

# The Christian Man

## Identity:

## Settling Who I Am and What My Life Is About

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

Well, good morning, men. How's everybody doing today? Good, please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 16:7. We are starting a new series today called The Christian Man. Before we get started, we're going to do our shout-outs. Today's area director shout-out goes to Armand Paladino, who is in the Cape Cod area, so if you're online and you're in the Cape Cod area and you're trying to figure out how to disciple men more effectively, let me encourage you to reach out to Armand, part of The Man in the Mirror team.

Then the group chat out today goes to a new group called "Solid Rock Men". They are in Ruiru, Kenya, six guys meeting on Saturday mornings at Trinity Chapel. Their slogan is "desiring to be discipled to disciple." Pretty cool. John Njau is the leader of that, and so we want to welcome you, "Solid Rock Men", and also give a shout-out to Armand Paladino, so would you join me in giving these men a very warm, rousing Man in the Mirror welcome? One, two, three. Hoorah. Welcome, men. We're honored to have you here. By the way, this is just a little bit outside of Nairobi, and if you've ever been there, I have, it's like 5,889 feet above sea level, very near the equator, so there's this very cool, temperate, beautiful weather year-round. It's a very lovely place.

The series, as I say, is The Christian Man. These are turbulent times to be a man. We all know this. Sometimes, it feels like we've been hacked, spiritually hacked. A friend of mine, Nick, says, "Sometimes, it feels almost impossible to live out a biblical model of manhood." None of us, though, we fail on purpose, we all know that, but neither do we succeed by accident. For that, you need a plan, and this series is that plan.

It's based on the book, The Christian Man. We've done this series here before when we were putting the book together. What ended up in the book is not exactly what we talked about, so you'll hear some new things, but you also hear some things you've heard before. This book was put together. Most of the books I write... this is my 21st book. Most of the books I've written, I've been writing from the perspective, I've done my homework, you can trust me, here's what you need to know.

But in this case, I took a different approach, and I assembled 24 men from 24 to 47 years of age, several of whom are here in this room with right now. Raise your hand if you were in the group. Three men right here. Four, back there too, our videographer today. Brian was also part of the group, and asked them basically two questions: What are the most compelling issues that you face right now? They came up with about 40 issues, but then when they voted them down, everybody had equal number of votes. We came up with a very clear list of 10 issues that the men felt mattered the most. Then we asked, "What are the questions you would like to have answered about each of those issues?" and that became part of the book.

Now, I'm going to... We want to up our game. We want to add more value to you and your ministry, to yourself and to the other men that you've come in contact with, and so I'm going to do something very unusual this time around. I'm going to be teaching out of this book and also out of the coaching guide that goes with the book, and I'm going to encourage you, exhort you, ask you, whatever, to go and buy a copy of the book and download a free copy of the coaching guide. Then in between sessions during the week, I'm going to encourage you to go through this with another man or a small group, or if you don't want to do it that way, do it by yourself, but to be mentored and mentor other men in this material, and let's all see if we can up our game.

Now, look, if you are just burned out and you needed a place to come to heal then don't pay any attention to what I just said, but if you have enough Christ for yourself and a little bit leftover to give away to others, this would be a great way to do it. I want to encourage you to do that. If you cannot absolutely afford to buy this book right now, I get it. See me. I'll give you one. If you're online between now and Thanksgiving 2019, I want you to buy the book too, but if you can't, send me an email, [patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org](mailto:patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org), and we will send you a free copy of the book. Okay? You got it?

Today, what we're going to do, looking at, is "IDENTITY: Settling who I am and what my life is all about." We want to start here because, as the old saying goes, if you don't know where you're going, then any road will get you there, so we got to figure out a little bit more about this, so who am I and what is my life all about? Who are you and what is your life all about?

I've been watching SEAL Team, the TV series. I love that. I love anything that has CIA or first tier operators or spies, but I just love it. But it's interesting, the theme of SEAL team this year seems to be the existential pain of not knowing who I am if I'm not a SEAL. You see this, and so first thing we want to talk about here then is what I'm calling the difference between your obituary identity and your naked-before-God identity.

## **YOUR "OBITUARY" IDENTITY VS. YOUR "NAKED BEFORE GOD" IDENTITY**

Most people, the way that we think about identity, and this is definitely a part of it, but the Immanence, the horizontal way of thinking about it without injecting transcendence into it, which we'll get to in a moment, most people, the way they think about their identity is: what I do, what I have, what I look like, who I know, and where I live, and maybe a few other things.

