Tim Lundy: Good morning, men. It's good to be with you and we are looking at what is the good life as you think about it. Just take a moment as we began and I want you to define in your own head, how would you define the good life for you? What would be the elements that you go, I'm just describing for someone, "Man, this is the good life," particularly as it impacts a man? As a man, what's a good life for a man? If you look in your notes, we've been looking at approaches to manhood, and in a lot of ways, your approach is going to define how you would describe a good life. The first approach we looked at is the self-made man. This is when you believe you have or should have what it takes to be a man. You naturally have that.

It's a belief that manhood comes from within. As we've been describing it, a lot of us have been left with a self-made manhood because no one was there to define it or describe it for us. If you didn't have a father, you didn't have somebody that spoke into your life. It was interesting I saw quote by Tupac Shakur. The rapper, he died over 20 years ago. Still famous though. He's an award-winning rapper, represented the whole New York side of the rap wars between New York East Coast, West Coast. It's interesting years after his death, his people would track him and track his life and just some of the things he said about it because he described his own manhood.

In all of it he said really it goes back to, "I didn't have a dad." He spent some time in prison. He's finally gunned down on the streets. Despite being this famous rap star, he's gunned down on streets because he never could leave the streets. Listen to how he describes his life without a dad. He said his dad was in the Black Panthers and left him. His stepfather was a gangster. He says, "I know for a fact if I had had a father, I'd have some discipline. I'd have more confidence. Your mother can't calm you down the way a man can. Your mother can't reassure you the way a man can. Your mother can't show you where your manhood was." This is so telling. He said, "You need a man to teach you how to be a man.

I go, "He is right on." There are so many guys who are trying to figure out what it means to be a man because nobody was there to teach them. We have this self-made manhood that really doesn't work. Second approach is the image-conscious man. Your manhood copies the culture and the changing times. Whatever the culture saying as manhood, you try to copy it and it's a manhood that comes from without. The problem with it is as the culture changes, especially in a culture that's turned on men where it used to be noble to be a man and there used to be a time at least there was an image of manner that you go, "All right, I could pursue that in life," but the rules keep changing and life keeps changing.

You look at guys that are frustrated or you're just trying to find meaning in life. It's been interesting to me, if you just watch especially for men and young men, the growth of gaming. I'm talking about video games, online games. Huge industry. For those of us, I grew up a little bit past it. I might like some games, but I don't realize how immersive it is for so many people. Listen to some of the stats around it. 155 million Americans play video games, 40% of them about three hours a week. 34 million play it about 22 hours a week, especially young men make up a lot of that, 5 million over 40 hours a week. The revenue from it compares with anything in professional sports, the movie industry.

One critic, Frank Guan, he described, "What is the attraction of this?" He said, "It's pretty simple. You go down the line with it". One, in the games, the rules are clear and know what life is, the purpose of the game, unlike the rest of life and society is really clear. The second part of it, it was interesting. You always get to be the protagonist. You're the hero of the story instead of watching somebody else's. They're convenient. Everything there. You don't have to leave the house to compete, to explore, to commune, to exercise agency, to be happy. It's all inclusive with it. Then finally, what he said is, "The game might be challenging, but it's set up for you to actually win."

When he put all that together, listen how he described it, he said, "Video games solve the question of the meaning in a world where transcendent values have banished, where God's struggling to find transcendent value." It's there. At least, there's some spot where it feels like, "Okay, I know the rules and I know the meaning of it," and you look at it and you go, "Okay, I understand," whilst many people spend hours in it. Here's how he described it though, "We no longer go there to visit. They want to immigrate there. This is life. This is where I find meaning."

I understand it, but surely there's something more. Surely, gaming could be a form of entertainment and hear me, if that's your thing, I'm not down on it. I love sports. We all have different things we enjoy. I'm not diminishing that. What I am saying though, it's one thing if it's your form of entertainment, it's another thing if it's where you're finding meaning in life. For all of us as men, I think we want something more. That's why I love this third approach, the transcendent man, where we actually believe God created man and called him to embrace timeless manhood responsibilities, that there are actually rules to this life, that this life was set up in a way that I was supposed to succeed here, that this life was supposed to have meaning and all those things that I'm trying to find in other places, God actually meant as a man, there's a transcendent value to my life. There's something bigger in life in that.

