

What Is Man?

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

What is our purpose? Why are we here? Who am I? What is man? These questions are asked in our minds and hearts at various times in our lives. Was the great eternal purpose for which we were created simply to live, to work and then to die?

Hebrews 2:6 says: "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man?" Does that sound familiar? It is a good question. What is man? Then a little later in Hebrews 2:9, the Bible says: "But we see Jesus." These two verses go together. What is man; but we see Jesus.

This booklet is a very personal reflection on how I considered these things throughout my life. My hope is these words will speak to your heart in some way. Really, no matter what we do, we are trying to discover what we are. But when we see Jesus, that searching process should stop for us as we embrace the Cross and allow His Holy Spirit to lead us in His new and

living way.

Chapter One

WHO AM I?

In 1970, I was 17 years old and living in Rome, New York. I was unsaved and not from a Bible-believing, Christian home. I loved my brothers and sisters and my mom and dad. We were “good people,” but something was missing in me. I would go out late at night into the cornfields behind our house and ask, “What is man? Who am I? What is my purpose?”

In school, I learned that the purpose of an education is to get a job. Then, I saw people with jobs, and I asked them what they were doing. They replied, “Well, we have a job. We pay our bills. We have our houses and our families and then we die.”

I was 17 years old—not too smart and not too old—but smart enough and old enough to know that something was missing. And so my search began.

At 19, I attended the university in upstate

New York. One day, a very strange young man came to our campus wearing a blanket. It had an opening for his head to go through, and there was a rope tied around his waist. He was telling a group of us that we must be born again.

Just the year before, this same young man had been a friend of mine and just like me. But now, he was different—he was a Jesus freak! I loved to hear him speak because he told us about Jesus Christ. In all my life, I had never been to a Bible-believing church, never met a Christian, never heard anyone teach the Bible. I had never met anyone like this man, and he said that Jesus Christ was real.

That was all I needed to hear. I asked, “What do I do? Here I am.” He took out a piece of paper from his pocket and said, “Say this prayer.” So, I knelt down with him and I prayed.

The next morning, I woke up and I was so full of love and freedom and joy. I walked for two days off the ground. I had not known that I was guilty until the guilt was gone. When the guilt was gone, then I knew that I had been guilty. Now I had Jesus Christ. After two days, the feeling was gone, and I went looking for this strange man with the blanket. I was searching and asking questions.

This was the essential element of my search, “What is man?” Who am I? Who can tell me? What psychologist or what teacher can tell me about myself?

I began to read the Bible, and I met a pastor who taught me a little bit—a little was enough and I survived. I started to pray and think about God more and more and about the will of God and about giving everything—everything—to God. The Lord faithfully led me.

A Big Decision

It's a long story from then until now, and not necessary to repeat in detail, but that very summer, I went to Maine and attended a church like this one. I saw the people and I met them and they were different. There I heard Pastor Carl Stevens. I listened to the messages, and I believed them. I had asked the question—what is man—and now I was starting to see what man is. I had never seen it before. I saw Jesus as it is written in Hebrews 2:9: “But we see Jesus.”

Then, Bible school started and I said, “No, I cannot go to Bible School, I must go back to the university. My father will be angry with me if I go to Bible school.” I hitchhiked home and went to my dad and said, “Dad, I'm going to Bible

school.” He said, “No, you are not. You're going back to the university. You cannot stop your studies now. You have to finish and then after that, you can do what you want.”

He drove me to college. For three days, I went to all of my classes. I thought about it and made a decision, “I must go to Bible school.” It was the most painful thing I had ever done in my life. As I was leaving the campus, someone said to me, “You will regret it. You are throwing away your education and why?”

I didn't even know how to respond, but I knew the reason why I was leaving. What is man? I had to find the answer to that question. Who I am could not be answered there at that school. No one there could tell me who I was. And nobody can tell me who I really am—only God could reveal that to me.

Chapter Two

GOD IS IN US

I went to Bible school, with only 33 people, in the basement of an old church building in Bath, Maine. We sat in kindergarten chairs with little desks perched on our knees. Pastor Stevens was our teacher, and when I listened to him, I was hearing what the Bible says about who man is.

After class, I would go outside and look up into the sky and think about what was happening in my life. I would say, “Thank you, God; for You are the only One in the whole universe who can tell me who I am, and You are doing it. I believe You and You are telling me who I am, and I don’t know what it is, but I taste it.”

It is more than me—it is more than us—it is a mystery revealed. It is God in us. It is Emanuel. God is with us. So quietly, like many of the students in those days, I started to study, to memorize the Bible, to think and meditate on

the Word. With others, we would have prayer meetings late at night and early in the morning.

Secret Manna

I got a job at a tannery in Berwick, Maine, working at a drying machine. I had a little Bible and I put it behind an electrical outlet. As I worked, I began memorizing the book of Ephesians. I would do my work a little bit quickly and read one verse. Then I would do a few more hides and then read another verse. I would pull the hides out and put them on these workhorses and then go back to the Bible. Work and memorize; work and memorize. Within a year and a half, I had memorized all of Ephesians, Hebrews, 2 Timothy, as well as many Psalms and parts of 2 Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Romans.

