

Real Men

Are

Godly Men

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Looking for Men of Right Priorities

This lesson will be couched around the idea that our culture holds up money as that which is of the greatest value. People who are so obsessed with making money. We say we disapprove of their priorities, and yet inwardly there's something about us that tends to admire their drive and their ambition.

Sixty-four percent of American men define themselves as workaholics. They openly admit: I work too long, too hard in order to get the things that I want. The bad thing is, we live in a culture which endorses this addiction, unlike addictions to chemicals or other substances.

Underlying reasons why are we driven to embrace the very priorities we say that we don't agree with.

1. Identity. For years and years, men worked themselves into an early grave out of economic necessity. Some of you, or your parents, got up and worked from dawn to dusk just to put bread on the table to feed the kids. But millions of men are working themselves into an early grave today and it's not really out of economic necessity. It is not as was the case with our forefathers for stark survival. Oftentimes, it's for the purpose of establishing identity.

It wasn't always that way. Just about a quarter of a century ago, the job that had the highest prestige in all the jobs that when asked on a survey: Parents, what would you like your children most to be? Second on the list was being a teacher. It doesn't appear in the top 20 now. Believe it or not, there was a time about half a century ago when the number one answer was: I'd like to see my child become a minister. Today, that doesn't make the top 25. Nowadays, we want our children to follow a career path that leads to the big bucks. Why? Because we associate money with identity.

Our language even betrays us. Have you ever heard somebody say about the fellow who just passed away over across town? He was worth \$4,000,000. Now listen to that statement. Think about that. That is about as unbiblical a statement as you can utter. A man is worth _____, and fill in that blank with a price tag? Do you know what that does? That unmask a major motivation in our quest for prosperity. We've come to seek prosperity to make our mark on the world. Identity is a critical issue in how we establish values.

2, Security. Having money, making money, makes us feel like we're in control. Men who have little have to trust in God for their future, but men who have a lot just call the trust department. When Jesus said, "It's harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," he meant what he said. I've seen us play all kinds of mental gymnastics with that, but the truth is, Jesus said it, he meant it, and the reason is simple. The prerequisite for entering the kingdom of God is relinquishing control of your life, turning it over to God, and trusting in nothing else for your future. While most of us say that's what we want to do, sometimes we like to keep a backup in the bank, don't we? Security.

3. Authority and Power. Money brings power. If you have money, the system we live in treats you differently. The world's version of the golden rule kicks in i.e.; the one who has the gold makes the rules. Look around, in politics, 90+ percent of the time, the candidate who wins the election is the candidate who spends the most on his campaign. Sadly, we're living in a time when Abraham Lincoln couldn't run for office anymore, he would be way too poor. You've got to be wealthy to have a chance.

In our legal system today, the rich man will get a better defense with all the lawyers that he can afford which that will string out the courts into a mistrial if need be. The poor man can't afford to do that. The idea of authority resting with power is even true in churches. Before a major decision was made by church leaders, somebody would go to the people who had the bucks to make sure they were generally comfortable with the decision.

Now I'm not even bringing this up to debate the rightness or the wrongness of those situations, I'm just exposing the basic reality that money brings authority, and that's another reason that men are driven to prosperity. Because there are few addictions in life are as powerful to men as the addiction of power.

This lesson is not to indict hard working men, nor to impute motives of those who have gained a great deal of wealth. Understand this, the Bible commends hard work. I applaud and think it's great if God has blessed you financially as he did Abraham, as he did Moses, as he did Job, all were godly men. But listen, as Christian men, we need to regularly and

ruthlessly examine our drive and our motivation to make sure it's consistent with our faith. That's important. The fact is, many men are trying to find in their work and in their earnings, a sense of fulfillment that will always remain elusive. But, it's not to be found there.

Jesus set the principal – “Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’ Jesus replied, ‘Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?’ Then he said to them, ‘Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.’” (Luke 12:13) Jesus just flatly says, prosperity can't provide the things that matter most in life. If you believe that they can, then Satan has sold you a pack of lies and the gold that you're chasing is fool's gold. Jesus said your life is bigger than how rich you are, it goes far beyond what you can amass and control. Following this statement, He illustrated it with the following parable.

“The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.’” (Luke 12:16)

Now examine this parable in relation to the desire for authority, identity, and security.

1. Did prosperity bring this man authority? The answer is yes and no. It brought him authority over the barn builders. He said, I want you to build a barn, I've got money, let's get it done. They got it done. But, it didn't give him any authority over where his final resting place would be, or the place of his eternal destiny, did it?

2. Did the prosperity give the man identity? Did it let him be known for who he was? The answer is still yes and no. The people in town called him the rich man, there's some identity. But God called him the fool, that's identity, too. Whose opinion mattered more?

3. Did the prosperity give the man security? The fact is, his wealth didn't delay his death one second. Regardless how rich you are, you're just one blocked artery, one poorly placed cancer cell, one stray bullet, or one drunk driver, away from judgment day.

