes on. I'm up for the day.

"But the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of money." I was deceived. I was a materialist. Another story for another day. Anyway, deeply involved in materialism. I'm a recovering materialist now, but definitely in a big way into materialism then. "But the seed that fell among the thorns is like the man who hears the word. But the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of money choke the word and make it unfruitful." The teachings were being choked because I was allowing my old worldview to continue to seep into the new worldview that I was trying. It's a process, right? It's becoming a disciple of Jesus is a process. You can understand why men want to grow, why they want to become, not that they said this exactly, but some of them did, that they want to become more kingdom-minded.

How do you do that? How do you become a more kingdom-minded man? Well, the Bible has a word for this. It's the word disciple. The how we become this more kingdom-minded man who grows and knows enough about God not to be disappointed with him is to become a disciple of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Disciple, mathētēs is the Greek word. It literally means student or pupil or learner. The teachings, we learn the teachings by becoming a disciple of Jesus. Now, I'm a mad man today, just today. You know, I've been teaching this Bible study since 1986. Now we're on the subject of growth. If you're asking the wrong question, you can only succeed by accident. I always try to figure out, "Okay, what is the right question?" It turns out this week the question is a question. I think the right question is a question. Is there a single sentence by which I can condense 32 years of teaching? How would I condense 32 years into a single sentence?

I'm vain enough to keep a little file of what I think are my best thoughts. I didn't have to go back to that file because immediately, bam, it came into my mind, a sentence. I do think that this is, if I were to distill everything I've said over 32 years down into one sentence, this would be what the sentence is. It turns out it's not a theological statement, but it's a practical statement. It's a practical statement that leads to growth, that leads to becoming a more kingdom-minded man. It's been used here before as a big idea. This is the sentence, the one sentence that I believe best condenses what I've been talking about for 32 years. Here it is, the one idea that, fully understood and truly believed, will change everything for you, for me, for all of us.

WHAT ONE IDEA, FULLY UNDERSTOOD AND TRULY BELIEVED, WOULD CHANGE EVERYTHING?

I was talking with Jim Angelakos before the meeting started. This whole idea, we only do things we really believe. We don't do what we say is important. We do what we really believe. You know, you can talk to somebody and ask them what's important to them, but if you really want to know what's important, just watch what they do. That's why I'm spending so much time developing leading up to this. I want to create the gravitas, the sense of urgency. If you were to fully understand and truly believe this one sentence, I believe it could change everything. Here's the Big Idea for the day. **A Bible, a small group, and serving someone else will solve 90% of your problems.** Now, this is hyperbole, yes? Of course it is. It's a generalization, yes? Of course it is. As I look back on 32 years of teaching and thousands of men that we've been involved with over the years, these are the three actions that a man can take, that if he will take these on a consistent basis, in my opinion, have the greatest likelihood of resulting in growth and becoming a more kingdom-minded man.

IF I COULD OFFER A SECOND AND A THIRD IDEA

Now, if I could offer a second and a third idea, I would like to. The question I was actually asking myself this week, "How could I condense 32 years down into one sentence, one paragraph, and one chapter?" That was the real question I was asking. I got the sentence, but there are a couple of other ideas that I think are extremely important in this area of becoming a more kingdom-minded man. The second idea, the second most important thing I have to say after 32 years is that moderation is overrated. You know, when you're talking about wine and food, that's fine, but if you think about a race team trying to win a race on a racetrack, imagine they say, "We want to do all things in moderation." If you want to be successful at your job, "I need to be moderate so that I can be successful at job." That's the most crazy idea in the world.

Malcolm Gladwell wrote this book, *Outliers*. He actually discovered some research that's pretty amazing. He calls it the 10,000 Hour Rule. How many of you have heard of the 10,000 Hour Rule? A third of you. Here's the big idea. The big idea on the 10,000 Hour Rule is that it takes about 10,000 hours of effort, practice, to really become expert at anything. He starts by quoting a study done at Berlin's Academy of Music where a psychologist looked at three groups of violinists. The first group were those who were the elites. They were going to be playing in concert halls. The second class were the good ones. They would have careers and so forth, but they wouldn't be playing at Carnegie Hall or anything like that. Then, the third group were those who were unlikely to ever play professionally, but they might be like music teachers in the school system, something like that.