We talked about it last week, manhood comes from the Bible. It comes from the Bible and we described that definition. I want you to look at it. You see it right there in your notes. A real man courageously follows God's word, loves and protects God's women, excels at God's work and betters God's world. We're going to spend our time walking through how to do that over the next several weeks. Give you clear tracks to run on each of these. Right now, I just want you to get that picture of it again. Remember that life compass that I have a true north. True north starts with, "All right, what did God say? What did God say? Am I following what he said in life?"

My east and west that's always around me are the relationships with women or my wife in my life and my work. I'm dealing with those every day. Sometimes, I feel the tension between them. Then when you think of that South, it's, "What am I leaving behind? What's the legacy that I leave in life? What's the legacy with my kids? What's the legacy in the world?" I think if you keep that picture in your mind every day as a man, "There you go. Okay, let me start. I got my true north, what God say. I've got work. I've got woman and then I've got my legacy." It gives us a picture of a transcendent life of how to do that. To do that though you go, "That's the compass. What am I going after?"

That's what I want you to look in your notes, manhood and the good life, when we come back, how would I define what a good life is and how does being a man fit into that? Point A, can the good life be defined? Research and social science says yes. Research and social science. I like reading social science studies. I like happiness studies, different studies that have been done across the sectors with it. You see a couple of I've quoted here, the social science. Harvard did a 75-year study of adult development. It was one of the longest longitudinal study of 268 men in particular that were tracked over a 75-year period.

Some of the things that came out of it is they examined that. Another one you see the mystery of happiness, who has it, how to get it. It was a study that was done and then presented on ABC several years ago and just track through it and in these studies, hear me, this is Harvard, this is a secular news source, they're just looking at it from a social science perspective what makes a good life. As you look at it, what research says the good life isn't because some of the things we put immediately in the category, "Okay, if I was going to have a good life, I'd be this, this, this." Look at some of the things that's not. It's not wealth and possessions. It's not. This comes back over and over again in studies.

Now hear me, there's a certain point that wealth and having enough money to meet your base needs, it does impact your stress level, but we have it in our heads if I just had more and more and more that the happiest people should be the richest people, but they're really not and we know that. Harvard did another study in 2018. It was the first of its kind because it was strictly millionaires. In the study, people across the sectors, they say 4,000 millionaires and you had people from 1 million some in the study well in the 10s, 20s, over a hundred million. You got a wide range of some of the wealthiest people in the country.

They asked them their level of satisfaction, where they were now on a scale of one to 10 and here's the interesting question out of it. They said, "How much more would you need to say you're a 10, that you're satisfied completely with your wealth?" About a fourth of them said, "I would need 10 times more." Another fourth said, "I need five times more." Another fourth said, "I need to double it. If I could double what I have right now with it." Only 13% said, "I'm satisfied. I'm good where I am. " Here was a fascinating part of it though, it went all the way across the spectrum on how people responded. In other words, it didn't matter if you had 1 million or 100 million. Just as many across the spectrum said, "I need 10 times more."

In all of it, here was the thing and this always comes back in the social studies about wealth, "It's not having enough. It's having more than the people around me. Our brains are always comparing all the time. You can have a family that might have 50 million, but if I live in a neighborhood or I run with people that have more, I'm always feeling that gap." That's why the studies of all the lottery winners when they studied their satisfaction and happiness level, right after you win the lottery for the first year, there's a huge spike in happiness. Makes sense, doesn't it? Here's where our brains do us in. Our brains always adjust.

You can take people that they had nothing, they win the lottery and immediately have it. The brain adjusts to this new level of life. Whether we're getting satisfaction you got in that spike, it actually when they track it over time, there's less happiness than when they began. Again, I'm just telling you social science on this. Yet, you know the number one stat that keeps growing or the number one category with the next generation and the ones coming after us, when they are asked what do you need to have a good life? You know what keeps growing? Look in your notes there. 80% of millennials would say, "I need to get rich. More than anything else, I need to get rich." That's more by the way than the generation before and the generation before.

