

“God Is Not a Man”
By Chris Ulrich
Sunday, May 7th, 2017

Amen, amen. It's good to see everybody this morning. You may be seated. It's good to have everybody out. It's good to see it's warming up a little bit, finally. Not too, too much yet, but it's definitely good that Spring is here, and, this month of celebration, it's our women, celebrate the women this month. Like Parrish had mentioned, mothers and that, and expecting, and whatever capacity, whatever relationship. I know we have a lot of different people in this room that have many experiences. But, it's about giving honor. And, this morning, I'm actually going to start out a little unorthodox; I'm not going to talk about the women at all, just yet. We're going to get into that, here, in a moment. But, I want to share something that, many of us are aware of, and it's something that, there's a brother in this ministry—a couple of brothers, actually—but one in particular that has been through an incredibly long ordeal over the last year and a half, that's our brother, Jesse Gulley. And, it's something that, it's been challenging, to say the least. It's been something where, just the times that many of us have spent time with him and visited him, and, he was starting to get some problems with his circulation in his legs, and he had to have his legs amputated. About, you know, over the course of the last year. But, there's another brother by the name of Mike Hooks that all of us know, as well, that call this our ministry, that has gone through the same things, here, just in the last month. Very unexpectedly, and, it's something that is very sobering. It's something that, the Bible talks about weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. And, it's something that we just think how that person's going to feel, based on what we might think. They have to make that decision on their own. But, I know, as hard as it's been for Jesse, I was over visiting Mike a couple of days ago, and Laygoze, Brother Laygoze was over there, and Jesse was over there, visiting with Mike, and encouraging him, uplifting him. It was just a sight to see. It was—I appreciate that. You don't know how much that blesses all of us. And that's not something that we take lightly.

And, I've got something I just want to share: It's kind of interesting. I get Sports Illustrated in the mail, and you might be thinking, “What in the world does this have to do with Sports Illustrated?” Well, I got the issue on Thursday, and, it's a gentleman that's had his legs amputated that's climbed Mount Everest. And, to me, I've never climbed Mount Everest, and I actually don't have any desire to ever climb Mount Everest. I've climbed some mountains, but, nothing, nothing, nothing even close to that kind of accomplishment. And, it was inspirational. I have to say, I thought about my brother Jesse, I thought about Mike, and it's not something that, again, until you go through that type of experience—and many of us probably never will. But, it's still the kind of thing that I just want to say that, just to see them there, that day, was inspirational. It was a blessing; I just want to say that.

So, I want to transition, now; we're going to be talking about our women in ministry, and godly women. It's a two-part message today, and the first part is about,

“Every Thought.”

“Choose Your Battles Wisely.”

I'd like to ask our sister, Linda Alford, if she could just come up and lead us in a word of prayer for the message today. I'm going to have a couple of the ladies are going to come up and do some of the reading, but, I'd like to ask Linda if she could lead us in a prayer, please.

Linda: Oh, my Heavenly Father, thank You for the gathering, today, and thank You for the Word that Chris is going to bring us, Jesus. Heavenly Father, open our hearts to the Word that he gives to us, because, God, You are my Everything, Everything to all of us. You made us. You wake us up in the

morning, God, and I just thank You for another day, and I thank You for time with my brothers and sisters, and, dear God, every thought, every thought, and every breath that I breathe would be for Your glory. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Amen. Thank you, Linda.

Part 1 – Every Thought

So, there's a term that I believe some of us have heard at some point in our lives and it has to do with how people think and could potentially act, based on behavior patterns. The term is "thought police," and it's not actually something that's practiced as much as it is more just speculated about. The term was probably popularized—there was a book called "1984," which was actually written back in the forties, but it was all about controlling groups of people, and it's the exact opposite of what "freedom of speech" is supposed to be. So what does this have to do with us, and more specifically, what does it have to do with celebrating women's month?

