

# Man in the Mirror Bible Study

## Pastor Series

### Guest Speaker: Tim Iamaio

Rough Transcript

Michael Aitcheson

#### **Tim Iamaio:**

Thank you. I appreciate the very kind introduction. Now, I hate to get up here and just disappoint everybody. So I am honored to be invited. So in some of my time, I'm going to spend a very short time talking about myself. I know you came here to hear about the pastor, but I'd much rather have you hear from the word of God. So in my time, we're going to talk about me a little bit in ministry, but mainly how the Bible has shaped my view of Christian maturity and the church. So I grew up in a godly home. As many kids, I grew up in Sunday school. Both parents are believers, grew up in a lot of good churches, but I saw my share of dysfunction as well, as many as of us had. We've had great examples and poor examples.

And the very short version is I loved sin a lot more than I loved Jesus for 27 years of my life. And I was actually converted in South Beach in the Miami party scene, sex, drugs, rock and roll. Seems like a lifetime ago. It literally was a lifetime ago. I am a new person now, but one of the things that's interesting since meeting Brett and hearing about the vision of Man in the Mirror for spiritual fathers, that's one thing that resonated this morning, I lacked spiritual fathers along the way. I got a lot of good Bible teaching, I saw some examples from a distance, but there was never any men who came alongside and say, "Hey, can I meet with you? Can I take you out to lunch? Can I help you?" I'm thankful that the Lord has grown and disciplined me according to his own time, but I would've loved an older man to help show me the rope, especially as a young Christian trying to understand the Christianity that I grew up with, the world that I came out of and how do I adjust now?

So fast forwarding. so even though I grew up in good churches, I saw a lot of that dysfunction. So, especially after my conversion, one of the things that really struck me is when I read the Bible and I saw what was going on in the church, I realized a lot of things I'm reading in scripture aren't really being practiced. They're not really being exercised. I'd either been in churches that were really loving and really welcoming, but didn't have sound doctrine or I'd been in churches where the doctrine was really sound and everybody was cold and stiff and no one welcomed you in. I said, "Why can't we have both of these things?" This was kind of a wrestling tension within me. So the Lord just started to develop a desire in me to see people in maturity, especially men.

I was blessed to meet and seek out a lot of older pastors. A lot of you may know Pete Alwinson. He's one of those, but who would give me counsel on training the men first. If you raise up men, if you invest in men, then they will invest in families and then wives and children and that will permeate through the generations. So having this heart for men, because honestly, I met a lot of men who would call themselves Christians, or maybe were Christians, but were not living much differently than they were in the world. So I got a call halfway through my seminary degree to go to a dying church in Sanford, figuratively and literally. When I got there, there was a handful of members. The youngest member was 63, not to say anything about the age, but there was not a child or family to be seen for years, but one of

the things that struck me is that none of the men were leading their families and none of their children were believers.

So I don't think that there's a disconnect between the church dying spiritually and otherwise, and having a lack of leadership of the men and I had this kind of crazy idea that we're going to be faithful to scripture and trust God to grow the church. And he has, and it's been incredible, and it's been amazing to see people like Brett and like Dylan and like Noah and like many others who say, "You know what? I'm tired of the fluff and being patted on the back. I want God's word. I want to be challenged. I want to be around people who hold to his word tightly, but also love one another well and serve one another." It's such a crazy idea. So there are many, many stories from the early days of the church and I could spend a whole day on them.

But when I got to a church, thankfully we had a building, but we had a roof full of bats, 5,000 bats in the attic, and drawers and drawers and drawers full of old outdated... so drawers full of clip art. So this isn't even a thing on computers anymore. But prior to that, there were books of clip art. Some of you have seen these, books and books and books and books where you could clip out a little image of a kid playing soccer or a little image of a cross, and you would clip it out and you would paste it to the bulletin and then make copies of it. So lots of that kind of stuff, but no gospel. It was hard to find something in the church that was sound doctrinally.