Previous generations would say, "Yeah, that was important, but not to the level," and so there's something about our society and there's something about those who are following us because we look at it and go, "Oh, millennials." I would say, "What is the message that's being said to them that this is the most important thing in life and that this'll produce the good life?" Look, second category. It's not good looks. It's not good looks and I would know that personally. No, actually, [inaudible 00:13:20] on this. And so I met people especially that are really good looking and there are advantages that come with looks. Social sciences have studied it. Job offers. Opportunities. You look at it. We live in an Instagram world. We're literally good-looking people who are Instagram influencers who just basically tell people what they like, make a lot of money doing it.

You might look at it and go, "Man, yeah, they've got it made." Yet when they actually studied the satisfaction of people who are really good looking, boy, it's a love-hate relationship because you can't afford to not look good. You can't afford any flaws. There's this constant tension of, "How do I keep this up?" and we see it. You see it sometimes with aging stars and people that you go, "Wow, you went a step too far there." Partly, why would you do that if your whole worth is built on it? Man, you live everyday living or dying with what you see in the mirror. It's not a happy life.

Look at the third category. It's not thrilling experiences. It was interesting, John Stossel who did that ABC Special, he tracked especially people that have these wild, from bungee jumping to cliff diving, to all the different things and all of it, you get this adrenaline spike. There's this rush that happens with it. Some people, it was just the experiences of travel and these trips and all of it that, "I've got to do." What they found though is over the course of life, it's usually people that aren't very happy and they're trying to compensate for their everyday life and the spikes almost make it worse when you have to go back to reality, the sense of trying to escape that you can't string enough of them together to actually raise the baseline level of happiness in life.

Look at the last one and this is probably what I think that hits us as guys. It's not personal achievement or fame. I don't know. Maybe fame is a big deal for you, but I think for all of us, achievement, that we just tell ourselves, "If I could just get to that next level, if I could just get ahead, if I could just launch this company, if I could just get to this level in the company or get to CEO or get to." Whatever is put out there, as men, we love to achieve. Now, part of that is our hardwiring and we'll see that as that part of that definition of being a man is fulfilling God's work for us, but a lot of it is that level of achievement is going to make me happy.

Remember years ago, I confessed to you guys I'm a Dallas Cowboy fan. I know not popular with this group, but I remember the glory years, especially I grew up Roger Staubach, but then Troy Aikman. I remember seeing Troy Aikman after they'd won his second Superbowl, it's back to back. In all the happiness of it and everybody's celebrating as he described it, I remember he said this line, it's like, "Is this it? I really thought it was going to feel better." It was so fascinating as years later and you can actually see it in your notes, I saw an interview with Tom Brady, probably the GOAT, the most successful quarterback in the NFL. He said the exact same thing, "Is this it? There's got to be more to life than this."

I would just say those lines, we felt them and I've heard them from other guys. I've heard them from guys who thought, "Man, I thought when I landed this account, I thought when I arrived at this level, I thought when I finally made doctor, I thought when I got this degree, I thought," whatever it was and then there's this knowing sense of, "This is it. Is this all there is?" I want you stop for a minute and just look at those four things. The category is the fourth things around what the good life is not. Are there any of those four that you would go, "Yeah, I probably had been chasing that pretty hard, thinking that it was going to deliver more than it does."

Now look in your notes, what does research say the good life is and again this is a social scientist. This just comes back in research and the same categories come back again and again and again. Here's the first one. First one is close friends. That Harvard longitudinal study, they studied 268 men were part of the study that they went through and they tracked them over life. They tracked their health, they tracked their habits, they tracked socioeconomics and all of it. If you think about it, a 75-year study will tell you a lot about a core group in it. It was interesting, the guy who led the study for the last 42 years was a guy named Dr. Vaillant.

They asked him, they said, "After all this research and that, what would you say is the key to the good life?" Listen to it. Out of all the things they studied, he said, "Here's the secret to happiness. The only thing that really matters in life are your relationships to other people. That's the only thing." More than anything else, it will determine your happiness. For men in particular, this is hard because we struggle more in developing the friendships that will shape life. You look at that quote by Robert Waldinger. He says, "People who are closely connected to family and friends are happier, physically healthier and live longer lives than people less socially connected." It's just a core.