So, there was a movie about 20 years ago called, "What Women Want," and, what's funny is, I was talking to Bob Heirtzler a couple of days ago, and this was after I was kind of preparing the message, and I mentioned about this thinking, and, about what women might be thinking, and he said, "Oh, there was a movie called, 'What Women Want!.'" And I just thought that was kind of ironic, because that was already part of my notes, so, Bob was reading my mind. I thought that was kind of, "No, wait, not what I want; what women want." So, anyway, the premise of the movie, it's about a guy who gains supernatural powers, and now he's able to read the minds of women. He's got, sort of, a tainted past; I guess the guy is portrayed as somewhat of a chauvinist, so, now, he's getting into their minds, and getting an understanding of what they're really thinking about. It's just a movie. How many have seen it? How many's not even heard of it, at all? Okay. So, now you don't have to see it. So, anyway, I kind of want to change that title, just a little bit—not remake the movie, but—I want to change the title, and ask it in the form of a question, "What Do Godly Women Want?" I'm not asking anybody to raise their hand or shout out answers, but this is an audience of godly women. And, I'd even like to change the title again, and reform the question one more time, and now it gets us to, "What does God want from godly women?" Because there is an expectation. There is a responsibility that is on women, and not on men; and there is a responsibility on men, too. I'm not letting us off the hook. I'm just saying that we all have a responsibility, we're all on the hook, we're all expected to live a certain standard that's a godly standard.

So where are we going with this "Every Thought" subject? We have to go back to the "thought police" point because we all need to know that we're all free to think whatever it is that we want. We can't act upon every thought, otherwise, we're going to get ourselves in a lot of trouble, but there's plenty of thoughts that go through all of our minds through the course of the day that are as wicked, and evil, and as far on the other end of the scale as peaceful and righteousness can possibly be. We're just talking about thoughts; we're not talking about taking action upon those thoughts. And, again, if you think back to what I had mentioned earlier, the control aspect is what somebody might potentially do, based on just what they're thinking.

Which, again, that gets us to—Okay, I'm going to ask some questions right now, and they're directed at ladies; I'm not looking for anybody to actually shout out an answer or raise their hand, but: So do you think that men are oppressing you? Do you think women don't have enough opportunities in this life to be successful? So, now we're going to get real personal: Do you think the Bible has unfair teachings towards women? And do you think God is a man? We're going to answer that last question a little bit later, but I'm asking these questions because I suspect some of these thoughts have crossed

your mind. And even if they haven't, I know a lot of people on the outside, and they've crossed their minds, and I've had conversations with them, over the course of many years. So, this isn't something where it's just, we're completely impervious to any thought that can cross our minds because we're Christians, it's a matter of what we do with it.

2 Corinthians 10:1-5 *Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*

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So, this is what the Bible's teaching us about thoughts. And, am I reading this passage so people will bring their thoughts into captivity so that they won't ask tough questions? No. God is ready for the challenge. I'm reading this so we are all on the same wavelength, and the same biblical page of understanding of what God believes we should do with our thoughts, because our thoughts can then transition into actions, and those can be either beneficial or detrimental. That's not "thought police" either, that's the word of God. Now, it's true that there's going to be some that are going to resist it, and they're not going to want to follow, or they're not going to know what the Bible says, anyway. But why should we focus on thoughts? And this question really goes out to both both men and women. We're all still human; we're all still susceptible to every whim, to every philosophy, to every thought, to every doctrine, to every ideology that comes around. And, if you look nowadays—I mean, the Bible talks about, in the Book of Daniel, in the last days, knowledge shall be increased (Daniel 12:4). And, you look at the incredible amount of information that's available at our fingertips, on our phone, on our tablet, on the internet, on television. I mean, a lot of us, when we were growing up, how many channels did you have, maybe eight? Maybe twelve? I'm dating myself, that's fine. Now, what do you have? Six hundred? Seven hundred? I mean, some of them are duplicates; some of them are just a channel that is in high-definition, or whatever the case might be, but, it's just an overload of information. I mean, you go to websites like Wikipedia, and just on and on and on and on and they've almost made encyclopedias obsolete. I mean, the hard-copy encyclopedias have just about become obsolete. But, getting back to thoughts, those thoughts can manifest themselves in our behavior; that can be spiritual, or it can be ungodly, but, it's a matter of bringing those things into captivity.

So, I believe that, as humans what we're shaped by, more than anything else is what we believe. It's not where we work. It's not what kind of car we have. It's not where we live. It's what we believe. And, what we believe causes us to make decisions that define our character. We believe in God or we don't believe in God, we believe the Bible is true or we don't believe it's true, we believe that Heaven is real and Hell is real or we don't believe it at all.