Here's what he discovered. In these three groups of people, long story short, by the age of 20, the elite group had been practicing for a total of 10,000 hours on average, about 10,000 hours. The good violinists had practiced, and they all started, by the way, at the age of five. All of these groups, they all started at the age of five and they all practiced two or three hours a week at the age of five. Then, as time went on, the elites start practicing more than the goods and the goods more than the average or the mediocres, if you will. By the age of 20, the top violinists, the elites, had practiced 10,000 hours; the goods, 8,000 hours; and then the future music teachers, 4,000 hours.

Moderation is overrated. Moderation is the first step to mediocrity. Did you just hear what I said? Moderation's the first step to mediocrity. That works in discipleship too. He has some other really cool things to say here. They couldn't find any naturals. There were no naturals. Once you were going to be a violinist, once it was determined that you could play the violin, there were no natural elites. They found nobody who ever rose to the elite level who didn't practice 10,000 hours. In other words, there are no superstars who can practice for 2,000 hours and end up playing at Carnegie Hall. It just doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. It takes a long time to become a disciple. It takes effort. The 10,000 Hour Rule applies here too.

When you're going after your Bible, your growth group, and serving someone else, don't do it with moderation. Moderation is highly overrated. Do it with passion. There's so much more I could say about him, but I won't, from Malcolm Gladwell. The Beatles, he talks about The Beatles. You know, The Beatles, they showed up in 1964. They had already done 1,200 performances. Most bands don't do 1,200 performances in their entire career and here are these teenagers in 1964 showed up and they had already done because they had been hired from Liverpool to go down to Hamburg, Germany, where they played seven days a week, eight hours a day for these striptease bars. Somebody said they went down there and they were not very good. They came back and they were very, very good. When they arrived in '64, they had put their 10,000 hours in already.

Can you imagine if Jesus had settled for moderation? Jesus was very immoderate. He died, for crying out loud. Paul was not very moderate, shipwrecked, beaten, stoned, all these things. I have these sentences that I've written down over the years. They're precious and they're important to me. A few of them, my life purpose. I want to live the rest of my earthly life for the will of God. Top of my do list, I would rather die for a worthy cause than live for no reason. I would rather be imperfect in actuality than perfect in potentiality. You have to decide whether you want to be imperfectly happy or perfectly unhappy. Advice to my daughter about who she would marry. The Holy Spirit usually does his best work when I do my best work. Sometimes you have to substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest. You have to take advantage of your opportunities when they present themselves because you do not know if they will ever come that way again. What's that? Printed. Yeah, we'll get to it. Who said that?

I join with Paul and I hope you will too in agreeing that moderation's overrated. Here's what he says, Colossians chapter one verse 24 and following, "Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions. For the sake of his body, which is the church, I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present you the word of God in its fullness, the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. To them, God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end," remember, moderation is overrated. "To this end, I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me. I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those in Laodicea and for all who have not met me personally. My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, growth, in order that they may know knowledge, the mystery of God, namely Christ in who are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Then, if I could say a third thing, it would be this. The first thing is that a Bible, a small group, and serving someone else will solve 90% of your problems. Second thing, moderation's overrated. The third thing is evangelism without discipleship is cruel. C-R-U-E-L. Evangelism without discipleship is cruel. Inviting someone to step inside the front door and then not ushering them in is cruel. To get people the kerygma, the proclamation of the gospel but not the didache, the teachings of how they can become more of a kingdom-minded man, that's just downright cruel. The Big Idea again today. **A Bible, a small group, serving someone else, that's going to solve 90% of your problems.**

THERE'S NO "ONE SIZE FITS ALL" SO DESIGN YOUR OWN GROWTH PLAN!

Final piece here is there really is no one size fits all discipleship plan or growth plan. You get to design your own plan. To that end, I put on your tables some handouts, if you would take it. I can't believe it. It's like a 14-page handout. I mean, it's like a whole chapter. A couple of things to draw your attention to.