I would encourage you and I hope that it's happening here, I'd encourage you as you're around these tables, as you're connecting with guys, we're making an investment to walk through this together, one of the best things that you would take out of this is the beginning of some deeper friendships or maybe reconnecting with friends again. Having the kind of friends that will show up for you and be there for you and that you can be real with. You got your foxhole friends. You got the friends that when battle is breaking out in all of life, you would know in your foxhole these are the guys I can count on. These are the guys that would be there for me.

I remember years ago I had just stepped in to a new position and I was taking over for a senior pastor. He'd been known. He'd been in the position forever. My first few weeks when I launched, I was pretty young in it and I was feeling it and I remember after one of the services I had a guy who came down and I knew him a little bit. I knew him in town some. He actually led the largest company in the state, a big leader of a Fortune 500 company and he came over and he goes, " I understand a little bit what you're going through. I had to take over as CEO for a pretty important leader." I'll never forget he looked at me and he goes, "You just need to know this. I'm in your foxhole."

Now, you'll get people who say that kind of thing to you from time to time. He actually meant it. When I look at the years of friendship since then and the times he showed up, the times he's been there for me and the trust that I have, I just go, "Man, it is so good to know he's there." I've got a few guys I can count on like that. Do you have that in life? Guys, hear me. It really will make or break a good life and you can succeed in a lot of ways, but if you don't have other men and I mean other men specifically in your life, you're losing out and it's not going to happen. You've got to step forward and be the kind of friend that you want.

Second part with that is a good marriage. We know this, but a lot of times we think about the happiness of marriage and immediately women understand this and probably embrace it more and invest in it. Years ago, a woman was at a wedding with her granddaughter, Melissa, and her little granddaughter was watching the wedding and she said, "Grandmother, why does the bride always wear white?" She said, "Because white is the color of happiness and today is the happiest day of her life." Then she had a puzzle look and she said, "Then why is the groom wearing black?"

Here's the reality. It's a little note, but happy wife, happy life. I would say happy wife, happy life, happy husband too. We're going to take a whole session and really look at this because it is such an important part of our world and building out a good life. It's interesting, there's a lot of guys who've succeeded in areas of life, but when they let down their guard and they really talk, you realize they're not happy because home's not happy and it robs the joy of all the success. That's why it's so important as men, we just get the right perspective around.

Look at the third thing. Third thing that will bring a good life and this is social science, control over life and you feel like you have control over your life. That's why people invariably who live in democracies are happier than people that live under dictatorships or heavy forms of socialism. Just remember that when you're voting, okay? The more you lose control in life, invariably they're not as happy and yet we can look at government and all the other parts. Look at the categories here. You can't control everything in your life, but you can take wise steps to reduce unnecessary stress and turmoil and provide greater stability.

Here's just four practical things to make your life more manageable, four things, if you want to keep control of your life. Stay out of harmful debt. Debt is a form of control that you're handing over to someone else. Stay out of it. You'll be happier. You just will. Pay attention to your health. When you let your health go, you're losing control of your life, so pay attention to it. Avoid long-term disputes. When you stay in dispute with another person, you're losing control over your emotions and it will eat at you. Fourth category is seek help to break any chronic or addictive habits. You got a habit that you cannot break. You look at this list and it's a real practical list there. Those are just things that will control your life. To the best of your ability, you come and go, "All right as a man, I'm going to deal with these things. I don't want to give control over to it."

Look at the final category, and again, social science says this, "The key to a good life is a vibrant faith," people that have faith. For men, this is probably one of the most neglected. It just is. Especially young men, especially as you're forming life, faith is something that is easy to put on the backburner and we look at it and go, "I'll get to that," or, "Yeah, that's probably a good thing someday," and yet the science comes back, guys who've actually built their life with a faith of vibrant faith have a much higher level of satisfaction and there's a stability. Remember we've talked about that weight that you want to have in life, it brings that weight and stability like few other things. It really sorts it out. It leaves that legacy like few other things.