The problem with these is that this is the visible you, but the problem with these ways of thinking about identity only, and I do think they're part of identity, but when you limit it to that, then the problem becomes, for example, if who you are and what your life is about is what you do, if who you are is you do, then who are you when you don't do what you do anymore? This is the problem that the SEALs guys are having in the TV series, and we see this all the time.

My problem, I'm a high school dropout. My brother's here in the Bible study, he watched me meltdown, quit high school, and the reason I did is because I didn't know who I was and I didn't know what my life was about, but it wasn't that I was invested in something that I had my identity confused with the roles, like I had no concept whatsoever, so that's the other extreme of this.

It's not necessarily just what you do or what you have. A lot of us have, at some point in our lives, gotten wrapped up in materialism or maybe a particular possession or something like this or something that we really wanted that we thought that that was going to be the thing that solved all of our problems is if I

could just drive that car, then I'll be happy, then I'll be somebody, then I... that is who I am, and so we find that doesn't work out, or what I look like. You might be brown, you might be black, you might be white, you might be red, you might be yellow.

There's this tendency for us to put people in slots and stereotype them and put labels on them based on what we look like. That's certainly an element. God created us brown and yellow and white, so yeah, there's a little bit of identity in that, but that's not, again, that's the visible you, that's the obit you. That's the way that people talk about you when you're gone when they tried to describe who you were. "Well, he worked here, and he did that, and he had this. This is who he knew, and he lived over here in Pine Hills or he lived over there in Winter Park." These are the visible ways that we talk about each other, visible ways we talk about our identity, who we are and what we do.

But there's another identity that we, I'm going to call our naked-before-God identity. How does God see you? How does God see me? When God thinks about you, what does he think about? What is your identity in God's eyes? I've asked you to open your Bibles to 1 Samuel 16:7, and the second half of this verse... well, just the whole verse. The Lord is speaking to the prophet Samuel about who's going to be the next king, and it's going to be David. It's going to be David, one of Jesse's sons.

The Lord says to Samuel when he's looking at one of the older brothers, he says, "That's not the guy you're going to appoint." He says, "Do not consider his appearance or his height." That's one way that people think about identity, what you look like, what people look like, "For I've rejected him," or not selected him. "The Lord does not," watch this, "The Lord does not look at things people look at. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." God, when he's thinking about who you are and what your life is all about, he's not looking at the outward appearances. He's looking at the heart.

I'm going to ask you to do an experiment with me. I'm going to ask you to take your head and to the extent possible, I'm going to ask you to wrap your hands around your head, and then shut your eyes. Just do that if you would for me. Just wrap to the maximum extent possible. Just take your head and wrap your hands around it, and shut your eyes for a second. Now I want to, I want you to take about 10 seconds, and I want you to think about the expansiveness of creation, not just the stars that we see in our own Milky Way galaxy, but the apparently billions of galaxies that perhaps exist, and just think about how big creation is.

Now, if you would, contrast that with the small mass that you have held in your hands, everything that the Bible calls the heart, the intellect, the will, the emotions. It's pretty startling, isn't it? You can put your hands down. It's pretty amazing, isn't it? This man, David, of whom God said, "Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart," this man David, he was the one that was selected as the king. He also asked this exact same question, different words, but he wanted to know, "Who am I, and what is my life about? What are we, and what is our life about?"

Now, if you would, turn with me to Psalm 8, Psalm 8, and we'll go to verse three. Psalm 8 was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s favorite text of scripture, and certainly one of my favorites too. In chapter eight of Psalms verse three, "When I consider the heavens," writes David, just like we were considering the heavens of minute ago, "the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Who are we, and what is our life about? God, can you help us settle this?"

Then David answers the question. He answers the question first by telling us who we are, our identity. Who are human beings? "You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor," and then what our life is all about, our purpose, "You made them rulers over the works of your hands. You put everything under their feet, all the flocks and herds, all the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the sea. Lord, O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth."

We are created by God in the image of God, and made a little lower, just a little lower than the angels. We're crowned with glory and honor. Basically, here's the deal. You are the full expression of God's creative genius, the full expression of God's creative genius. God was at his very best when he made you. You are his most excellent creation. The Big Idea that I put in the coaching guide, which I'll read to you, is that your naked-before-God identity is founded on faith in Jesus, the roles he gives you, and attributes that reflect Christian character and conduct, but that might be a little bit much for you to write down, so here's the Big Idea today, a little shortened.