This is no exaggeration. I sat down with that man who was 63, one of the deacons, and he came to me with a problem in his family. And he said "My daughter's going through this. How do I respond as a father?" And I said, "Well, come into my office. Let's open the Bible and let me show you what scripture says." And he said something that just jarred me. He said, I've been here for 35 years. This is the first time a pastor's ever opened the Bible with me." Sadly, that is more common than we care to admit. So we all know immature Christians and unhealthy churches when we see them, but are we able to recognize and cultivate spiritual maturity and healthy, thriving churches? How do we do that and does the Bible have anything to say about that? So this morning, I want to be true to my word. We're going to spend most of our time in Romans 12. So if you have your Bibles, you can open up or click to Romans 12.

We're going to look at all of Romans 12. We'll make it work. So Romans 12 has helped me understand the complete Christian life and it's one of those passages that's impressed upon me the disconnect between the practices of many churches and many Christians. Why is it that so much of what we see in the church and in people calling themselves Christians seems so disconnected from what we see in scripture, especially when a text like Romans 12 exists where Paul gives us such a clear model? So I want to read Romans 12. I want to read verses one through eight, but Lord willing, we will read the entire chapter by the time we're done. This is Romans 12:1. I'll be reading from the ESV, but it should be very close to any of your translations.

Romans 12:1: "I appeal to you therefore brothers by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. That by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For us in one body, we have many members and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

"If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness." Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I pray that you bless our time this morning. That it be glorifying to you, that your word, which is living in active, would be

impressed upon our minds and our hearts through your spirit, that your son would be glorified in our speech and in our actions, that we as men would lead in our families and in our churches for your glory and for the building up of the body of Christ. And it's in his name, we pray. Amen.

So if you are not a Bible student, one of the first things I want to tell you, anytime you see the therefore, I love how John Piper says, "What is the therefore there for?" Verse 12, "I appeal to you therefore." Therefore always refers to something previous. Therefore, based on what I've said before, here's what you need to know now. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers." What is he appealing to? What's his appeal from? The mercies of God. What are the mercies of God according to Paul? I would argue that the mercies of God, according to Paul, and the therefore refers to all of the previous 11 chapters, which we're going to cover right now very quickly. If you're familiar with the Book of Romans, one of the first things he says to them in chapter one, verse eight is that: "First, I want to thank God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is proclaimed in all the world."

The church in Rome was one of the most mature of the day. Paul is saying, "Everyone knows of your faith." So what do you say to the mature? Verse 15, still in chapter one. "So I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome." Wait a second. A lot of us have been trained to think, "Well, the gospel is for non-believers. The cross of Jesus Christ is just to repent and then we move on to greater things." You know what Paul says to the mature? I want to preach the gospel to you. Why? Verse 16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Why? Because whether you've been a Christian for five minutes or 50 years, the gospel is the power of salvation, for salvation and through salvation and through the fullness of our salvation in glory one day. So I'm going to give you Paul's gospel presentation in chapters one through 11 quickly.

Chapter one, got to start with the bad news before the good news. Chapter one, the world is screwed up. The world hates God. It suppresses the truth. Chapter two, Jews, you're not exempt. You're sinful too. Greeks, you're certainly sinful. Chapter three, everyone's sinful. Everyone's falling short. No one seeks after God. No one does good. You're dead. You are hopeless. But it turns chapter three, verse 21: "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law while the law and prophets bear witness to it. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus for all who believe." Here's the good news. Two chapters of bad news. The good news starts at the end of chapter three. Chapter four, this good news is if you have faith in Christ, you are our son of Abraham. Everyone who's come before everyone who's come after, they are all set apart by their faith in Jesus Christ. This is called justification. You are declared right with God through faith. Chapter five, if you've been justified, you are no longer under Adam and die, but you are under Christ and live.

Chapter six, You're in Christ. Don't continue sinning. You've been baptized into him. Don't be a slave to sin, be a slave to righteousness. Chapter seven, the reality of the Christian life is, "Man, I sin and I wrestle with my own weakness. And the things I want to do, I don't do. And the things I don't want to do, I do. But praise be to God that Christ has saved me from the wretchedness that is my myself," and that's why chapter eight begins with: "There is now no condemnation." So when you are struggling with why do I keep going back to my old sins? That's why Roman's eight is beautiful because it comes right on the heels of Roman seven, that wrestling with the sin and the flesh within you, there is now no condemnation. You walk by the spirit and not by flesh.