I was reading the words of a writer, a guy named David Briggs who's writing about his father and he said, "My father was not famous. He was never really rich. He led a print screen printing company in New Haven, Connecticut." Listen how he describes his dad's life. He said, "Before I was old enough to go to school, he took me to work with him on Saturdays. I watched him sweep the floor before he began and soon, I had that job. He was hired initially to sweep four floors. Even after he became president of the company or worked on projects for famous clients, it was important for him to not lose sight of the dignity of all work and he always taught me that.

Faith was just a part of his life. Some of the best memories I had was walking through the snow to be there at church because he wasn't going to miss it and the pastor would be surprised to see us. There was no self-pity. It was something I picked up on. He never had a bad word for others. At the dinner table, he talked about customers who defrauded him by asking for large amount of work and skipping out on payments. There was never talk of revenge or fighting back. He just said he would no longer deal with people who didn't have integrity. For my entire life growing up, a lot of it during the '60s when there was racial tensions that boiled over in cities like New Haven. He delivered food once a month to the poor in the city, telling me when I came along in the car to stay in the car while he walked to the top floor of apartment complexes to make sure that families received their groceries.

A letter to my father as he lay dying, I spoke of our walk to church during the snowstorm. I told him the lessons he had taught me about real faith, that it came from seeing you live your life and how you genuinely love everyone. My father was born into poverty, lived a humble life, died in a bleak spare surrounding reserved for veterans with limited resources, but his was a life of faith, testified that true happiness lies within us and within it. What do I want to do with the rest of my life? I want to be like my father." Isn't that a powerful tribute when you want your kids to write that about you? Even more for it to be true, that you have that foundation, you just hear it all the way through the guy's life that there was that white, there was that foundation that guided every other decision.

How do we engage the faith side of the good life? How do you engage that? How do you actually have that as a reality in your life? If you look in your notes there, there's a couple of verses. They come from the Bible and a book, First Peter, that was literally written by Peter. Peter was one of Jesus's disciples. He was an eyewitness, so he was there with him, saw the whole thing. You're not going to get a better testimony, a better eyewitness than one of the guys that was with him and look how he describes this faith life and how do you have it. I think this couple of verses are a great snapshot to just grab it. Look how he describes it. He says, "According to his great mercy, God has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, so that we can obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."

Look at each of the parts of this because he breaks it down. How do you engage faith and what does it mean for us? Look at the first side. "Faith begins with God's great mercy." It begins with God's great mercy. Look at that first line. "According to his great mercy, God has caused us to be born again." It was an initiating work of God, and a lot of this, and I really think the disconnect for a lot of guys when it comes to faith really starts there, it's how you view God. If you don't view God as merciful, that's not your starting point. It's interesting, years ago on the iPhone, there was an app that came out called Pocket God. It's a little game.

The whole game was there was an island with these islanders and you were the God. You got to decide as God what you were going to do to the islanders. You could pick up the islanders and toss them in the volcano. You could throw boulders at it. You could cause earthquakes. It was interesting, you'd look at the list of options and almost all of them were as God, "Here's how I get to torment these people." Isn't that an interesting perspective though? A lot of people, that's how they view God, "He's up there. Maybe he's in control, but he's not really looking out for us," or some people have a real distant view of God. "If there even is a God, he's not really paying attention to me or I can never do enough to be right with him or it's just so easy to just push it away."

It's interesting, I would encourage you if you're here as we've been dealing with father wounds and maybe some of the core issues you have with your father, I'd encourage you, it's easy to put those same images on God, that if dad wasn't there, you don't really believe God's there either. If you could never measure up enough for dad, you probably don't feel like you could measure enough for God. It's amazing imprint of that. Here's the reality. Here's what Peter is telling us. When you start with God and you think about God, yeah, he's God, he's powerful, he's in charge of everything, but here's his leading act toward us, mercy, not spite, not judgment, not standing there going, "All right, let's see if you measure up. You'll never be good enough."

The thing about his mercy is he's not distant either. He's not absent. Dad may have bailed on you. Dad might not have been there. God's always been there whether you believe it or not. A huge part of faith life is just stepping back first of all and go, "Do I have a clear picture of God? Do I actually believe God would be merciful to me?" When I'm talking about mercy, because here's the other part, I think a lot of times as men because so much of what we know about faith was shaped by women. Let's be honest. If you even grew up in the church, a lot of the people that taught you about faith were probably women, women Sunday school teachers and women that were there.

