

Reconstructing Manhood

Re-Constructing Your Faith

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning. We are in this series, **Reconstructing Manhood**. Jeremy started the series with a special guest appearance, Jeremy Schurke, and he gave us some of the statistical background for the problem that the body of Christ's followers, followers of Jesus face in this day and age. And we're going to be looking at the issue of reconstructing your faith and the faith issues that some of the men, younger men... It's like a myth that this is a problem with younger men.

You've heard about the problem of de-churched men. You've heard about the problem of the dones. "I'm done with church." You've heard about the problem nones. "I have no church." According to Statistica, 29% of Americans now never attend church, if they consider themselves to be either nones or dones. So we want to look at that. Now, you are here. Hopefully, you do not need to reconstruct your faith, but if you do, my hope is that you'll hear something this morning that will help you take another step in the right direction. It is more likely that you know someone, perhaps a family member, perhaps a coworker who has de-churched, who has become a done or maybe is a none and you would like to know how to help them. That's what we're going to be discussing this morning. First, let's go ahead and give a shout out to all of the men who joined us online. So if you would, on the count of three, let's give them a very warm, rousing Men In the Mirror, welcome. On the count of three, 1, 2, 3- Hoo-ahh! Welcome, guys. We are glad to have you with us this morning.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE MAN IN THE MIRROR?

The title of today's message is Reconstructing Your Faith. I didn't have enough room on the slide, so I put Reconstruct Your Faith. You get it, right? The first thing I want us to talk about is the problem. What's wrong with a Man In the Mirror? When I began my ministry work, I was 37 years of age, 37 years of age. We started this Bible study when I was 37 years of age. I was a millennial, when we started this Bible study. I was a millennial before there was a millennial, right? About that same time, I had also become successful in business and I was an out loud Christian. So I was getting invited to go and speak at prayer breakfast since other events around the country. And I always started every message the same way. I said, "I would like to make an observation about how men are doing today." And I'm going to tell you what that observation is, because I believe it's as true today as it was when I started at the age of 37.

I don't think anything's changed in this regard. If I could only make one observation about how men are doing, I would say that it is men are tired. And not just physically tired, although that too, but mentally, spiritually, emotionally, financially, relationally tired, just exhausted with the me-now fast pace of our culture. Having met with many men, thousands of men in one-on-ones over the last decade since I was 37, I came up with a taxonomy of seven inner aches and pains that men had because they were so exhausted, because they were so tired, because they were so spent. I've talked about them here from time to time. The subject of my book, Man Alive, they're detailed out in there, but you don't have to get the book, because I'm going to tell you what they are. When men try to express what they're feeling, the problems, the inner aches and pains, what's really going on in their lives, they will say one or more of these seven things.

"I just feel like I'm in this alone. I'm lonely." "I don't feel like God cares about me personally. Not really." Number three, "I don't feel like my life has a purpose. I don't feel like it's going somewhere." Number four, "I have these destructive behaviors that keep dragging me back down." Number five, "My soul feels dry, just shriveled up inside." Number six, "My most important relationship, they're not really that healthy." And then finally, "I just don't feel like I'm doing anything that's making a difference." What a problem? What a problem, right? If we were to try to establish what's really going on... I want to tell you a story that about a dream I had a couple of nights ago, two nights ago. I was at a movie theater. About a thousand seats, apparently was some sort of a premier for a movie or it was like a gala atmosphere. My wife and I were sitting about halfway down in the auditorium near the side seats. Keith Thomas was in a row behind us with his family.

The movie was about two hours and 20 minutes longer. Maybe it was a little bit longer. It could have been something like the 007 premiere, two hours of 43 minutes, a long movie. At the two-hour mark, the manager of the theater came in, the movie was still playing, and they turned up the house lights and the manager said, "I'm sorry, but all of you, you purchased a two-hour ticket, so you're going to have to leave now." So he began dismissing the people in the theater while the movie screen is still playing and the house lights are up. He begins dismissing people from the front row by row and people dutifully got up and started walking out of the room. I won't tell you how my wife and I snuck around and stayed in and saw the whole movie, but when we look at what's really going on with the church nones and dones, and people in faith crisis and having these inner aches and pains and feeling tired and exhausted, what's really going on is there is a battle from end souls taking place.

And often what's happening with we who are solid in our faith is that what we are doing is we're selling men to our tickets. We're not selling them the ticket to the whole show, because what happens in the first two hours of a two hour and 20 minute is there is conflict. There is a problem. There is some situation that needs to be resolved. There is a battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. And we all know that that battle continues on until the last 20 minutes of the movie. And it's in the last 20 minutes of the movie that there's resolution, that the conflict gets resolved, that there's healing, that there's forgiveness, that's there is redemption. So many men today are not selling a ticket to the whole show. We're just talking about the problems and we're not talking about the last 20 minutes of the show, the healing and the redemption that's possible.