You've been adopted. You're called sons of a living God and you're co-heirs with Christ. You've been pre-destined. You've been called. You've been justified. You will be glorified and no one can snatch you out of his hand. Chapter nine, this is his plan to call people to himself according to Jacob and not Esau because he's God and we're not. He can use who he'd like, the vessels for honor and the vessels for dishonor. Chapter 10, Paul wishes that the Jews would be included. It seems like the gospel is being received by the Gentiles, but the Jews are rejecting him in mass. So Paul says Romans 10 that: "It's by

faith and through hearing then you will be saved." Romans 11, here's the mystery: "The Jews have been cut off, those who are unfaithful, and we've been grafted in, but what's amazing is there will be a time when these Jews, the original branches, will be regrafted in and we will all be one spiritual Israel." This is chapter 11.

So by the time you get to chapter 11, this is why Paul says in verse 33 of chapter 11, "Oh, the depths and the riches and wisdom in the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways for who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor or who has given him a gift that he might be repaid, for from him and through him and to him are all things to him be glory forever. Amen." That's chapters one through 11. That's the therefore. This is God's miraculous plan of redemption, to save sinners through the sinless life of his son. So that's where we are. Paul's excited to share with you the gospel, I'm excited to share with you the gospel and our text is not possible without the gospel. So jumping back into chapter 12, "I appeal to you therefore brothers by or according to the mercies of God."

What is the appeal? To. What does he want them to do? To present your bodies as a living sacrifice. Your entire selves. Your body. Live as a pleasing sacrifice, which, excuse me, holy and acceptable to God. Holy means to be set apart. You're not like the world. You are different. Your sacrifice is every aspect of our lives to be holy. Our thoughts, our affections, our actions. We live out of the spirit. We live contrary to the flesh. And what is this? This is your spiritual worship. Worship is not just sitting in a pew on Sunday morning, it is your entire life set apart as a sacrifice to God. Why? Because you have received his mercy. This is true worship. True worship is not mere external observance. It's not just going through the motions. It is a heart. It is a disposition that knows that you've been forgiven. That knows that you are a new creature in Christ and you want to praise God with everything he's given you in your new life. Amen. That should be a bigger amen.

Thank you. He goes on: "Do not be conformed to this world," so the essence of holiness is conforming to Christ not the world. You've been brought out of that. You're no longer under Adam. You're under Christ, you must conform to him. "Stop looking back to the old man, look to the new man. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." And one of the things I want you to see, there's a logical progression. There's a theological progression through all of Romans and through this passage. Paul is building on each individual thought here. So it begins with the heart of worship. And then a reminder don't be conformed to the world and then the further call to be transformed by the renewal of your mind. The gospel is not just informational, it must be transformational. It is not just informational, it must be transformational. And this condition of our heart, this heart of worship drives and guides our minds.

So in the original Greek, the renewal of the mind, it's not a one time event. This is a perpetual discipline. Your mind continually renewed. And there's a reason for that. "Do not be transformed...." Or excuse me, "But be transformed by the renewal of your mind that here's your purpose by testing you may discern what is the will of God?" What is testing for discernment? Testing for discernment, this is cognitive training for maturity. What is maturity? Discerning what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and pure. How do we know that? How do we know what is good and acceptable and pure? How do we train our minds? Want to take a wild guess? There is no shortage of leadership books and five easy steps to grow your church to become a more mature Christian. How do we know what the will of God is for our lives? Well, he has given us something that we know is his will, but yet we often look at so many other things and whatever's catchy and trendy at the time. So I want to pause for a moment and just think about this. I think a lot of guys struggle with this. What is God's will for my life? What should I do? What job should I take? How do I raise my kids? How do I be a better boss? How do I be a better employer? All of these things. What is God's will? We ask all these things without starting with what we know to be God's will in his word. So I want you think about it. Why do soldiers go through bootcamp?

Why do athletes go to training camp and why do they practice? Why do shooters go to the range? Well, if you want to perform under pressure over time, you must train and discipline your body and your mind to react.

