

Reconstructing Manhood

Reconstruct How You Treat People

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Well. Good morning. This is Man in the Mirror, men's Bible study. So welcome. And to our visitors online, we greet you and let's give them a very warm, rousing Man in the Mirror welcome on the count of 3. 1, 2, 3, hoorah!

Welcome guys. We're glad to have you with us. Brett and I were talking and we decided we wanted to extend the Reconstructing Manhood series because there were a few issues that we had not discussed yet that we really believe are culturally relevant, sensitive to the times. And the first message in this little extended play is **Reconstructing How You Treat People** or reconstructing how we treat people. The great late theologian and philosopher, G. K. Chesterton, he was a famous author and it said that the New York Times sent out a letter to several famous authors asking them to answer the question "What's wrong with the world?" It's reported that Chesterton wrote back, "Dear sirs, I am. Respectfully yours, G. K. Chesterton."

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD?

Let's talk a little bit about what's wrong with the world. And the backdrop for this message is the city of Corinth. The city of Corinth was not unlike the nation in which we live today. In fact, the city of Corinth was not unlike most cities in most places in most countries in most centuries. Because the world, although the presenting problems change from generation to generation, the core problems, the root problems, the underlying problems are pretty much the same everywhere. So what was going on in Corinth? Paul had been in Athens and he'd been kind of brutalized there and feeling somewhat down and depressed he made his way about a five hour boat trip over to Onesmus, then across that to the city of Corinth. Corinth had been in ruins for a hundred years and emperor of Rome saw the potential in Corinth and rebuilt it into a lavish place. And there, it was an international city. There were people from all different nations and countries. It was a city of great commerce. It was very prosperous. The sports world was tremendous. The people came there to see the different kinds of games and boxing matches and things that were taking place there. Great entertainment. A lot of really good things were going on. There was a strong Christian community in Corinth. The city on the other side was full of moral decadence. There was a lot of sexual immorality.

If you've watched TV lately, and you haven't seen a woman's butt, then you haven't really been watching TV, right? The state of the culture with regard to sensuality and sexual morality is pretty intense. I mean, honestly, let's face it. And if you haven't seen sex on TV or in a movie, then you probably haven't seen a good plot, right? Because anything with a plot these days has a bunch of sex in it. Corinth was like that. It was very litigious. It was an arrogant city. It was a city where there was lots of jealousy and quarreling and fights and divisions. And now I'm talking about what was going on inside the church, because the church had assimilated a lot of what was going on in the culture. There were great divisions. There were preachers who were egotistical and were trying to attract followings to themselves

and make a big name for themselves. There was a lot of anger, and so a lot of finger-pointing, a lot of questions coming up. And Paul then comes to this city and he's not in a very good place.

And he sees all of this and he looks at his own situation and he writes, and I think I'll just read the text to you so that you can hear it in his own words. He writes, "to this very hour, we go hungry and thirsty. We are in rags, we are brutally treated. We are homeless." So Paul is in Corinth as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he's hungry, he's thirsty. He doesn't have any clothes to speak of. They've been treating him like dirt and he's homeless. He's actually homeless.

And against this backdrop, we see Paul and how he reacts. And the way that he reacts is by writing this letter to the Corinthians later and addressing some of the problems and questions that were being asked. And then he sums up his letter, actually, the very last verse is a personal greeting where he tells them how much he loves them, but the last real instruction that he gives them, the last substantive instruction that he gives them is found in 1 Corinthians 16:14, and here's the verse, do everything in love. Do everything in love.

So it's interesting. As abused as Paul had been, his reaction is basically to say, I don't need them to love me in order for me to love them. I don't need them to love me in order for me to love them. I love them. And then he tells them, that's what I want you to do too, Corinthians. That's what I want you to do also, Americans, do everything in love. We'll get to that in a moment. One month ago, one day short of one month ago, I changed my life purpose, excuse me, my life verse. I changed my life verse. In the month we started this Bible study almost 36 years ago, the same month we started this Bible study, I adopted as my life verse 1 Peter 4 verses one and two. "Now, therefore, since Christ suffered in his body arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because when the body suffers, sin loses power. As a result, you won't spend the rest of your earthly life chasing after evil human desires, but rather for the will of God". And I wanted that. And I wrote in my Bible, I wanted to live the rest of my earthly life for the will of God, and really meant it, still do. I'm not changing my life purpose. But over the last couple of years, I've really been sensing that, I don't know if it's because I'm getting older or more spiritually mature, or maybe those are related, I'm not sure, but I've just noticed my own heart has been so bruised by how angry people are. And you get that. It's okay. I mean, anger is a human emotion, but it's not just the anger. It's by how mean people have become. People have just gotten so mean. And it's the vitriol that people spew out towards each other.

Just sort of looking for any kind of little hint of youth having a different ideology or philosophy or bent than me. And then I cancel you or... And I realize that it's probably exaggerated because probably most people are just not even engaged in that kind of thing, but it's so visible and it's bruised. My heart has bruised my soul. And so I've been moving in this direction, but when I was reading through the text in my one year Bible, I just finished my 34th year reading through the Bible cover to cover. I've started over. This will be my 35th year. I would like to invite all of you. Let's all read the Bible through cover to cover this year. As I was finishing up, I read this verse, do everything in love.

