

Man in the Mirror

Take a moment and get up. Find a mirror and take a look at yourself. Really look at yourself. What do you see? Who do you see? Do you recognize the man staring back at you? Is this the man you thought you'd become a decade ago? Is he better or worse? If he's worse, why? What is keeping you from experiencing God's best for your life?

While I don't know your specific situation, there is one thing I'm certain about. We are in a battle. We are in the midst of a war. A spiritual war. A physical war. We are in a war over the fate of our souls, our families, our loved ones, and the world around us.

Are you winning the war? Or maybe just surviving? Or are you getting completely ravaged by the enemy? Have you quit? Thrown in the towel and given up? Maybe you're just running. What are you running from? Or running to? Are you just pretending? Going through the motions? What are you afraid of? What are you hiding? Who are you hiding from?

How is your health? Blood pressure? Sleep? Exercise? Eating habits? Weight? How is your job? Are you balanced? Are you a workaholic? Do you work harder and desire the praise of man more than the praise of God? Are you more committed to your job than your marriage and family? Or are you the opposite? Are you lazy and doing the bare minimum to get by? Are you satisfied? Are you happy? Why not?

How is your flesh? Are you carnally minded? Are you prideful? Arrogant? How would you know? Pride does not just manifest in the form of boasting. It can be so much more so subtle than that. What about anger? Rage? Malice? Slander? Gossip? Hatred? Un-forgiveness? Are you any of these?

What are you looking at? Is it healthy for you? Is it edifying? Encouraging? Is it pornography? Or maybe just looking at things with lust in your heart? Is it violent? Gory? Are you desensitized?

Are you drinking alcohol? Doing drugs? How much? Do you have a problem? What are you addicted to? Or could you quit any time? Are you deceived? How would you know?

Are you in fellowship? Who is your accountability? Are you connected with a brother or brothers in Christ? Are you accountable with anyone?

What about God? Do you make time to hear from God? Or are you too busy? Life. Wife. Kids. Work. School. Sports. Activities. Are you isolated? How would you know?

Look at the man in the mirror once again. Now take a look inside. Take a look into your heart. I ask you make an honest self-assessment. Take time. Better yet, make time. Pray about it. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you. Ask your spouse. If you have trusted friends, ask them for honest feedback. Be courageous enough to ask, then humble enough to listen. Truly listen.

Who are you? Why are you here on earth? Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? If so, are you making a difference eternally? Why not? When is the last time you talked to someone about your faith? Are you ashamed or embarrassed of the Gospel? Is the pull to fit into the world too strong for you?

My brothers in Christ, all the questions I just laid out, I asked and assessed myself. I starting writing this in the fall of 2020, over two years ago. As I wrote it, I came to a startling conclusion. One I didn't expect.

I realized that slowly, over the past five to ten years, I had drifted. I had subtly lost my sense of purpose. I had lost the bearing on my calling as a believer, where Jesus commanded us to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19).

I woke up day after day, until days turned into weeks, weeks turned into months, and months turned into years. Those years turned into many years until one day, in a country far from home, without my wife and my family around me, I realized I was lost. I felt alone and isolated, as if on an island.

It pained me immensely to realize I strayed from becoming the man God wanted me to become. I strayed from becoming the man I thought I would become when I gave my life to Christ in December of 2003.

Over the course of a decade, I had sustained some wounds. I know, guys aren't supposed to talk about wounds, or feel emotions for that matter, but let's throw all that out the window. We don't have time for the false macho, bravado stuff. We must be real. We must be authentic and transparent if we want to experience victory in our lives.

Through those life experiences, I became more guarded, because those wounds hurt. And hurt led to offense. Offense led to me having a chip on

my shoulder. I had something to prove, and that became my mission. Through that obsession, I slowly became prideful. Friends, let me tell you this—pride is oh-so-subtle. Although I was wounded, I still found an incredible amount of success in my professional life. I was on an upward trajectory, doing really well by worldly standards.

When I finally looked at myself in the mirror, although professionally I was towards the top, spiritually and emotionally, I was at rock bottom. I was exhausted. I was beat down. I was defeated. I was angry. I had components of hatred and even rage built up in my heart. I was broken. I was ashamed of the man I had become. I was ashamed to admit I was a Christian.

By almost all accounts, I never felt like I had come completely off the rails. Pride (or really, the fall) does not manifest in ways that are easily recognizable. The enemy is far too wily for that. I was still in the Word daily, and I was still in prayer and relationship with God. The slide was so subtle and extremely hard to recognize, until it was almost too late.

I didn't wake up one morning and start going off my course 90 degrees in the wrong direction. It's more like somewhere along my journey as a Christian, I started veering a degree or two here or there. And over the course of time and distance, those degrees added up in a way I never foresaw. I thought I was headed for Colorado, but ended up somewhere lost in Mexico.

That was 38 months ago

Only by the grace, mercy, and goodness of God, I was restored. Over the past three years, I have worked to intentionally rebuild every area of my life: spiritual, physical, mental, emotional, marital, family, financial, relationships and community. I'm rebuilding alongside my wife, family, and friends. We're intentionally refocusing everything around the vital, life-giving personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In many ways, this experience helped me to better understand Nehemiah in the Old Testament. Nehemiah was a man who returned to the city of Jerusalem to find it in shambles. He was devastated. But with the

strength and wisdom of God, he and his fellow Jews rebuilt the wall surrounding Jerusalem piece by piece, until the entire wall was complete. The completed wall represented restoration, hope and protection for a lost and broken people. I was a man in need of total restoration. I needed hope in my life again.

If you are, or were, in a place like me, do not despair. Now is the time. Join us on this journey. It's an imperfect ride, along with imperfect people. We're hungry to regain the ground that we gave to the enemy.

We've already lost too many good men in the battle. Men who were once so strong in the faith. Men who I stood side by side with, on fire for Jesus Christ. We were passionate to see lives changed, and we literally took the Gospel around the world together. But over time, their flame slowly dimmed, and for some, their fire for the Lord was snuffed out completely.

I'm sure you can name at least one casualty from the war. Or maybe you are one. Or maybe you're becoming one. Or maybe you were one.

I was a casualty from the war

I thank God that I recognized—I thank God my wife recognized—who I was becoming before it was too late. I thank God for His son, Jesus Christ; for my wife; for a military Chaplain; for a few brothers I eventually reached out to who stood with me in the fire. Men who shined the light of Jesus Christ for me during my darkest hour.

Here's the good news. It's not too late for you. The past is the past. It's time to get back up. It's time to get back in the fight and start swinging. It's time to join the community.

This is not another self-help approach, nor is this a "just be more disciplined" approach. Yes, discipline is a key aspect; however, it is only when we surrender to Jesus Christ and put Him at the center of our lives in every aspect, that we can find true meaning and victory in our lives.

I came to understand that faith is a fight. It is a battle. Paul says "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Jesus tells us that the faith won't be easy in the final days, but assures us that "...he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew

24:13). It is not how or when you start, but rather how well you finish in the faith. Be like Paul. Be like Jesus Christ.

The vision for Endure Ministries is to see people experience

Victory in life through Jesus Christ

Our purpose is to train, strengthen, connect and equip the body of believers.

We are founded on three core principles: Faith, Fellowship and Fortitude

Faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior

Fellowship with a community of like-minded believers

Fortitude to lay hold and fulfill God's calling on our lives

None of us know how long we will be on this Earth. Let's be intentional and start making the time we do have count for eternal significance.

Join me. Join us. Let's endeavor to endure together.

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