

How Can a Man Change?

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

June 19, 2022 – Father's Day

Purpose: The purpose of this sermon is to help men (and women) realize that the myriad of problems and pressures in life can overwhelm us at times. But you can change in the midst of these trials and tribulation. There are practical steps to gradually change our life from one of endless meaninglessness to purpose.

Text: Matthew 19:16-26 Emphasized (v. 26) – But Jesus said unto them, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

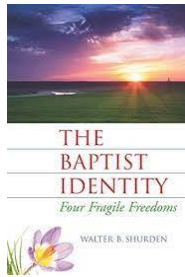
Sometimes life can be really difficult. One day, a guy walks into a shoe store and asks for a pair of shoes, size 8. The obviously well-trained salesman says, "But sir, you take an 11 or eleven-and-a-half." The customer said, "Just bring me a size eight."



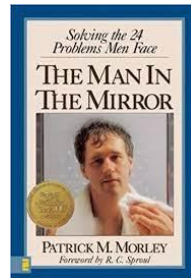
The sales guy brings them and the man stuffs his feet into them and stands up in obvious pain. He turns to the salesman and says, "I've lost my house to the I.R.S., I live with my mother-in-law, my daughter ran off with my best friend, and my business has filed Chapter 7."

"The only pleasure I have left is to come home at night and take my shoes off." ¹

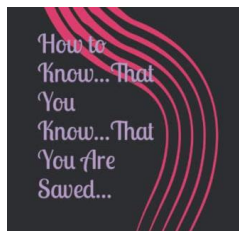
Over the past few weeks, we have examined Four Fragile Freedoms that express our identity as Baptists in the context of our relationship with God and our nation's relationship with the church. Starting next week, I want to begin looking at the Five Purposes of the Church. Why are we here? What are we doing? What do we need to give greater attention to?



Today I wanted to pause between our two-sermon series and attempt to give the men (and women) in our church some practical insights into the pressures that they face in life, and possibly give them some tools to succeed in this journey we call life.



As many of you know, I love to read. I read Patrick Morley's book, *The Man in the Mirror*. What some of you may not know is that I am often reading two books at the same time.



A second book I have read while reading Patrick Morley's book was one written by Carolyn Brown, a former student at Campbell University Divinity School. Her book was titled "*How to know, that you know that you are saved.*" Sometimes

there are themes in two books that overlap and can help you grasp the concept they are conveying when you blend them together. There is sometimes a synergy between the two that can help us understand in a much deeper, richer way.

The word synergy is an interesting word. It means when you add the parts together you get something greater than if

you just consider each apart. Let's take for example, if you had two horses that could pull 500 pounds each. Separately they could pull 1000 pounds. But if you put them together, they might encourage one another so much so that they could pull 1200 pounds.

I heard of a farmer that had one mule he used for plowing. When he hitched the mule up, he always put blinders on him so the mule could not see beside him. As the farmer plowed, he would call out to Bessie, Henry, Pete, and to Sally. One day, someone asked him who was he talking to since he only had one mule. The farmer said that that was true, but the mule works better when he thinks he is not the only one pulling.



This morning, I am going to try to bring the themes of these two books together in a way that we gain a greater understanding of ourselves and how we can change our situations.

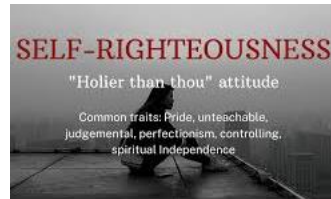
Carolyn Brown grew up in Rocky Mount North Carolina. While growing up there, she was exposed to the Christian faith of her mother and the church they went to. The church they went to was a Holiness church. Often the church services would include testimonies, shouting, and dancing. At the age of 13 she decided to stand up one evening and give her testimony. You see, Carolyn was trying to copy what her parents and the elders in the church were doing. She tried in her own strength to come to God and give praise in her own strength.



As Carolyn grew up it appeared that she was two different people. On Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, and Wednesday evenings, she was doing all the “external” things required for church membership. But the rest of the time, according to Carolyn, she was going to clubs, dancing in places a Christian has no business, wearing clothes that only attracted attention to herself – short skirts, bright clothes, and high heel shoes, red lipstick and red fingernail polish – which she said was her favorite. To my amazement she continued in this way of life for almost 23 years – living two lives.



