

A Deeper Walk with God

Becoming the Man God Created You to Be

Edited Transcript

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Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 8, verse 14 and if you don't have a Bible, just look on with somebody who does. So Saint Augustine said, "Thou has made us for thyself, oh Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee." So every morning, on this road out here in front of this building, there are men traveling on their way to work. And we have signs out on this road that say, "Visitors welcome," and that it's a Bible study and the time. Also, many of you belong to a church and that church is on a busy highway. And so, every morning, like today, men are driving by your church. And then every afternoon those same men are driving once again by your church on their way home and they're doing this every day, day in, day out, month in, month out, year in, year out, and many of these men have deep struggles, deep problems. They have this restlessness in their soul.

And so every now and then, one of those men will come to the front door of your church, of this building, and they will reach out their hand to take hold of the door handle. And what I would like you to think about for a moment is just how incredibly important that moment is, the sanctity of the moment when the man reaches out for the handle of the building to go into where you are talking about matters of faith. And so on the outside where he is, we know that the reason that he's doing this is because he has been driving by your church or driving by this building back and forth every day, all these years, and one day he looks over and he thinks to himself, "I wonder if that would be a place where I could get some help." And when you think about it, this is a place, your church, these are the places where men present themselves when they have a deep hunger in their soul for an experience of God's presence, his power and his peace.

And so it is the Holy Spirit that is working in that man giving him what John Calvin called the *sensus divinitatis*, the sense of the divine, the yearning that comes up, that bubbles up, that boils up inside of us to reach out for that door handle, that helps him overcome all of the fears, all of the doubts, all of the reasons, that he wouldn't want to open that door. That is a huge accomplishment on the part of the Holy Spirit to inspire that man to reach out for that door handle. Meanwhile, on the other side, we also know that all the spiritual forces of darkness in the heavenly realms have mustered to do everything humanly possible to keep that man, to keep you, from reaching out for that door handle. There is a huge spiritual battle taking place. You know this because you have had a man, for example, that you wanted to invite to the Bible study and you have invited him, and invited him, and invited him eight times.

And he's promised to come six times and he's never come. Why? Because he's engaged in a spiritual battle. There are spiritual forces that do not want that man to have a deeper walk with God. Now go inside, on the other side of that door, on the other side of that door handle, and inside that building there are leaders who long, who yearn, to have a bigger impact on the men in their communities, who want to help these men who have all these problems. And so it would be wise, and our leadership has done this here, it would be wise if there had been a group of men here or in your church who had sat around a table before that man reached out for that door handle. And that's the question, when that man opened that door, why did he just do that? Why would he do that? Why did he just open that

door? What are the problems, four things, what are the problems he's trying to solve? What does he need from us? How can we help him?

It would be useful if some men had considered that before all of this stuff, all the prayers of all the mothers, the grandmothers, the wives, the sisters, for years who've been praying that God would send the men in their life and finally he comes, it would be useful if there had been some men who had thought about why that happened. So that's what we're going to talk about in this series. The series is called A Deeper Walk With God.

We're going to do a couple of shout outs as we begin, as we always do. The first one goes to the Emporia State Football team, a group of men who have been meeting for a year in Emporia, Kansas with their Coach McDown. I think he's coach. Are you a coach, coach? A group of men who have been meeting for year with us on Wednesdays using the Video Bible Study and he writes, "A group of young men looking for hope and the only thing that can give us true joy and peace."

And then also a shout out to one of our Area Directors, Nick Koogler, in the Michigan area. And Nick is passionate about being an Area Director because of the difference that he's seen that Jesus Christ can make in men's lives. So Nick Koogler and the Emporia State Football Team. I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm, rousing, Man in the Mirror welcome to these men. One, two, three. Hoo-Ra! Welcome, men. We are honored to have you with us.

THE PROBLEM: A HUNGER THAT CAN ONLY BE SATISFIED BY GOD

So today, the topic is becoming the man that God created you to be and we're going to start by looking at the problem. The problem is that men have a hunger that can only be satisfied by God. Pascal wrote, "There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man that cannot be filled by created things but only by God, our creator, through Jesus Christ." And so there's this vacuum that men do have that can only be filled by Jesus Christ and where does this vacuum come from? You should be in your Bibles at Luke chapter 8 verse 14.