I'm going to share something, just briefly. I have a relative, and I won't say who it is, but, he's told me this before, and, he's not particularly religious, that's for sure, but, he's told me, on a few different occasions, over the course of years, almost a desperate sort of angst-filled way, "I just hope there's no devil." And, I'm not going to sit there and get all self-righteous, and, you know, I'm just going to tell him, "Well, yeah, there is. There is a devil. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of evil and darkness (Ephesians 6:12). And, one of the biggest—I think I read this somewhere before; I believe it is biblically-based, but it is just a statement—that the biggest lie the

devil ever perpetuated on the Earth was to show people that he didn't exist. And I thought, "If you can get people to believe that you're not real, and, yet, you're the originator of evil, then you've got them."

And Christ said, Himself, in John 8:24 if you believe not that I am the Lord then you will die in your sins. Do you believe that, today? Do I believe that, today? Those are some pretty strong words. And that's a pretty defining moment. There's a show that I like that has been for several years—the series actually ended about a year and a half ago. The show was called, "Mad Men." I don't know if anybody here's heard of it. Anybody here heard of it? It's based on an advertising agency, and the time-frame of the show is during the 60's, so, it's really kind of at the threshold of the marketing, and advertising, and so on. Tome, it's been very interesting, quite remarkable, in a lot of ways, but, anyway, there's a character, one of the lead characters, and, over the course of time, you see that he's had trouble with his marriage; he's had trouble with children. And these are all based on that poor decision that he's made. He had a brother that he basically told to go away. So, he's talking to this lady, who's kind of like a sister to him, and she tells him this, and I get that this is just a TV show, but I think that there's a lot of weight to this statement, because, when I heard it, the other night, I had had a difficult day, or a difficult last couple of days, but, the statement was, "The thing that keeps you from happiness is the belief that you are alone." And, if we take that personally, if we think that we're alone, and we forget that Christ said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," then it doesn't matter how many people we have around, it doesn't matter whether our spouses are close, or our children, or our family, or friends, or whoever, if you feel like you're alone, and you take Christ out of the equation, then that's going to keep you from peace and happiness.

I'm going to read from the Book of Numbers, chapter twenty-three, verses sixteen through nineteen, and this is going to be the tittle of our message, today, is found from this passage, and, it's a response to the question I had posed earlier.

Numbers 23:16-19 *And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the Lord spoken? And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*

So that's it: God is not a man, and those of us who know the Bible understand that, and receive that, and live that. So, God is not a man, and though it's quite obvious that men and women are different, anyone can be saved and anyone can have a relationship with God. God speaks to women and there is biblical proof and there is proof right here in this room; thank God for that. Do godly women want peace, law and order, and a godly environment? God will establish that, and will honor your position.

Yes, the pastors in our church are men. And the disciples of Jesus Christ were all men. And Christ Himself was a man. And there are certain positions that God has called for men, and there are certain positions that God has called for women. And it just might seem like the men get preferential treatment by God. But God is not a man and none of us are God either.

Part 2 – Choose Your Battles Wisely

I think it was you, Jesse, a couple of years back, and I don't know if it was a message you heard from, just someone else, or something that—but I remember it really stuck with me, that, and it's kind of an open-ended statement in the sense of, we're all going to fight battles in life, every day you're going

to face some kind of problem. It doesn't matter what it is. It could be the best vacation day in the best part of the world, and everything seems to be going fine, and then the air conditioner breaks, or your seat's not adjusted properly, or, whatever, the breakfast is too cold, or you have a flat tire. But, we're talking about choosing your battles, today; choosing your battles wisely.

And I know that there are some points I've made today that are directed at both men and women and really there's probably no way around that, but the focal point is the Christian women in our midst. And there are battles we'll all fight until the day we die and that also goes for both men and women. But again, our focal point, today, is the women.

So we talked about thoughts earlier and how it might affect some women more severely than others. Might make you mad, it might make you sad, and it might even make you question why it is that way. All I would say is to learn the Bible, pray, and choose your battles wisely.