**Your naked-before-God identity is founded on three things: your faith, your roles, and your attributes.** When you understand and have a big-picture comprehension of this identity, then it gives you a great freedom to really feel like you have settled the issue of who you are and what your life is all about. **Your naked-before-God identity is founded on your faith, your roles, and your attributes.** We'll come back to this again.

### **3 MAIN ASPECTS: YOUR FAITH, YOUR ROLES, YOUR ATTRIBUTES**

There are three main aspects that we're talking about here to identity, faith, roles, and attributes, so let's just take a minute and break it down a little bit, each one. 2 Corinthians 5:17, which is one of the verses listed on your note taking sheet there today. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone or passed away, and the new has come." I like it, this is one place where I really liked the King James Version because it says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature." In other words, if you are in Christ, when you have faith, you have a new identity. You are a new creature. Paul wrote, "If only for this life we have trusted in Christ Jesus as Lord we're to be pitied more than all people," because we go through all kinds of sufferings, but underneath this, our naked-before-God identity is that we are new creatures in Christ.

Here's the sub point for this, and it's worth remembering. This one's worth writing down too. It would've been a Big Idea on a different day. Who I am in Christ is who I really am. That's it. Who I am in Christ is who I really am. It's the naked-before-God identity, who I am in Christ. Identity Christian man's identity is founded, founded primarily on faith in Jesus Christ, and then of course, the roles that he gives to us, and then the attributes by which we exhibit character and conduct. That's number one, your faith.

Then the second main aspect are the roles that you take on in life, that you feel God has called you to take on in life. I have mine. You have yours. There's a lot of crossover. I have a prayer. I've mentioned this here before. I can remember it sometime, a prayer that I pray every morning.

"Father, we come to meet with you, our much-loved Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. We pray that you would meet and abide with us, your much-loved sons and daughters. The Father Jesus, we come to meet with you, our much-loved Savior, Lord, and Teacher. We pray that you would meet and abide with us, your much-loved disciples, friends, and servants. The Father Jesus, Holy Spirit, we come to meet and

abide with you, our much-loved Comforter, Counselor, and Power. We pray that you would meet and abide with us, your much-loved temples, vessels, and charges."

For me, I can strip out, I put my roles into that prayer, if I strip those out for you right now, then the roles that are most precious to me are the role of being a son, of being a disciple. I consider being a disciple the highest honor to which a man can aspire, a disciple of Jesus that... I mean, just imagine being able to aspire to be like Peter or Paul. This is like the highest honor I think we can aspire to is to be a disciple.

In terms of our actions, I would say, in terms of our being, to be the son would be the highest privilege that we would have, much-loved sons. Sons, disciples, servants. If the highest honor of a man is to be a disciple, I think the highest honor of a disciple is to be a servant, is to be among you as one who serves, to deny yourself, to take up your cross, and to follow Jesus not as a duty or as a performance or out of shame or guilt, but rather because I'm so filled up in my own personal relationship with Jesus that I just feel like I have so much Christ in me that I'm overflowing with it, and I'm almost drunk sometimes. I feel like I'm drunk. I have to do something to give away this Christ other people in order... At the top of my to-do list, I have this little sentence: I would rather die for a worthy cause than live for no reason. This is the worthy cause that's worth dying for. It's sharing Christ with other people.

I won't belabor the others, but anyway, so the son, disciple, servant, friend, vessel, temple, and charge. These are the roles that are... Now, you may have other roles. For example, you might say, "Well I'm a steward," or, "I'm a husband. That's like one of my top roles," and there are other roles that you can have.

In the coaching guy, which I hope you will take advantage of, and there is a worksheet in there... What I do with it? Here it is. There's a worksheet in here that you can work through with a mentor or on your own in the identity chapter, and you can list out the roles that you feel like are part of your calling, part of the way that God thinks about you, part of your identity, what your life is all about and who you are in the eyes of God. Then the next area here... so we have your faith, who you are in crisis, who you really are, our identity is founded on faith, and it's also founded on the roles we feel like God has called us to.