This is the parable of the sower or the parable of the seeds and the first and the second seed are described as falling on the rocky path and the birds, the Devil, snatch it away. And then the second falls on rocky soil, springs up but no roots so it withers. And then the third seed, in verse 14. "The seed that fell among the thorns stands for those who hear but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures and they," what? Do not mature. And so the reason that men have a vacuum in their soul, the reason that men are discouraged about the way their lives are going, is that they've gotten caught up in this third seed thing. They have, on their way, they've been choked, this is of course my story, probably your story too, by life's worries, riches and pleasures. I remember reading that after I'd been a Christian for 14 years and wondering why I felt so dead inside and so miserable, even though I had all the success I thought would make me happy.

I wasn't. I was miserable and I realized that the Word, which I was reading every day because at that point I was a Christian, but I'd been choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. And it says they, what? And they do not mature. And so you have this problem of malnutrition, spiritual malnutrition. Now there are some who think that this parable, you have three people who are not Christians, and then the fourth seed, verse 15, which is the one Christian. And then there are others who, like me, think that the first two do describe people who are not actually believers but believe that this third seed man is someone who actually is a believer. You make up your own mind but my point is that in order for

someone not to mature they have to be the thing at which they're not maturing. So this is why I believe it's someone who is a Christian who's not maturing. This is what I call a cultural Christian with a defeated faith. They're discouraged.

Then verse 15, the fourth seed, what we all aspire to in a deeper walk, but the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart who hear the Word, and word there is logos, retain it and by persevering produce a crop. Isn't that what we want, this fruitful life, to be this fourth seed Christian? Isn't that what we all really want? But when we become this third seed or these other men who are driving up and down the roads, they're discouraged. Why? Because the word that they have heard has been choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. And so they're hungry, they're hungry, they have this vacuum in their soul. And so what happens is that, at some point, that man feels the weight, the gravity, of this longing, this yearning, this craving, this hunger, for a deeper walk with God, this hunger for a spiritual reality that will give meaning and purpose to his life, that one day, one day, he reaches out for that door handle.

And as I say, it will be a good thing if there have been some of us who have thought in advance about what all that means. So what did these men need then? Well, what these men need is really quite simple. They just need to be encouraged. I've often thought that really all I have personally is the ministry of encouragement, encouraging you, encouraging others, inspiring people to have courage. Courage is the state of mind and spirit that enable one to face hardship or disaster with confidence and resolution. Out of Webster's. And then, so what does it mean to encourage? It means to inspire people to have that. In fact, I sign books, I write books, I sign books. Usually what I say is, "I hope these pages are an encouragement." Men need to be encouraged and so the Big Idea for the day is this, **Encouragement is the food of the heart and every heart is a hungry heart.** You're never going to meet a man who doesn't have a hungry heart and what is that heart hungry for? It's the encouragement that comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ultimate encouragement that a man can get comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and this encouragement is food of the heart and every heart is a hungry heart. How many of you heard me say this sometime along the way? Anybody? Good, I'm glad I used it again. So this is the problem, the compelling problem, that's screaming for an immediate solution.

HOW DOES GOD PROVIDE TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM? IT'S A PROCESS

Next, how does God provide to solve this problem? Well, it's a process. Turn with me now to Hebrews chapter 5, verse 13. "Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness." Remember this teaching here is again, logos, L-O-G-O-S. With the teaching about righteousness. Now, watch this, but solid food is for the mature, who by constant use and constant would mean something like daily or almost daily I would imagine, you make up your own mind, have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

So training is just so incredibly important. When new race car drivers come out of the Formula One circuit, the rookies, some of them do better than the others more quickly because they've come up in the junior formulas and so they've already raced those tracks. But if they haven't raced that track, then they have to train so they have practices and practices and then, as the years go by, they begin to excel and they can distinguish the right line from the wrong line, the good from the evil. Therefore, verse 1 of chapter 6, "Let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity." So what are the elementary teachings about Christ? Well, it says so right here. Not laying

again the foundation and what's the foundation? Repentance and faith, repentance from acts that lead to death and a faith in God.