Emperor Othello in the year 1000 AD exhumed the body of Charlemagne. Did you study about Charlemagne in school, the conqueror of France and Germany in that era in there? Charlemagne had been buried in 800 AD and Emperor Othello heard that he had a certain request for being buried. It was said that Charlemagne was buried seated on a throne with a gold crown upon his head, a scarlet robe upon his back, and a scepter in his hand, and a book laid open across his lap. Two hundred years later, as his tomb was opened, Othello found out that Charlemagne had been buried just as he had demanded. He was still seated on the throne, but the golden crown had fallen off his head and the purple robe had been eaten away by the maggots and the other creatures that would devour such. The scepter had fallen from his hand and it was across the bony feet, but the book was still open in his lap and the bony finger was pointing to the verse, Matthew 16:26, "For what would it profiteth a man if he were to gain the whole world, but lose his own soul."

Two premises about our work and how we acquire our assets

1. Work is good. I'm not implying that work is not good. The Ten Commandments say that six days shall you labor and do your work. In the Thessalonian letter, Paul said, if you've got a man among you who doesn't work, don't let him eat. I heard people say one time while growing up, that work is the curse that was put upon man. No, if you go back to the Garden of Eden, God assigned man work to do before he ever fell. Work was designed by God for man's benefit in the context of innocence. Work is part of God's plan to prosper us, to take care of us, to take care of our families, and to give us an avenue of having our needs met.

Do you remember in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said? "Look at the sparrows of the air, they don't worry, and yet God takes care of them." He does, but they still have to go out and look for worms, don't they? See, we've got to go out and work, too.

Working is the avenue for our needs to be met. The most rewarding work comes only with love as a salary. In fact, money is the weakest of all salaries, but work is good. "Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him---for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work--this is a gift from God." (Ecclesiastes 5:18) Work is good. Work is a gift from God. But man has a tendency to take the gift and turn it into an idol to be worshipped.

2. Work is good, but work is not God. The reason so many men are stressed out workaholics and disillusioned is because they're trying to find more in their work and their money-making than either are able to provide. God intends for you to work, but he never intended for you to find your source of eternal happiness in your job or your bank account. God, and God alone, is the source of identity, security, and authority. Those are the things that every man and woman seek. God gives them. Therefore, we need to make a choice.

"No one can serve two masters. He will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money [mammon]." (Matthew 6:24) You cannot serve God and money. Notice, it does not say,

- a. "A man should not serve God and money," that makes it a question of priority. It's not worded that way
- b. "A man must not serve God and money," that makes it a moral issue - I should or shouldn't do it.

It said:

"You CANNOT serve God and money." It's an issue of impossibility. It's not even an option. Do you know why? Because God will not be a second-place deity, he just can't do it.

Satan incessantly uses money as the false god demanding our allegiance. That is why Jesus talked so much about it. Men we must stand up and say in a world that's extolling this virtue and this value above all others, "I'm not going to let my life be defined by my bank account or my job. I've got a higher calling."

How do you combat the desire for fortune, fame and power (authority)?

1. Regularly contemplate what the Bible says about money. Do you realize that in the Bible there are over 2,000 references to money and assets, how we use them and the eternal reward that's going to come from those choices? Do you know how many verses there are in the Bible about prayer? About 500. There is more said in the Bible about how we use the assets placed in our charge than there is about faith and prayer combined. Do you know where the richest deepest and most prevalent treatment of the subject is? It's in the words of Jesus. Jesus taught more about how you handle money than he did about any other subject except the kingdom of God. In light of so much teaching on stewardship, we should contemplate our handling of this responsibility.

2. Communicate our struggles with these temptations. Start first with our wives if you're married, and then with select others that you've chosen to be accountable to. Of all the things in our lives, we tend to want to make money the most private. It's amazing the number of husbands who don't even share the family's financial situation with their wives or the person you chose to help you be accountable in your life. Satan uses that failed process as the idol to lure us to bow down before him. When we talk about how we use our assets and whether or not we worship the dollar, we're talking about spiritual warfare. It's a tool of the devil, and it's something we need to communicate regularly with those we love and trust.

3. Keep the right perspective by cultivating a thankful spirit. Paul said "But godliness with contentment is great gain." (I Timothy 6:6) Contentment is not inherited, it's a learned thing. He also said "I know what it is to have plenty, and I know what it is to be in want, but I have learned the secret of being content in any and every circumstance." (Philippians 4:11) Most people don't know the secret of contentment. They are constantly focusing on what they don't have instead of what they do have. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

Hebrews 13:5 says, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, 'Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.'" If you're breathing right now, there's not one of you who has lost everything. Even after you die, you won't. That's when you receive your inheritance.

4. Consecrate yourself through faithful giving. Do you know why God declared and decreed that we give to his work? God doesn't need our money. Our God can do anything he wants to the church whether or not anybody ever gave a dime. The reason God's in it, is for the benefit of the givers because he knows it purifies our soul and it keeps our priorities in line. "When you love money, it becomes your master. When you give money, it becomes your servant." Have you ever thought about that? I don't want money to rule me. I want it to serve me. The best way to train for that is by giving it away.

Giving keeps our priorities in line. God is calling us to be men of right values, men with right priorities, and men of real prosperity. Amazing Grace #1212 - - Steve Flatt - June 4, 1995