We've discovered Man In the Mirror now has an R&D division called Mirror labs. You've heard about that if you've been here. What we've discovered is that younger men are open to hear about faith. Younger men are looking, are eagerly and earnestly looking for purpose, for meaning and significance. What we need to do as a mature believers is we need to sell them a ticket to the whole show. So what's wrong with the Man In the Mirror is that he has these inner aches and pains. He is tired. He is de-churched. He is a done or maybe he's a none, but that to doesn't mean that he wants to be that way. He does want meaning, he does want purpose. He does want significance and he is opened to that.

HOW DOES GOD SOLVE THIS PROBLEM?

So next then I want us to talk about how does God solve this problem? It is a good question to ask, why are young men leaving the church? To understand the problem is a necessary part of coming up with a solution. But I think we also need to ask what is it that will inspire men to come home?

Or what is it that will inspire men to stay? And what it is that will inspire men to come back home to Jesus, or to stay and not leave in the first place. It's important to understand why they leave, but isn't it more important to understand why they would want to come back or why they would want to stay? Why they would never want to leave in the first place? So, yes, by all means, let's understand what the problem is, why they're leaving, but let's understand and let's embrace what brings them back and why they want to stay. You with me? Let's show them the last 20 minutes of the movie. Don't sell them a two-hour ticket when you're talking to them about matters of faith.

The classic text for me about this is Matthew 11:28, 29, but here's how it often is presented or perceived, if you will, by men, "Come to me," in the words of Jesus, "All you are weary and burdened, and I will give you more work to do." This is how a lot of men perceive the church. Is that all the church wants me to do is work, but the text, so this is fine. I mean, it is a lot of work to do, but what Jesus actually said was, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." He says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I'm gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Are you tired? Do you feel like nobody really cares about you personally? Do you feel like God doesn't care about you? Do you feel like you do not have a purpose? Do you have destructive behaviors? Do you soul feel dry? Are your relationships not healthy? You feel like you're not making a difference, Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

"I'm gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls." These manmade ideas that often get presented about how men can resolve their conflicts are in error. As Karl Barth, a famous 20th century theologian said, "You can't call God by shouting man in a loud voice." If you want men to restore their faith, to come home or to stay and not leave in the first place, we have to show them the gospel of Jesus. And this is the gospel of Jesus. My family de-churched when I was 16. My father was 40 years of age and my mother was 36. So I know what it means to be de-churched. The why is a very difficult thing to understand in many cases, but I think I understand the deep why of what meant for me, probably not my parents as much. We all know that, we, each of us feel like our lives are on the right track when we feel like somebody believes in us.

Whether you're a teenager, whether it's at work, whether it's on a sports team, but when you have a coach, a pastor, a parent who says, "Alex, I believe in you." And it only takes one person really to believe in you to really make a difference. One person believing in you can change your life. Some of you have had that teacher, that parent, that coach, that pastor, that believed in you and it has made all the difference in your life. It only took one person to really believe in you. And the other deep why is that feeling that you're part of something that's going somewhere that there's a purpose. In my life as a young man, I have no recollection of anyone ever saying that they believed in me. I'm still trying to get over that. Okay? But now, I'm not saying it didn't happen, because I could have recreated the narrative, because of the negative starting point that I'm using, could be recreating or perpetuating a narrative that's not true, but nevertheless, I have no recollection of anyone ever saying, "I believe in you."

I also have no recollection of anyone ever showing me that there was a purpose for my life, that my life was going somewhere. And then we de-churched when I was 16 and now, I've completely lost touch with the one group of people that should be able to help me with that, I suppose, more than any other. So I quit high school when I was 18 in the middle of my senior year and I ended up re-churching at 24 because of my wife, and then at the age of 37, the same month we started this Bible study, I made a significant surrender of my life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I stopped trying to be a materialist and a Christian at the same time. I stopped trying to have the best of both worlds and I yielded my life to Jesus. I finally came to this understanding that Jesus meant, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." I was so exhausted. I was so exhausted trying to be a good Christian through my behavior, through my own self efforts, through my own will.

I was just so exhausted by that, that I came to this point of surrender, a complete, full, total surrender. I prayed that every day. Every day, I pray, "Lord Jesus, I make a full, total, complete surrender of my life to your Lordship today. So the sign, so back to the gospel, what the gospel basically says to a man, and this is the last 20 minutes of the movie. If you sold him a two-hour ticket, he's not going to see this. The last 20 minutes of the movie, this is it. God says, "I believe in you." God says, "Your life is going somewhere." If men, young or old, can understand these two things, Jesus says, "Learn from me." What are we learning? We're learning about God's love, that God cares about us, that God believes in you. And then you are also helping them understand that you're part of the family, yes, but you're also part of the

kingdom. You're part of something that's going somewhere. There's purpose to this. I believe in you and your life is going somewhere. That's the last 20 minutes of the movie.