When I came out of my working place, I had something! I had a hidden motivation—secret manna from the Lord. When I would go home from the factory at midnight, I could hardly sleep. I was so energized and so motivated by the Bible. I had a secret. Pastor Stevens had been preaching about it and he had told us about it—he said it was true. He told us to concentrate on it and to rejoice always and be thankful in all things. He told us to hide the Word of God in

our hearts. And we did.

Simple Faith

Here I was, 22 years old with the Bible in my heart. Life was so simple. There were no problems. I didn't care about anything other than the fact that "who I am" was now being realized by the grace of God because I was seeing Jesus Christ.

We see Him in the Bible, by the Holy Spirit, and in the Body of Christ. This is amazing. I could work in the factory the rest of my life and memorize the Bible. I could be a soul-winner wherever I go. I don't need to be recognized. I don't need to be honored because God is honoring me as He promised He would. We have bread to eat—hidden manna—that others do not have.

We have something!

Jesus said to the disciples, after His encounter with the woman at the well, "I have meat to eat that you know not of." Then came my second year of Bible school. I am sitting in the congregation and I am so satisfied. I can't even see the leaf wither. I see no desert ground. I have no personal problems. I'm not perfect, but

it seems like I leap over walls and run through troops. Enemies disappear in front of our faces. Why? Because we have found what it is to be a man, as God tells us who we are. Is that ideological, hypothetical, or purely theological? No, it is powerful! No, it is the reality of our lives.

Chapter Three

WHY ARE WE HERE?

In my third year of Bible school, I decided to go to Finland. We had a team of 10 people. I was 23 years old and we didn't know exactly what we were doing, but we went over there. We had no manual and no methodology planned out, but we had a revelation, an understanding of who we were. So, we started soul-winning and teaching the Bible in Finland.

Sometimes after teaching the Bible, I would feel so bad. I would feel like going into my room and hiding in a closet. I would feel so intimidated, shy, unable or unworthy. Yet even in my worse state, I always knew I had a secret. Even when I felt beaten down and lacked confidence and security in the presence of people, there was something I knew I had in the presence of God. I would build up myself, say "shucks" and go home. Or, I would go out and get a hamburger and rejoice, remembering that a righteous man

who stumbles is like a fountain. It is not that the fountain ceases to function; it is just that it is troubled. Sometimes, with the troubled fountain, the water still comes out around the rocks and mud. The fountain is still there—it is just not a geyser—but it is still there. I knew who I was.

Continuing in Faith

After my first year in Finland, I said, “Okay. I’ll go back to the tannery. That’s fine. I am more than a conqueror, and I know who I am.”

We had 20 people when we finished that first year. We had something and we knew it. In that time, we would go to the Cross and say, “Thank you Jesus. Here I am in a secret place.” We know who we are. Thank you, Jesus.

Then, I married Lisa Hughes—the treasure of treasures—unbelievable. Just eleven days after we got married, we went back to Finland. That year, in just one year, our church grew from 20 people to 200 people.

We grew so fast the newspapers started writing about us. There was a controversy in the country about who we were. Some students from the university left their studies to go to our newly founded Scandinavian School of the

Bible. Some parents reacted and wrote opinions in the paper. I was told that we even came up as an issue of discussion in the parliament.

One Lutheran priest wrote in a newspaper that the church could learn something about church planting from us. He wrote, “These people have a vibrant and fervent congregation of young people.”

We know why that happened. It certainly wasn’t us. It was the Lord. But isn’t this what it is to be a man or a woman? Isn’t this our calling? Isn’t this the mystery of God’s work? Shouldn’t this be the normal Christian life?

If I submit to what I hear, and what I hear leads me to the Cross, then give it to me because that is the place where I meet God; and that is the place where I really discover who I am. If I make excuses for myself and apologize, I may never find that great, powerful secret that God wants us to have.

No matter what our personality, no matter what our limitations, no matter what our background, no matter who we are, we have something. It is something so high and so far above and beyond the flesh of men. It is so powerful. Just put it in me, God—put it in me always. Refresh me in it. Teach it to me always. Speak it

again to me. Hit me with it again and again and edify me with it. God, Your rod will be comforting to me and You will exalt and promote Your Son. Surely it is because of Your Son that this happens.

Chapter Four

THE STEADFAST WORK OF THE CROSS

It is easy to put up a banner and stage a big hulla-ballou. We could easily create a circus with a lot of people. But it is another thing to know and live something when you are hurting and when you are down.

It is amazing to believe, and to continue, and to embrace, and to stir up, and to pray, and to stay just as we are, to live as the Scriptures say to live and to be just what He promised to make us.

There was heavy persecution in Finland. For weeks, we were in the newspapers—headlines, front-page stories, big photos. Some said that I was the leader of a Nazi movement and others said that we were part of the CIA. There was betrayal and lies. Someone falsely prophesied that my wife would die in childbirth with my daughter Amy. I remember being in the hospital when

she was born, and the phone rang in the delivery room. It was my secretary, telling me that a reporter was there at the office waiting to talk to me. And I said, "This is easy. This is fun. This is not a problem." As the apostle Paul said, it does not matter what is happening around us or to us—we have a treasure. We overcome in everything.