I am thankful for their investment, but sometimes we can go into life with a real feminized version of faith and everything's really soft and everything's really nice and it really doesn't appeal to men. Hear me, God is powerful and God is strong and God is merciful. When I say that term mercy, he's not up there as a merciful God going, "Oh, you're going to be okay, baby." He's not soothing you like a woman, he's treating you like a man. As a man, one of the most merciful things God does in a man's life is he's willing to disrupt your life. He's willing to cause things to come into your life. He's willing to get in your face at times with other guys who speak into your life. He's willing to let you be in circumstances and places where you have to stop in life as a man and go, "Is this working?

That's his mercy that he loves you enough that he goes, "I'm not going to let you just destroy your life without dealing with it." Look in your notes there. God always makes the first move. It may be through a stranger. It may be through an event or a crisis or a friend or a family member or a circumstance. Whatever the means, God steps into our lives and with a whisper or a shout, he says, "I have a better way for you," that sometimes there's those points in life where God's trying to get your attention and it's the most merciful thing he can do is look at you and go, "How's this working for you? Is life adding up the way you thought it was?"

Instead of just ignoring it and running from it or just doing the same thing again, what if you stopped and you go, "All right, I'm going to actually listen this time. I'm going to actually deal with it." It starts with his mercy. Look at the second thing Peter says, "Faith comes alive when we respond to God, believe," and he puts that line in there, "You got to be born again." You're born again. That term, actually Jesus was the first one to use that term. You know who he used it with? He used it with a religious guy. He used it with a guy who thought he's on top of life, a guy who thought he had done everything right, thought he was right with God because he had kept all the rules and Jesus looked at him and he says, "You got to be born again."

Here's what he meant with it, the way you've been doing life is not working. To be born again, something has to stop, doesn't it? See, Jesus isn't talking about just, "Hey, let's add onto your life. Let me give you one more new thing to do. Let me just be an add-on," and I think this is where a lot of guys miss it, that even when they start entertaining faith, it's like, "Yeah, I'll add that faith thing. It'd be a good thing to do. Yeah, I'll do that. I'll start doing that more. I'll start going to church more. Yeah, I'll be a part of that," and we treat it like an add-on. One more thing, Jesus goes, "That's not how it works." That may be how other systems work. That may be other even religions work. They'll give you more to do. I got something a lot more radical than that. The way you've been doing life is over. See, to be born again, someone's got to die first.

There's a whole principle that you'll see it's all the way through the Bible. You want to live, you want to experience it, you got to die first. The great thing, and this is why I love talking about Jesus, this is why I love talking about what he's done more than religion, is what he called us to do he did and he did what we could not do. He actually died. He actually died. When he looks at us and he goes, "You got to be born again and the way you've been doing life, you've got to die," that's literally what you mean. You go, "Okay, I'll look at how he died. I want to die with him. When he died on the cross, all my junk, all my life, the way I've been doing every mistake, it dies too. It's done. He did it for both of us."

In that moment, here's the unique thing about it when you think about it cosmically and spiritually, he not only physically died in that, but spiritually in that moment, all the junk I've done, he paid for it too and literally. I can put it on him. When I go, I died with him, that's over. Life's over the way I did it. When I believe in him, that's what he's looking at is he's going, "Yeah, you die to the way you think. You die to the way you've been doing life. You die to the system you've been trying to do. You die to trying harder and more. You die to all the stuff you did that you know is wrong, that you still feel guilty about it." All of it does and it's buried with him.

Here's the amazing part, born again, you know what I mean? A new life is born. You start over. The same way he died on the cross, here's the great part, he rose from the grave. Look in your notes what Peter says, "Faith joins us to a living hope." It's not just dying to something and you go, "Okay, I'm going to bury." It's not just some exercise that you go to, "Okay, I'm going to bury all that now." It's actually joining now to a living hope. Jesus's resurrection changed everything. He actually rose from the dead. If he didn't rise from the dead, guys, man, we don't have faith. Maybe you have faith, but it's a faith like any other system, any other belief. If he did rise from the dead, it changes everything because he literally did for us what we couldn't do. He died and rose again.