Why do we think the Christian life is any different? So many people think they can just show up to the range and be able to sight in their rifle. How many Christians can't even hit paper? If you don't know what that means, it means when you go to the range, you're hitting everything else but your target. Because we've lost the challenge, especially for men to train, to be disciplined in the things of God so that we can discern what is good and acceptable. How many men neglect training? How many men are failing to live as a sacrifice and failing to renew their minds and assume when the spiritual bullets start flying, they're going to know how to react or that when they're when they need to make a decision that they'll have all this wisdom to draw on? If you don't make deposits, you can't make withdrawals. If you're not making spiritual daily deposits, if you're not transforming your life according to Christ and renewing your mind according to scriptures, what do you have to draw on when things get difficult and when decisions have to be made?

So now we've kind of laid the foundation, we've dealt so far with the heart and the mind, we got to put some other things in order before we can get to the actions. Let's move on in our text. Verse three. Another thing too, when you read your Bibles, these little section headings are helpful, but ignore them. Because this is one thought, most of you in your Bibles will have a section heading between verse two and verse three. This is one continued thought. Again, there's a "for". It's a purpose statement. What came before it? "For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than you are." Here's a reason that humility is essential because if you're in Christ... Oh yeah, let me back up a moment. Wrong place in my notes. For.

It's almost as if Paul anticipates here, "Okay, I've renewed my mind, I've got this Bible knowledge, I've got this theology and I'm feeling, feeling pretty good about myself. I will be the first one to admit." Knowledge puffs up and I think a lot of us have seen that too. We'll store up a lot of theology and a lot of knowledge and, "I'm better than everyone else. I'm more mature than everyone else." So Paul goes right in: "After you renew, your mind after you have discernment, after you have maturity, make sure you're not thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think." If we have received the mercy of God, we have no reason to think highly of ourselves. We know how great of sinners we are. We know what greater price Christ paid for us. So that's why he tells them: "But to think with sober judgment."

This sober judgment reminds us of the mercy of God. But also, look at what Paul says here: "Each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." even our faith is measured out and determined by God. What do we have to brag about? What reason do we have to think highly of ourselves? We of all people should be humble and grateful. He continues on here. There's another for in verse four: "For further purpose here, as in one body, we have many members and the members do not all have the same function. The other reason humility is essential is because by being in Christ, you are also in Christ's body." The members of that body don't have all have the same faith or have the same function, but they are members of one another. So if you're in the body of Christ and you're comparing yourself and your gifts to others, you're missing the point.

It is more important whose you are and who you belong to than how God has wired you. Let's kind of break this down a little bit. "For as in one body, we have many members and the members do not all have the same function. So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another." This is one of the best texts for church membership. If you go through our membership class, this is where we go. But our modern way of defining words has kind of watered down the idea of church membership. When we think of membership, we think of Sam's Club. I pay you my 40 bucks a year. I get a card. I get big boxes of toilet paper. Or I have a YMCA membership, so I get in and I get all the benefits from it. Here's what I pay. Here's what I get in return. What's in it for me? That's not the biblical picture

of membership. What is Paul talking about here? The same thing he talks about in First Corinthians 12: "You are members of one another, bodily members. Some are hands, some are elbows, some are feet, some are shoulders. Even the toenail is useful in the body of Christ."

And none of them are disconnected from one another. It's not, "I'm a member of this club that I can check in and out of." How often can you separate your hand from your wrist? How many healthy hands are there out there that are not connected to arms? And we're not talking about the Addams family here. You're not Thing, that little hand running around with nothing attached to it. That's a monster. Any hand that is not connected to the body is a monster. Just like there's no healthy hands apart from arms, there are no healthy Christians apart from the body of Christ. Paul says here: "You might be a member of one another if you get along with everybody, if everybody votes the way you do." He says: "You are members of one another." This is your identity. If you're united to Christ, you're united to his bride. "So we," verse five, "though many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another." As individuals we are called, but we are called to a body. We are called to be members of that living body and each member has different functions.