Romans 12:2 says so that we can approve his good, pleasing, and perfect will. Finding the will of God, knowing the will of God, gaining the knowledge, the maturity, the wisdom and the power through this transformation of the renewing of the mind leads us to be able to know God's will. When somebody says they want to grow and become more of a kingdom-minded man, what is it that they want to do? I want to live the rest of my earthly life for the will of God. That's my life's purpose. In some sense, there's different ways to say it, in some sense, that's what we all want. That's what we're trying to do when we want to grow. We want to be obedient to our Lord and Savior Jesus because we love him. The approach

that we use here to design our growth plan, the approach that we use is to become part of a group that is studying the word of God. You got the Bible and the group. To be part of a group that feels like you're coming home to a family that really cares about you, not going to a job that's going to fire you if you can't perform. Do you have that? That's the group you want to be part of.

By the way, if you're at a church, it needs to be a church where it feels like it's a family that you're coming home to that loves you and accepts you the way you are. If you are going to church and it feels like you're going to a job where you're going to get let go of, you can't keep up, this is not the gospel, men. That's not the gospel of Jesus. That's the approach we use. The Bible is our constitution. The Bible is the Christian's constitution. We have a Supreme Court in the United States that meets to interpret the Constitution and you have two schools of thought, generally speaking, again, generalizations. You have one school of thought that wants to interpret the Constitution based on the intentions of the original authors and what they wanted to have happen.

Then you have a second group that wants to interpret the Constitution ... What's the right way to say it? I rest my point. I rest my case. I mean, what that sounded like, sounded like gibberish. That's the way it is with the Bible. The Bible is our constitution. We need to be careful to interpret it based on what the original authors said, intended, and meant, not on the gibberish of personal opinion. You can do that to a point on your own, but you need a group because our minds are fallen just like our bodies are fallen and the interpretation we need ... If you are reading the Bible only on your own, you're going to be looking for evidence to support the decisions that you want. That's just reality.

Then, serving someone else, this final piece on this is that it's important. You have to be a true believer. If you don't believe this, it's not going to make any difference. Again, the Big Idea is what? **A Bible, a small group which we talked about a little bit, and serving someone else will solve 90% of your problems.** Here it is. Here it is. Here it is. You have to believe, you have to know, the Bible clearly teaches you are an indispensable part of the body of Christ. The body only works when every part is doing its part and preferably not in moderation. The great need that we have today in the body of Christ is for a cadre of men who want to grow and help others grow. You see, it's not just becoming a disciple. It's becoming a disciple-making disciple. You've heard me say this before. Becoming a disciple who does not make disciples or disciples not making disciples, that's an oxymoron because inherent in the definition of what it means to be a disciple is someone who grows and then helps others grow as well. That's serving someone else. There are other ways to serve too.

I want to encourage you to look through this package. Finding God's will is the first page. There are seven means of finding God's will on the second page. Then, there's a little guide in here on how you could start a weekly men's small group. You could graduate from here or do something in addition here or just keep coming here but bring some people with you. The six worship languages, it's just so important in terms of understanding from a growth perspective how you best connect with God. Then the spiritual gifts assessment tool, which we've done here before, by which you can find out what is that indispensable part of the body that you are. I want to encourage you with all of this. We're running a little bit over. I think I'll just wrap it up there. Again, the Big Idea. A Bible, a small group, and serving someone else, after 32 years, I'll condense it all down to this, that will solve 90% of your problems. Let's pray.

Our Father and our God, Lord, we come to you, our dearest Father, and humble ourselves. We do, Lord. We're all here because we want to grow. We want to grow in maturity and knowledge and wisdom and power. We want to be transformed. We want to renew our minds. We want to know what your good,

pleasing, and perfect will is for our lives. Father, I pray that you would superintend this big idea to each of our hearts. I just pray that we'd all figure out for our own selves what is that one sentence that we would use to summarize the practical steps that really can lead to becoming a more kingdom-minded man. We make this prayer, Jesus, in your wonderful and precious name. Amen.