Suddenly, Carolyn became obsessed with the idea that her lifestyle was not consistent with being a Christian. (And really, it was not consistent.) She went in the other extreme. Like many people that undergo change, the pendulum swung from one that was once very liberal to ultra conservative. She began to tell her former friends that they were all hell bound sinners. The only thing that Carolyn had changed in her life was the exterior. She lowered the hem on her skirts, removed the high heels, replaced the bright clothes, and got rid of the bright red lipstick and fingernail polish. She proceeded to lecture those around her. In her own strength she did these things. But inwardly she was still missing something.



All this time, her husband continued to stand beside her despite the fact that Carolyn abused his trust, manipulated his commitment to her for her gain, spent the family money foolishly on trips, extravagant clothes, pricey shoes, and

frequent clubbing. The inner conflict began to build within her.

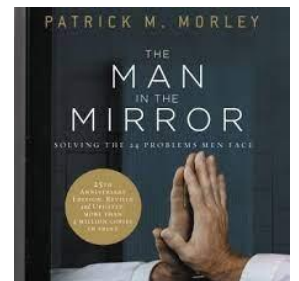
During this time of searching for God, Carolyn’s sister became sick with Leukemia in New York. She knew in her heart that God was going to heal her sister. She quoted Matthew 17:30 which says, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” She told her family, the doctor, her church, her neighbors and friends that she had the faith that her sister would be healed. Two weeks after a visit with her sister, she died.



Carolyn was in a crisis in her faith. She had faith, she believed, but God did not answer her prayer the way she wanted. She was, in what I would call, a crisis of faith.

Let us turn to Pat Morley’s book and come back to Carolyn’s story in a few minutes.

Patrick Morley in his book, *The Man in the Mirror*, addresses 24 problems that men face in today’s modern world. It is a practical identification of pressures for the modern person. Let me also add, that in today’s world, these pressures are not just for men only. These are pressures that women are facing in today’s world in unprecedented proportions.



When you go to the doctor, what does he do? The nurse takes your blood pressure, takes your temperature, and weighs you. If you have heart problems, they may do an EKG. If you have problems with diabetes, they may check your blood sugar. If there is any problem found, then they can begin to advise you on how to correct the problems. It could be as simple as “exercise more” or more complicated as an adjustment in several medicines that regulate your heart, blood pressure or blood sugar.



Before we can make any steps towards making changes in our life, we need to identify those areas that need adjustment. Patrick Morley identifies at least six areas that every person needs to come to terms with in their life. Anyone of these areas could cause stress and problems in their life.

Please Create a Slide for Each of these Six Areas

1. Identity problems

- a. The Rat Race
- b. Leading an unexamined life
- c. Biblical Christian or Cultural Christian
- d. Significance
- e. Purpose: Why do I exist?
- f. The Secret of Job Contentment

2. Relationship problems

- a. Broken Relationships
- b. Children: How to avoid regrets
- c. Wives: How to Be Happily Married
- d. Friends: Risks and Rewards

3. Money problems

- a. Money: A Biblical Point of View
- b. The four Pillars of Financial Strength
 1. Earnings: Little by Little
 2. Savings: Little by Little, too
 3. The Nest Egg Principal
 4. Sharing: Where You store your money

4. Time problems

- a. Decisions: How to make the right choice
- b. Priorities: How to decide what's important
- c. Time Management: Doing God's will

5. Temperament Problems

- a. Pride
- b. Fear
- c. Anger
- d. The desire to Be Independent
- e. Avoiding suffering

6. Integrity Problems

- a. Integrity: What's the Price?
- b. Leading a Secret thought life
- c. Accountability: The Missing Link

Let us turn back to Carolyn Brown's story.

It was at this crossroads in her life, the death of her sister, that she had exhausted all that she could do in her own strength. She thought that God needed her. That God could not function without her. What she found out later was that God is self-existent.