Why? Because that's the way God made us so that we compliment one another. If there are room full of hands and no minds and no mouths, we wouldn't get anything done, et cetera, et cetera. You know what Jesus says in John 15, he tells us "Abide in me." We love that picture. I'm the vine and you are the branches. "Abide in me and you'll bear fruit." But what does he say in the rest of the chapter? "How do you abide in me and bear fruit? Love one another." He says: "Abide in me, love one another." He says, "Love one another twice." And then the end of the chapter, he talks about bearing fruit. How do we bear fruit in Christ? We hold on to him with everything that we've got and we love the rest of the branches that are engrafted into that vine.

I know. I get it. People are hard. Christians are hard to love, especially Christians. I am one. We're a mess, but Jesus loves us. That's a good enough reason to love Christians. Additionally, we as Americans, we're individualists. We are trained to think, "What's in it for me. So if I show up to this church and I don't like that song, or I don't like his illustration, or I don't like the color of the carpet, or this person got under my skin, I'm out because I'm just here for me." Is that what Paul's saying? Is that what Jesus is saying? There's one last step. We talked about the mind. We talked about the heart. Now, how does the gospel guard our actions? That's why verse six through eight logically follow: "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them. Hearts for worship, heads for doctrine. Now, hands for service." Notice something here. That our faith is given to us by God. So are our gifts. Everything we have is from him.

Paul continues this line of thinking: "You worship God because everything you have comes from God. And the people that you unite with in membership, they come from God too. They're given their faith and their gifts from him." Think about it. We are saved by grace. We are equipped by grace as well. Here's the other thing that I think a lot of Christians miss. Your gifts are not your own. Our gifts are given to us by God to build up the people of God for the glory of God. But so often, we think, "Well, I'll only use my gifts if I get credit publicly," or "I'll only use my gifts if everyone appreciates me," or "I'll only use my gifts if they do all the things that I think they should do first." I've have heard this so many times in churches. "Well, I'll serve if you do X, Y, and Z." Is that what Paul's saying?

That's why he goes on in these lists here. And we're not going to define all these, but I want you to notice in verses six through eight, look at these gifts. They vary. There are public gifts and there are private gifts. "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them." Brothers, men, you may feel like, "I don't know where I fit in. I can't preach like you. No one wants me to sing. No one wants to hand me their child. What do I do?" You have been given a gift, use them. Every one of us, every member is essential and needed in the body of Christ. You can serve somewhere. You can encourage people. You can instruct people. If you're better with your finances than someone else, teach

some of these young fools how to manage their money. Teach them how to love their wives. Teach them how a mortgage works. That would help look. Look at these gifts. "If prophecy and proportion to our faith, public. If service in our serving, public and private. The one who exhorts in his exhortation, this is more personal. The one who contributes in generosity, certainly private. The one who leads with zeal, public. The one who does acts of mercy, private with cheerfulness."

Paul doesn't list the hierarchy here. I have a more public gift, but all these gifts are listed together and they are all different. What would the church be without these varied gifts? The public and private ones. We use the worship of our hearts to the glory of God and the good of the church. We use the doctrine of our minds to the glory of God and the good of the church. We use the gifts of our hands to the glory of God and the good of the church. And we should all increase in these for the sake of Christ and his bride. What would the church look like if we all had this perspective? My worship is out of love for the Lord. I'm growing in knowledge of his word and I'm serving and caring for his bride because he loves her. So should I. The rest of this chapter is what flows out of Christian maturity and this is a wonderful picture of Christian maturity and a healthy church.

I want to read verses 9 through 21 with no explanation. I want to read them. But notice, these are all imperatives. These are commands. What does Paul expect will happen once the gospel is preached, once the gospel is applied? What should the church look like? And as I read these, think about it, what would the church look like if we all did these? What would happen in the church if we as men led in all of these. Just listen. Verse 9: "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal. Be fervent in spirit. Serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another.

"Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so as far depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay,' says the Lord. To the contrary. If your enemy's hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him something to drink, for by doing so you'll heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." So in our remaining moments, I'm happy to answer any questions and hopefully we can have a good discussion on this. Hopefully, I gave you some things to think about. But the floor is yours.