So the elementary teachings about Christ. In theology, since I have a seminary degree I need to throw out a couple of terms every now and then just to keep my theology card going and so, the elementary teachings about Jesus in theology are called the kerygma. How many of you have heard of the term kerygma before? This is why theologians don't make very good speakers, because nobody understands what they're saying, right? So kerygma is K-E-R-G-Y-M-A or maybe it K-E-Y-R-G-M-A. Kerygma, it's the elementary teachings about Jesus. It's everything that you need to know for salvation. But that happens in a moment of time, it'll last forever, but it happens in a moment of time and then the reason that some men gets discouraged is they get their fire insurance and then they don't go on from there. But Paul says, "The problem then is that it's like you're drinking milk your whole life instead of getting onto solid food."

He says, "Therefore, let us move beyond the elementary teachings." He doesn't say let us abandon the elementary teachings but he says, "Let us move beyond that and be taken forward to," what? Maturity. And so God provides to solve this problem through a process that leads us to spiritual maturity. Now on your tables is a sheet of paper and I'd love to have each of you, I've required, that each of you grab a piece of this paper. And catechism, this is a catechism for A Deeper Walk With God. So last weekend, Brett Clemmer, the President of Man in the Mirror, and I went to Dallas to meet with the Catholic Men's Leadership Alliance. And this is a group of Catholic leaders, 55 of the 200 dioceses were represented, so they had a fourth of all the dioceses there, and these are men like you and me who are passionate about evangelizing and discipling Catholic men.

And the one thing I just appreciated so much and I've been around Catholics off and on a lot but every time I am I'm just so touched by the deep sense of worship that they have, the deep commitment to prayer that they have, and so I was struck that we did a little catechism. So I said, "Well hey, why don't we do a catechism for a Deeper Walk With God?" So that's how this came about. You will be doing this together in your table discussion later unless your leader takes you in a different direction but let me just go through this with you. It's going to take me 2 minutes and 37 seconds to do this. Catechisms, what's a catechism? Basically, in religion, it's a list of questions and answers that help organize doctrine or Christian thinking. If you read the Bible, it's not organized as a systematic theology. It's hasn't been systematized. So catechisms basically take different ideas about God, Scripture, man, the world, so forth and organize them into questions and answers.

So this is Pat's shorter catechism for A Deeper Walk With God. Question number one, in what state does every man who loves or wants to love God eventually find himself? Answer. Hungry for a deeper, richer, more consistent experience of God's presence, power, peace and all the other fruit of the Holy Spirit. Q two, what are some of the chief cravings that attend this hunger? Answer. To know and be known, to love and be loved, to renew the mind, to be transformed by Christ's Gospel, to grow in maturity, to be free of fear and anger, to lead a more holy and sanctified life, to feel that his life is useful and to receive from the Holy Spirit the power to imitate the example of Jesus, whom he has come to acknowledge as the greatest man who ever lived. Am I talking to anybody here? Aren't these the cravings that, at some point, we all come to after we've tried to use God to make us rich and get prosperous or we've pleaded with God to get something that we shouldn't have wanted in the first place?

Or if we have been angry at God because he didn't heal that person that was sick and they died and now they've come back to the front door and they've opened the door and they've come in. These are some

of the cravings that they have. Q three, how can this hunger and the cravings that go with it be simply and succinctly summarized? Answer. As the desire to have A Deeper Walk With God, which is the title of this series. There are many ways you can say that. A deeper experience of the power and presence of Christ. There's so many ways you can say it but the reason that I say it this way has to do with origins of the name of the series. So welcome to the 1670th edition of the Man in the Mirror Bible Study. This is the 1670th time we have met on a Friday morning, and I'm estimating now, but this is really a guess, at some place along the line I developed a way of praying for our first time visitors who will join me at this first time visitors table even this morning and every Friday morning.

So I estimate that I have prayed a prayer for those men at least a thousand times and certainly if you include all the times I've prayed it for other men around it's got to be well over 1000, at least 1000 times I've prayed for these men. After hearing their stories, I pray for them, our dearest father, because of the obvious desire that these men have expressed to have a deeper walk with you, I pray that you would bless them with a great abundance in every area of their lives. In their relationship with you, in their relationship with loved ones, in their work, their health, their finances, their educations and their ministries, I pray that you would find it pleasing to bless each of them with a great abundance. Because I know that they are here. The why that they are here is because they're hungering for a deeper walk with God. There are so many other things a man could be doing on Friday morning, like sleeping in.