And I felt like I had 10,000 gigawatts of electricity go through my body when I read it. I mean, I read it many times and it just struck me, do everything in love. And I decided to change that to my life per verse. And I found that people can remember this one a little easier than the other one. So do everything in love. And let me tell you what's happened to me just in the last month. And I'm hoping it'll be like that. I'm hoping it won't be a little blip. I'm hoping it's a long term trend, but we all have anger, that's a natural human emotion. And so let's just say a rude driver cuts in front of you.

And every driver that cuts in front of you on the freeway has to do what? They have to tap their brakes, right? Because they have to slow down because the car that there's... So you have to do what? Tap your brakes. Well, after about the 1000th episode that, you start to really get irritated to the point where you have this accumulated anger, right? So what do you do with that anger? Well, what I've been able to do with that anger, because I have been growing in maturity and over the years, I have been able to

exercise self-control and a strong will to overlook that offense, which is what the Bible says to do, overlook offenses. But the most amazing thing is happen over the last month. And I don't know if it's... I hope it's permanent. But what's happening is that a rude driver pulls in on me. And I have the thought, that is a weak person. They are frail, they are fragile, they are finite, they are feeble, they are human. This is what humans do. They can't help themselves. It's no big deal.

Is that amazing? I never would've thought that I could have had that thought. I would've thought to do everything in love means that that person pulls in front of me, taps the brakes. I tap mine. It's the 1001st time, and I'm thinking, God, in the name of Jesus, I forgive them and I choose to love them. So I want to just dig into this a little bit with you, because I think there are a few thoughts here that might help all of us reconstruct how we treat people. This is the Big Idea today. **I don't need you to love me for me to love you.** That's what I can say to that rude driver. That's what I can say to a family member who has cut me off. That's what I can say to a coworker who keeps changing the rules on me.

And so I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing. That's what I can say when my blood sugar is low, when I feel cranky, or they have low blood sugar and they're cranky. Your wife, she's irritable. I don't need you to love me for me to love you. I think that was what Paul was saying to the Corinthians. Look, you left me in rags, homeless, hungry, thirsty, but look... And you guys are all mixed up, your church has become a cultural church, not a biblical church, but I love you. And I don't need you to love me. So do everything in love. **I don't need you to love me for me to love you.** That's the Big Idea for the day. So what kind of love is Paul talking about?

WHAT KIND OF LOVE?

Well, he talks about it in 1 Corinthians 13. It's agape love. It's agape love. And agape love is the love with which God loves us and which with... The love with which God tells us to love other people. I will read to you from 1 Corinthians 13, and you can look it up or not look it up, but just drink this in if you can, in a way that reflects this idea of doing everything in love. And just ask yourself, would this be a place that I would want to go?

Paul writes "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. If I can prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." So he talks about his ability to speak, to prophesy, faith, giving to the poor and enduring hardship. He said, if I do all those things, but I don't have love. I'm a clanging symbol. I am nothing. I gain nothing. And then in verse four, famously, he describes agape love.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects. Always trusts. Always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." What is love? It's agape. Love is agape. It's also truthful. When someone does treat you rudely on the road or at home or at work, that doesn't mean it didn't happen. That doesn't mean that love means plastering over offenses and pretending that they didn't happen. Paul teaches an Ephesians 4:15, speak about... He talks about speaking the truth in love so that we will grow to become in every respect, the mature body of him who's the head that is Christ. And so here's what's happened for me.

I have in the last month changed the way that I'm addressing problems. My tendency is to be an overlooker, even if it's a real offense. And then sort of hemming and hawing and trying to be this overly loving person, as I'm trying to tell the person that what they've done is wrong. I've been liberated from that for the last month. I've been just been able to tell you straight up what you just did was wrong and you shouldn't have done that. But the thing is, is that I can say that now, because I'm not angry when I'm

saying it. Now, it sounds like I'm setting myself up as I was saying, I'm setting the say, but it is a shift and one that I hope it'll continue. But by adopting the idea of doing everything in love, it's sort of changed my basic brain chemistry or something.

My framework, my perspective, my worldview, my frame of reference has switched from having to exercise self control in a strong will to love to rather that my baseline now is this idea of being an agape kind of a guy. Being an agape kind of guy, not as a performance. I call agape, Johnny Cash love. Agape is Johnny Cash love. If you listen to Johnny Cash songs and I love Johnny Cash songs, he talks about I hurt myself today, just to see if I could still feel the pain, this kind of... That's Johnny Cash love. And so there's agape, but it's also truthful and truthful is also Johnny Cash love, you see? So we have a love is agape, but it still tells the truth. It's still truthful. It's not winking at misbehavior and so forth in the name of love.