When he calls me and he says, "All right, I want you to be born again. I want you to start life over." I go, "Okay, what did he do? Okay, he died. I can die with him. He rose. Okay, I can have a new life." Maybe you're hearing and you go, "Tim, this is where it loses me." I'm with you up to that point. I can understand, dying, the life and that, but to honestly believe that he rose from the dead, can you believe that?" There's a lot of people that will tell you can't. Stephen Hawking considered one of the most brilliant astrophysicists, scientists in the world passed away a couple of years ago and that was his estimation, he finally said, "Resurrection is a fairytale story for people who are afraid of the dark." He says, "When you die, it's over. There's no resurrection. Then no afterlife. No one ever rose from the dead."

A lot of people will say that, they go, "It's a great story of celebrate. You can go to church and you can believe that, but it really it's too mythic for me. Give my life to that myth and that story." It's interesting though I was reading C.S. Lewis, who's the great Oxford scholar and teacher and writer. If you're a Christian, you've probably seen so many of his books that he's impacted, but forget on this side of history that he spent a large part of his life starting as a professor, totally as an atheist. He didn't believe it. That's exactly how he described it is this myth, "I can't believe the myth of Christianity," and he had studied the myth stories. He'd studied the great epics of history with it.

That's what he put Christianity in a myth until he kept pursuing it to the point, listen to his words. He said, "Until I realized the story of Christ is simply a true myth, a myth working on us the same as others, but with this tremendous difference. It really happened. It actually happened in history." He said, "Yes, it's a myth. It's larger than life. It's a story like unlike any other stories. It's so big, and then what I realized though is it happened. If it happened, that changes everything." That's what I would encourage you. It's not just celebrating his story and remembering his story, there's a lot of great stories, but I think that's how a lot of people treat faith. Even people that come to churches, "It's his story I come to celebrate, but do actually treat his reality?" because reality changes everything.

We're right in the middle of baseball playoffs. I don't know if you're watching at all, not a lot of teams left that we track with as much maybe. I love baseball. I think of two scenes in baseball. One from the movie The Natural. Remember that movie in the '80s, Robert Redford movie The Natural. He's Roy Hobbs, this baseball prodigy. He's hidden, comes out of nowhere, plays for the New York Knights. The very last scene, he comes to the plate and he's injured and he's got his bat and he hits the homerun, so they win the pennant and the ball goes flying and it hits literally one of the stadium lights and the lights are popping and he's rounding the bases and everybody's going crazy and you're going, "Man, what a scene."

Now, think about that scene and compare it to another one. For someone who grew up a Dodgers fan and again, not a real popular team with my audience, maybe one of my favorite baseball scenes of all time, 1988 world series, Dodgers-A's. Dodgers are down by a run, ninth inning, no more options. They got one guy on base, greatest closer in the game, Dennis Eckersley on the mound and who comes stumbling out of the tunnel? Kurt Gibson with two bad knees. He can't run. He's there for one reason. Could he hit a home run? That famous scene, man, when he jacks the homerun and he's hobbling around the base. He goes around first base. He gives the fist pump with it. I'd still remember I was watching. I'm jumping up and down in it.

Two great scenes by the way, two awesome home runs. What's the difference though? One actually happened and as great as that scripted scene is, it really doesn't compare to reality. Hear me, guys. When we talk about the story of Jesus, I'm not talking about this great scripted scene. If you just treat it that way, it really has no impact. It's a nice thing to maybe celebrate, but it doesn't change your life. I'm telling you what he did was reality. Because it was real, it changes everything. It literally changes everything about a guy's life. Look at it. There's no greater moment in life than the one where you experienced Jesus is alive in your life when he's real in you.

When you go from either believe in God is against you or believe in God doesn't care about you or believing that faith is just this story that other people celebrate, when you actually face it and you go, "You know what? That's not only real. It's real for me and I'm actually going to embrace a life of faith. There's no greater moment in life." I'm telling you, there's guys all around this room, there's guys watching this, they would agree with that reality, bar none, but would you? Here's the final thing that it does. Faith assures us our inheritance in heaven. It's not just this life. It's also the life to come. We have life beyond this life. We have life beyond this life.