By the way, just, I think one thing you might want to consider doing is doing something like I did. To make sure that I stay on track with these roles that I feel like I have, I've incorporated them into a repetitious daily prayer. I don't write down my roles one time, and then five years later come back and look at them, say, "Oh, my gosh, I forgot about that one." I'm not going to forget about anything because I'm praying it every day and thinking about it all the time, and I encourage you, just a suggestion, but it's a possible application, to just put it into some sort of a repetitious daily prayer.

Then the attributes that reflect Christian character and conduct. Turn with me to Galatians 5:22, Galatians 5:22. We don't have to guess about what the attributes that are desirable for the Christian man because God took note that all of us should have all of these particular qualities and attributes of character and conduct, and he wrote them down so that we would not forget them.

In verse 22, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Then if you would turn over... Those are the fruit of the Spirit. Very famous. If you've been around Christianity for a while, you heard that before. Turn to Luke 18:9, and this is the story of the parable and the tax collector.

Jesus told this parable, "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and then look down on other people, two men went up to the temple to pray, one was a Pharisee, one was a tax collector. The Pharisee said, 'God, I thank you that I'm not like all these other people out here, these evil tax collectors. I fast twice a week. I give a 10th of all I get.' But the tax collector, he stood at a distance. He would not even look up to Heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' Jesus said, 'I tell you that this man rather than the other went home justified before God, for all those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'"

You have the fruit of the Spirit, and I think it's a very reasonable assumption to add into the attributes that are most desirable for the Christian man, this attribute of humility, and so there you have it. In the coaching guide, which, again, I hope you'll take advantage of and either download... probably most of you in the room already have a copy of it anyway, but there is a list here of these attributes. You can look back through these two verses that I've mentioned, and you can list out the attributes that you want people to think of when they think of you.

Instead of thinking about what you look like and what you have and where you live, wouldn't it be great instead to think about wanting to have people think about how loving you are or how kind you are or how self-controlled you are. You can list that out here as well. These are the three main aspects of identity. Obviously, we could write... there have been written tens of thousands of books on identity, but I think that this is helping us really distill down, boil down to the very essence of what is a Christian man's identity.

The title of the talk is *Settling Who I Am and What My Life is All About*. Again, the Big Idea: Your naked-before-God identity is founded on your roles and your attributes but then how do you settle that?

### **SETTLE IT: MY DECLARATION OF CHRISTIAN MANHOOD**

Well, one way is to make a personal declaration of your desire to find your identity in Christ alone to surrender to Jesus Christ in faith. On the handouts before you, which I'd like to ask each of you to pick up one of these, there is... You guys don't have enough. Somebody have an extra one for me? Anybody have an extra one for me, the handout. Yeah, that's good.

On the handout on the right-hand side is a shaded area, and it's called My Declaration of Christian Manhood. What I would like to do this morning is if you have already settled it and would like to reaffirm your Christian identity, or if you've been thinking about it, but you've never really actually driven a stake in the ground and you would like to do that, whether this is the first time you've ever done something like this or it's a reaffirmation of something you've done in the past, I'm going to invite you, if you'd like to, to pray this declaration of Christian manhood out loud with me. It'll take us two minutes to go through it, and then we'll be done with the first session. If you'd like to, say this out loud after me. Let's pray this together.

Heavenly Father, I am tired of weak, unsatisfying faith. I am weary of leading a divided life. I want to be so in Christ that others want to catch what I have. As a new creation, I long to know your love for me as a son, disciple, friend, servant, temple, vessel, and charge of the Holy Spirit. I want to experience and infectiously exhibit all the fruit of your Spirit. Here, today, I take my stand. I repent of all my worldly ways and put my faith in Christ alone. I hereby declare that from this day forward, I will stop seeking the god or gods I have wanted and will start seeking the God who is. Before a watching world, I pledge to lead a Bible-saturated life of devotion and study of God. My desire is to renew my mind, to be a man

after God's own heart, to live out of the overflow of a vibrant relationship with Jesus, and to each day fully surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

I will make it my business to live in right relationship with God and right relationship with all people and to exercise my gifts and calling to fulfill the great commission and cultural mandate. My true identity is in Christ. I commit to live openly for the glory of God in all my ways. I openly confess that I can do none of this apart from your grace, Father, through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I pledge my allegiance this day to a life of Christ-centered manhood. If they cut me, I want to bleed Jesus. Amen.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this first session in this series about the 10 issues that men say matter most, and I pray that you would inspire and insight us for this session to be fully settled in who we are and what our lives are all about. We make our prayer in your name, Jesus, Amen.