Eventually, we moved back to the United States. We were fortunate to have the opportunity to come back though Finland was, and still is, a treasure in our hearts and mind. We still have seven churches there that are faithfully continuing the work we began.

Coming back here, however, there again is the Cross in our lives. Never knowing why I have been apprehended, but pressing on and pressing on and pressing on. That means a walk at night, a prayer, a Bible study, a meditation. I don't know exactly how to explain how it happens, but you know what I mean.

We hear something when the Cross is preached to us. We believe that there is a Bible school student or a person on the street or from the city or somewhere in the world that is searching. The question in many minds is the same question we had—what is man? And we

can tell you what man is. It is an ongoing revelation. It continues. It goes on throughout our lives. We never settle back fully because we don't know what God will do today or tomorrow or next week. I can't settle back fully. It is a mystery.

New Opportunities, New Challenges

Then we had this opportunity a few years ago. My family and I were very happy and quite content in Baltimore. One night, I was sick and up late at night and began to pray around 2 to 3 o'clock in the morning. I searched the Scriptures and thought, Lord, tell me there is something that I am not doing, or something that is not right, or something that I should be doing—show me.

God gave me this verse in Matthew 10: "If you love your wife, or your daughter, or your son more than you love me, then you are not worthy of me." I said, "Lord, I cannot. That is too hard. I love my wife and my daughters and my son very, very much. This is impossible. How could I give them up or lose them or leave them? I don't think I could do that."

But at the same time, I was thinking about the mission field and going to Hungary, and I

spoke with Pastor about it. He is my example, a man who has not stopped, quit or put limitations around his life, even as he has grown older.

So the question comes back. What is man? Tell me, God. My ear is not turned to the voice of the world but to the voice of God. What is man, God? Who am I, God? The world will try to tell me who I am, but I am not interested in its opinion.

No one can limit me as to who I am. That belongs to God. It is up to Him. I am saying that everything is possible, but all of it has to go through the Cross, doesn't it?

If you are shy and you are sitting in the back row and you are saying you could never be a pastor or a missionary, then you are limiting who you are by what you know about yourself; and you have no right to do it. For only God will tell you who you really are.

I was in Bible school with a couple of these types of folks back in Maine, and one said to me, "You know, I could never be a pastor." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I'm just not that kind of person." I was quiet. I knew I would also say that if I thought that I had the right to say to God who I am. Instead, I let God tell me who I am no matter what I feel.

In my first year in Finland, the insecurity and loneliness and the feelings of failure were so intense. One day a team member said to me, “You aren’t a pastor, are you?” I answered, “No, I don’t think I am.” But that thought did not last. I want to say to Pastor, thank you for the mystery that is revealed here because we don’t care to know who we are as just mere people. You go out the door and find that anywhere.

But here, in the church, you find out who you are in God. It is satisfying and it feeds me and it builds me up and the church is what it is supposed to be.

So one day I said to Lisa, my wife—“Hungary”—and she is so godly and so wise, so quiet and discerning and loving and she hardly said a word. I don’t think she said a word, but she just started to pack—by faith. We just started to do it. Why? To kick the devil in the teeth and because we knew that there must be some people in that country like the people who responded in Finland—people like Jorma Immonen, Matti Himanka, Juha Haatanen, Paivi Taskinen or Riitta Hakulinen.

And once I got there in Hungary, there were people like that. I met Kende—a soldier in the Hungarian army. We spent time together, and

often I drove him to the train. He is there, right now, the pastor of our ministry in Budapest.

Who are we? What do we see? And if we have seen Him, then Lord, here we are. I will not limit my life by the natural. Why? We are too victorious! We are too great! We have too much!

When we got off the plane in Budapest, I felt like the whole world was ours. Honestly, we walked with Holy Spirit power. We would talk to someone and—wow! We'd preach and wow!

The church grew fast, people got saved, and they came in from the countryside and got disciplined and went to Bible college. They were basically just like us—nobodies who were asking the questions “What is man? Who am I? Can you tell me?” And we would say, “Yes, we can tell you. Let's sit down and talk from the Scriptures. God will show you.”

Then these people become like us because we become what we hear. We are more than conquerors. There is no boundary for us; there is no limitation, no perimeter to faith. Everything is possible. We have a great commission; a great God who uses people, who are in themselves nothing, but in Him everything! Praise God!

CONCLUSION

I want to thank Pastor Stevens for preaching the Cross. The words we hear are drawing us to it. The messages are putting it right to us. We hear it all about the Cross. We learn the sourness of it and the sweetness of it, the pain and the comfort of it, the wound and the healing of it. We come to the Cross so we can confess that we are sinners.

In myself, I am unable to answer the important question concerning my life. I don't know what I am or who I am. I cannot do anything. But I can say this: "Heal me, God, and I will be healed, so deeply and so greatly. I will be a complement wherever I am.

Even if I remain unrecognized and unknown in this world, even if I have failed many times in the same area— I have a secret from God. I have something living and eternal. We see it, and we know it, and we share it!