Jesus said, and he said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even if he dies." Whether we like to admit it or not, we all have that knowing question about what happens after you die. What happens in it? Let's see. Peter said it that way. He said, "It's reserved." It means you can count on it. It's guaranteed. If you look in your notes, the most famous verse in all the Bible is right there, "For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Why is it so famous? Because I think all of us long for that.

In fact, it's interesting, Randy Alcorn, he reviewed every culture. He's always had some sense of the afterlife. Everybody's always painted that. Look at it. He walks through it. He says, "The Australian Aborigines pictured heaven as a distant island beyond the Western horizon. The early Finns thought it was an island in the far East. Mexicans, Peruvians, Polynesians believe that they went to the sun or the moon after death. Native Americans believed that in the afterlife, the spirits would hunt the spirits of Buffalo. The Gilgamesh, Epic in Ancient Babylon refers to the resting place of heroes with the tree of life. The pyramids of Egypt, they embalmed the bodies with maps placed beside them for gods in the future world. The Romans believed that the righteous would picnic in the Elysian Fields."

Every culture has always had a sense that there's something more. I think if we're honest with our self, we all have that sense. We all want to know, but here's a question. Do you know? Look at that final question in your notes. Are you connected to Jesus? Are you connected to Jesus? Do you know? I love the way it's put here, "Faith in God is the beginning point of a real manhood. Nothing else happens without it." Guys, for all the good that we're teaching, and hear me, over these weeks, there's so much truth in this. No matter where you're starting from, no matter where you are in life, I think there's truth that can help you as in your life as a man and hopefully you've been feeling that because the truth starts with that ancient wisdom. It's built on what God said.

Here's the reality. You can build a pretty good life, but if you don't have faith, if you don't have this connection to Jesus, you don't have a foundation. Jesus described it as, "You can build this great house of a life, but without the foundation, if you don't build it on rock, man, you're so vulnerable and you don't know." Here's my question to you. Do you know? Do you know that you know you're connected to Jesus? Do you know what we're describing here? Do you know that you actually have faith? If you don't, what's holding you back? Why would you not take that step?

Maybe what's holding you back is up until today you've never really dealt with it. never really thought about it, but hear me, and this is why I'm being so direct, this is God's great mercy to you today. Your life's not working without it. Maybe you feel successful in other ways, maybe you can put it out of your mind, but it will catch up with you and God loves you too much to let you just continue on without at least stopping and dealing with it. I want to close out a little bit different than we normally do. I want to close out praying with you. If today you want to deal with it, today, you want to go, "You know what? I want to die to the way I've been doing life so that I could actually live. I want to know I have that foundation." It's not hard, but it is profound. Hear me. You have to get honest and you have to get real with God. If there's one person you shouldn't play games with, it's God.

I'm going to ask, if everybody would close your eyes, just close your eyes, if you're here today and you go, "Yeah, I need that. I need to know that I know," I would just say in your heart, repeat these words or make them your own words as you talk to God, is just tell him, "Dear God, I want to talk to you openly and honestly today. I want to tell you, I'm tired of living life my way and I'm sorry. I want your forgiveness. I want my old life to die with Christ. Now, I want a new life that starts now. I trust you. I believe you. I want to declare that Jesus is my savior and I will build my life following you. Lord, I pray for all who maybe said that prayer for the first time or maybe have it said that prayer in an honest way in a long time. Lord, I pray right now they would believe by faith, by faith, that there's a new life ahead. And I pray these things in Jesus' name, amen."

Guys, I want to encourage you, part of what we do in BetterMan, part of what we do here is we're honest with each other. I'd encourage you, if you prayed that prayer or if you made that statement maybe for the first time or maybe it's been a long time since you were honest with God, tell somebody. Tell somebody in your group or grab one of the guys. Tell your leader. This isn't a kind of thing that you have to be embarrassed about because hear me, we've all been there. Every single one of us, we know what that means. As you declare that, as you tell someone, it's inviting someone into your life, into your foxhole so you can experience it as well.