It's rather it's having the courage to call it out. Agape is actually having the courage to call things out in truth, but in a way that is not angry and is not mean. I don't have to be angry. I don't have to be mean. And by I, I mean we don't have to be angry. And then it's agape, it's truthful, and then it's forgiving. Jesus said in Matthew, right after the Lord's prayer. The next thing he said is "if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you don't forgive others their sins, your father will not forgive your sins." So do you think he said that, like you are a rude driver that just cut in on him? Do you think he said, if you forgive other people, when they sin against you, this is Jesus, then your heavenly father will forgive you. But if you don't forgive others their sins, your father will not forgive your sins. I don't think so.

I think what he's saying is that an elemental part of others is forgiving them. By the way, there are many things that could be said about what is love, and I picked five that I just think are representative.

Certainly agape, certainly truthful, certainly forgiving, and then how about humble? How about humble? Jesus said to some people who thought they were righteous and better than other people, he told them a parable. He talked about a Pharisee who went to worship God and said, God, I'm thankful that I'm not like all those other people. And I do these good deeds and those good deeds, and I'm sure glad I'm not like them. And then a second man came, the tax collector, and he didn't even look up at God. He was so humbled by... And he said, Lord have mercy on me, a sinner.

And Jesus says that God will exalt those who humble themselves. And there's so much pride in the world today. So much arrogance. When you think about the way all the people we see that excel in sports and celebrity, I'm sure there are many of them that are humble, but it just seems like so many of the people that our children are looking up to are arrogant and proud, and that's not love. Love is humble. So agape, truthful, forgiving, humble, and then faithful. Proverbs 20:6 says "many people claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find". Just the idea of being faithful, faithful to God, faithful to the commitments that you make, faithful to the commitments, to the people that you've made. To see things through, I've said it here, more than one occasion. The most unpredictable part of my career has simply been, who's going to do what they said they would do.

Honestly, when somebody tells me they're going to... when somebody says, I promise. I got a guy right now who sent me a text, today's going to call me next week, he said, I... And he ended the text, I promise. And I just say, well, we'll see. We'll see. Because, so to be faithful to our vows, it's a question of integrity. It's just so integral to what it means to do everything in love, to be faithful to each other, to our promises. To not do that is to not do everything in love. Okay. So the Big Idea then today is **I don't need you to love me for me to love you**. Can you say that? Do you feel that, could you feel that? Do you want that? Is that you? Well, do everything in love. So we talked about love. So what is everything, what does everything mean?

WHAT DOES EVERYTHING MEAN?

Is this love? Is this everything in the literary sense. In literature., When you see the words always, never everything, when you read literature, it never actually means that. What it means, it's a generalization. It means generally speaking, every time this happens or generally speaking, this is always the case. But, and I could be wrong, but I believe that in this case, Paul, when he says everything in love, I think he means everything with no exceptions. So, okay, well, what does that mean? Does that mean I can't get angry at the rude driver? No, that doesn't mean that at all, anger is a human emotion. But what it does mean, what you do next is what counts. I do feel anger. I do feel irritable, but it's what I do next that determines whether I'm doing that in love or out of some other emotion.

So with all of this said, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Jesus said that. Our spirits are willing to do this, but our flesh is weak. God said after the flood in Genesis 8:21, every inclination of the human heart is evil since childhood, every inclination of the human heart is evil since childhood. So we have the flesh and we have the holy spirit. And we know that the spirit wants what is contrary to the flesh and the flesh wants what is contrary to the spirit. And so I think that Paul summarizes all of the problems in the world, all the problems in the body of Christ, all he takes all of his own problems and mistreatments.

And he says, "Okay, I don't need you. I don't need them to love me for me to love them. And I think he's telling us that we should be able to adopt the position. I don't need you to love me for me to love you. That's what it means to do everything in love. So you could be this morning, you could be, the spirit is willing. You could be strong. You could be right there this morning, or you could be weak. You could be fragile. You could be the bro that's been bruised. So you could be strong or you could be weak, or you could be angry. You might have let your emotions just sort of get control and you need a reset and you know you need a reset. So let's begin the rest of our lives together with a prayer, just sort of a prayer of expressing our desire to God, to be this kind of a Johnny Cash lover.

Let's pray. Our dearest father, Lord, we do see the world for what it is. We see that the world is... the degree to which it has gained a grip on us and Lord, we don't want to react the way that we've been reacting. Hopefully, some of us have been reacting in a right way. I know for myself, just speaking for myself, I repent of all of the ways that I have either acted like the world or beat my breast that I'm so self righteous, that I'm not like the world, and Lord, I repent of all that. All of us together, Lord, we say, have mercy on us. We are sinners.

And God, we pray that you would put us, put into our hearts the desire to follow this overarching instruction, not only from Paul, but from Jesus himself to do everything in love, that you would put that agape, that you would, whatever foundation we've been building on, that you would just sort of rip that up and re-pour agape as our foundation. And we dedicate our lives God, to allowing you to work in us by your holy spirit, to this fruit of the spirit, not by our will or not by self-control, but by your spirit that we would do everything in love. And we make this prayer asking you to reconstruct our manhood in Jesus' name. And everybody said-

Amen.