She woke up one morning at 3:00 am and looked out into the beautiful night sky. She remembered the words from Matthew 19:26 which says, *“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”* She had tried to believe in her own strength, but had not fully surrendered to God in **ALL** areas of her life.



The verse from John 3:16 came flooding back to her. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but shall have everlasting life.”* That morning, she cried out to God, “Lord, I believe. Save me.” She said, “I then literally felt the power of the Holy Spirit from heaven that morning.” From the top of her head, to the souls of her feet, she **KNEW** she was born again. From that moment on, she **KNEW** that her name was written in the Lambs Book of life. There was no doubt in her mind from that day forward she was a child of the king.

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JOHN 3:16

She recognized that she had an outward appearance she was a Christian. But on the inside, she knew she was a sinner and had not fully surrendered her life to God. She knew she was a sinner that was destined and damned heading straight toward hell. She may have looked the part, but on the inside, she was lost.

Patrick Morley calls us to look at that man in the mirror. He offers us some practical solutions for moving from meaninglessness to purpose:

His question for us is, **“How can a man change?”** It first requires recognition of our sinfulness. Admitting we are a sinner, believing that God can save us if we turn to Him, and confessing our sinfulness to God. We cannot continue to live as if we are fully in control of our destiny. This confession is not an end unto itself. There are some things that we need to put in place if we are to succeed and become the person God would have us to become. This life we surrender over to God requires ...



1. Daily Preparation

- Daily Bible Reading and study
- Prayer – ACTS



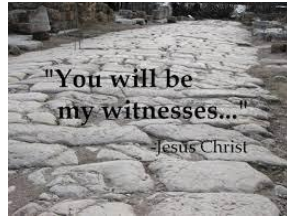
2. **Turning from Daily Temptation** – acknowledge the areas in which we are tempted and take steps to remove those from our life.

3. **Fleeing Daily Sin** – acknowledge that we do sin daily and we need to take steps to push them aside, not yield to them, flee from them.



4. **Seeking Daily Power** – seek God’s guidance in our daily activities. We cannot do it in our own power. It takes God’s power in us to overcome these temptations.

5. **Determined Daily Witnessing** – be willing to share with someone at least daily, your faith in God. Some people make it their daily goal to share God’s love with another person each day. Maybe that could be a goal of yours.



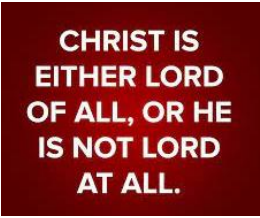
6. **Intentional Daily Pilgrimage** – recognize that we walk with God daily. It is a pilgrimage that God wants to walk with you. Invite God into your daily routine. If you ride in the car, listen to Christian music. If you work where you can take some time for Bible Study, do it. Include God and His word into your life daily.

7. **Avoiding the Sin of Partial Surrender** – recognize that one of the greatest hindrances to growth is the sin of partial surrender.



The story is told that a man decided to invite Jesus into his home. The man had some places in the house that he did not want Jesus to enter into. It was ok for Jesus to sit in the living room. The man did not want Jesus to look into the refrigerator because there may be some beverage there he would be embarrassed about. The man didn’t want Jesus to look in his books or magazines because some of them would not be suitable for him. As Jesus tried to make his way around the house, the man continued to hinder Jesus from going into each room. Jesus reminded the man that when he invited him into his home, he promised that Jesus could examine anything in his life.

Jesus went to the back bedroom and knew that there was secret closet that was under lock and key. Jesus turned to the man and asked for the key. Jesus turned to the man and said, **“If I am not Lord of All, then I am not Lord at all.”** With that, the man finally surrendered everything and gave Jesus the Key.



You see, Jesus died for **ALL** our sin. It is time for us to stop going through the motions and get serious about our eternal destiny. We need to examine our life. The unexamined life is not worth living. The examined life **IS** worth living. We need to determine to let Christ explore every inner room of our mind, and yield it to Him. Christ wants us to break out of the mold of this world and lead an authentic Christian life. We need to begin by surrendering our whole life to him.

LET US PRAY

Endnotes:

¹Micky’s Funnies, March 28, 2022 – A Shoe Funny