So why would a man be here? Except that, and then when you hear the stories you realize that, this is exactly why men come. They want a deeper walk with God. They want to get to know the savior that they have invited into their life or they want to get to know about the savior so that they can invite him into their life. And then they want to know, "Okay, well, what I do next? How do I live? How do I move beyond the elementary teachings? How do I move onto maturity?" And so, question four, how does God provide for men to cultivate this deeper walk with himself? It's Hebrews 6:1, which we just read. "Let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken on to maturity." Q five, how then does a man increase in spiritual maturity? Romans 12:2, "You are transformed by the renewing of your mind." Q six, what then are the benefits of renewing your mind? Then you'll be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Q seven, how then does this renewing of the mind, this spiritual maturity, take place? Second Timothy 2:2, it takes place right here. It's discipleship, the answer. The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, in trust to reliable or faithful men, will also be qualified to teach others. Q eight, how then will I become the man God created me to be? Watch this because we're rolling up a lot of things right here into this one answer. Through loving and serving others as part of a band of brothers who encourage each other and build each other up because they fully understand and truly believe that whoever looks into the perfect law, and that's just the way that James describes the Bible, whoever looks into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in, not forgetting what they've heard but doing it, they will be blessed in what they do. They will have this deeper walk with God.

So over the next few weeks, we'll unpack how this might happen, what this might look like for you, how you might help someone else be encouraged in their walk with God, to have a deeper walk with God. Again, the Big Idea of the day is that, what? **Encouragement is the food of the heart and every heart is a hungry heart.**

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

So how can you help? Turn to Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews chapter 3, verse 13. "But encourage one another daily as long as it is called today so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." We have the opportunity to be the encouragement that other men need, the food of their heart, the solid food. Men need solid food, they need the solid food of encouragement and you and I can give it to them. But now of course the other question becomes, what if you're the man who needs to be encouraged? What if you're the guy who needs to be encouraged?

Well, I want to encourage you to be honest about that, to open up about that. If you're discouraged, this should be a place. For crying out loud, this should be among a handful of the places where you could actually tell people that, "I think I'm really pissed off at God." You ought to be able to say that here. You ought to be able to say that in your church too. If you're angry at God, you ought to be able to say that. Somewhere, to real people, who are mature enough to understand that that is not a statement that needs to be judged, but encouraged. All right, so maybe you're the guy who needs it or maybe you're the guy that needs to do it. One of the visitors here this morning was telling me an interesting story. I didn't ask him for permission to tell the story so I'll just disguise it a little bit.

So he was at a yoga class and he went with somebody of a particular denomination but one of the people that he went with decided that they couldn't stay because it was a yoga class and it does have foundations in some eastern whatever. And you know what? That's okay because there are different personalities. Some personalities have more narrow limits and are more rigid. And others, like me, are much broader and more flexible. I love everybody. I mean, I really do love everybody. I can't think of anybody I don't love. I even love some of these wicked criminal type people like Bernie Madoff. I feel the love of Christ. That's just the way I'm wired. Some people will never be able to forgive Bernie Madoff and they're Christians, and I get that, okay. But what I am saying is that the more flexible that we can be, the more we will be able to be an encouragement to other people. And people need to have places where they can express their honest doubts, beliefs and emotions without fear of being judged.

They need the encouragement that can only come from Christ's Gospel. I want this place, this place is, it always has been, that's why we're still here by the way. Hey, if we were this little, narrow, rigid group of guys we wouldn't be here after all these years. Big Idea today. Encouragement is the food of the heart and every heart you see, every person you meet today, every person in every car that you pass, even the ones that are zigging and zagging going 20 miles an hour over the speed limit, I hope that's not you but if it is, God bless you. I'll come and visit you when you lay on your deathbed in the hospital from the accident that you had that you shouldn't have, everybody needs encouragement because everybody has a hungry heart.

Let us pray. Our dearest father in heaven, thank you so much for your word, for giving us the pathway, this process, to have a deeper walk with you, that we don't have to live in the shallowness of being choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures. But that we can move beyond the elementary teachings. We can move forward to spiritual maturity and you have given us a clear path to do it, a path that we will be exploring more deeply in this series. Thank you for the men who are here today. I pray that you have blessed them with a great abundance. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.