And it's through the gospel here where Jesus is saying, "Come to me if you're weary, you're burdening, I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Learn from me. I'm gentle and humble at heart, and you will find the rest that you've been looking for, for your souls." So if I was a pastor, this would be the sign over my church. It is the sign over my door anyway. The sign over my door is the first part of this verse, Matthew 11:28. The sign over my door, "Come unto me, all you who're weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." The Big Idea today is a question for you. We have these de-churched men struggling, we have these dones, we have these nones struggling. When one of these men comes into contact with you, the **Big Idea** today is: **What does your sign say?** What does your sign say? Is everybody just a customer? Is just everybody just a prospect? Or do we see men who are wrapped up in this great drama of life and these conflicts?

I KNOW YOU CARE, BUT WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Well, you're here because whatever your sign says... I know it says something about connecting with these men. So let's look at this last thing. I know you care, but what can you do? I know you care, but what can you do? Well, what you can do, it's called the ministry of reconciliation. In 2 Corinthians 5, you could probably start a couple of verses earlier, where Paul says... He talks about how Christ's love compels us. We are compelled by the love of Christ. And he goes on, "So, because of that, because of being compelled by the love of Christ, so, from now on, from this moment forward, we regard no one from a worldly point of view." We're not looking at the length of their hair, the color of their skin, the sins of their past. We don't care if they're gay, straight, black, blue, red, yellow, purple, Republican, Democrat, rich, poor, weak, strong. We don't care about where someone has come from in their past. What we care about is their future.

So from now on, we don't have a political litmus test about whether or not we accept someone. We don't have a predisposition. My daughter was on a plane one day with a young man and he was going on about gays and so forth and he said, "God hates gays." My daughter's a counselor, counsels a lot of gays who are struggling with sexual identity and she laughed. She said, "What Bible are you reading? Homosexual behavior is something that God does not approve of, but God loves... God made them. God created that person in their mother's womb and would love to have that person be engaged with the gospel of Jesus so that they could be reconciled with him." So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view. God gave us, you and me, the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of the last 20 minutes of the movie. All right? That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them, whatever they are.

Hey, some people have a same sex attraction. Hey, I have an opposite sex attraction. It's a real problem. Okay? You have whatever your sexual attraction is. It's a problem. It doesn't make a difference of the same or opposite. Okay? Not counting people's sins against them. And he is committed to us. The message of reconciliation and what is the message of reconciliation? It's the last 20 minutes of the movie. It's, "I believe in you. Your life is going somewhere in me. And you're part of my family, you can be part of my family because I believe in you and your life can be going somewhere because of the kingdom. Because of the kingdom." I said, "I know you care, but what can you do?" Trust takes time. And this is not a mass email. This is a personal engagement. The ministry and the message of reconciliation is something that takes time. Takes time to build trust. And it's also a personal engagement. It's a one-on-one thing. You can't... You probably are not going to be a mass evangelist. There's not... That whole field of mass evangelism works. Okay? It really does, but probably not for you.

You probably are not going to be able to send out a broadcast email and get someone to come to the Thanksgiving prayer breakfast. You're probably going to have to have a personal engagement with them. You're going to have to participate in the last 20 minutes of the movie. You're not going to be able to

buy them a two-hour ticket and say, "Come enjoy." You're going to have to invest in the last 20 minutes of the movie on a personal basis. There is an economist, his name is Paul Romer, and he talks about the difference between complacent and conditional optimism. I would prefer to call it passive and active optimism. Just a little bit more easy for me to understand. The idea of passive optimism, he says, "It's the optimism of a little child who's waiting patiently to open their Christmas presents." It's a passive optimism.

He said, "But an active optimism is like the little boy who wants to build a tree house, but knows that if it's going to happen, he needs to get a hammer, some nails and some wood and get some of his friends to help him, and then go do the work." There is no place, men in the kingdom of God for passive optimism, sitting around here, hoping that somehow someone will show up. The kind of optimism that Christians have is an active optimism. We go out, we grab a hammer and some nails, and we go out and we do the work. We do the work. So again, the **Big Idea** for this week; **What does your sign say?** These other verses, I'll let you look at later. What does your sign say? What does your sign say? Do you have that inviting personality? Are you talking to people about what God likes, what God doesn't like all the time? Or are you extending the invitation, "Come unto me all you are weary and burdened and I will give you rest?" Let's show men the last 20 minutes of the movie. Let's not sell a two-hour ticket.

If we show them the last 20 minutes of the movie, I think that many would want to come home and I also think that many would want to stay and not leave in the first place. Let's stop being legalistic. Don't be licentious. Cling to liberty, make sure that your sign is an invitation for men to come and partake in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Our dearest Father Lord, some of us have been so off base that we are right now just so riddled with guilt, that we don't know what to do about it. Father, I pray that you would clear the deck, help us understand that all the sins that we have committed that have gotten us to this point, being judgmental, having spiritual litmus tests, excluding people that should be included, that you forgive all that. And Lord help us to each have a sign of our own making. It can say whatever it wants, but it's a sign that welcomes men who have been de-churched, who have been done with church, or maybe have never been part of church.

They're a none, and that we would be the aroma of Christ to them. We make this prayer in your name, Jesus, for your sake and for your glory alone, as you use us to help men construct or reconstruct their faith. Amen.