1 Peter 3:1-7 *Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

So, that's a rather lengthy passage, and a beautiful passage that speaks very highly of women, but, I have to suspect that there are some who would take exception to that reference of the woman as the weaker vessel. That just goes without saying. Again, feel free to have a talk with God about it. I'm not here to try and force it down anyone's throat or make them think that they should feel a certain way about it. We all have our role in God. I'm here to try and live a Christian life and make it to the finish line so I can hear, "Well done thy good and faithful servant." And I believe that's all of our goal, that's all of our goal. Because, what's it going to matter, ultimately, if we don't? The other end of the scale is, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." And it's a scary thought. And it seems that, more and more, lines are getting blurred, as far as doctrines, or, as far as beliefs, and that's why, when we talk about beliefs, it has nothing to do with a profession; it has nothing to do with objects; it has to do with what we take into our heart. Because, nobody can take Christ away from us. Nobody can take our walk with God away from us. As much as they might try; as much as they might threaten us. And there's, obviously, plenty of examples, in the Bible, and in modern times. But, I know there's plenty of people out there that don't think twice about the Word of God. It seems to be less and less important to society in general. And, yet, us that profess Christianity, it's a matter of digging in, and realizing that, whatever condition the world is in, however much worse it gets—and, there's maybe times it's going to get better, and there's times it's going to get worse—but, overall, the Bible talks about it worsening. It talks about iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold (Matthew 24:12), it talks about because evil seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13). That's a real thing. It's a manifestation of the thoughts that go into people's minds, and then the actions that they take, acting upon those thoughts.

I've shared this story before, this was about twelve, thirteen years ago, and, it was actually the first time I'd ever broken a bone in my life. So, it's not really that great—there's maybe some funny details, maybe gory details about it, but what was interesting was that I remember God highlighting a Scripture that related to my condition, because, when it happened, again, this was the first time—I

mean, I think you probably feel a little bit more, you probably feel a little bit more like you can't be touched, or you can't be injured, or you can't be hurt, maybe, earlier on in life, unless you have sort of an unexpected experience. But things do happen. Challenges happen, tragedies, misfortune... And this was something that, I wouldn't say it was an extremely challenging experience; it wasn't. I mean, there was a surgery, and rehabilitation and everything. But, I'm going to ask if you could turn with me to the Book of Psalms, chapter thirty-nine, verses one through four. And, I'm closing soon; this is our last verse we're going to be reading.

Psalm 39:1-4 *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am.*

So, it was that part about being frail that, as a man, was a little bit offensive. Not in a macho kind of way but more from the standpoint that most men don't like to think of themselves as frail, or weak, or imperfect. We know that we're all imperfect, we've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but there is a certain strength that God gives us, but, to hear that, and think, when that happened, there was a certain degree of frailty that I hadn't experienced before. And I'm relating that to the women, because we read that verse about being the "weaker vessel." We're not going to run and hide from these verses; we're not going to run and hide and bury our head in the sand and act like we don't see it, or act like we can't address it, or talk about it, or know that we have a position, that we take stances. These aren't always pleasant things to hear, but, they have to be known, they have to be understood. One of the best subject matters that we cover, a couple of times a year, the theme of Sound Doctrine, because, if we don't have that, then what do we have? Just coming up here and blurting out some nonsense, or even some stuff that might sound good, or something where, in the Old Testament it talks about, "Preach unto us smooth things, prophesy unto us lies." (Isaiah 30:10) Does anybody want to hear that? Do you want to hear lies? Because, they're easy to tell, they're easy to tell. Anybody could do it. But, if we have conviction from God, then we're going to want to stay as far away from that as we possibly can.

So, how tough are any of us, really, in the eyes of God? And, when it all really boils down to it, we can't heal ourselves without God granting it. Cut yourself? You don't heal it yourself; God does it. I mean we might, "Oh, the body..." and, you know, all the physics of it, and whatever. We can't feed ourselves without digesting it, that God doesn't grant it. We can't even take our next breath without God giving us that. And it all goes back to having belief and faith in God, that we give credit to God. We don't give credit to ourselves; we don't give credit to just whatever else we might give credit to. I'm closing with this last section:

Brother Parrish and Andy—Andy and Sonia, we missed them; I can definitely say that I feel it this morning. But, like you shared, Parrish, about keeping them in prayer, and ministering to their family. But, Pastor Paine, our General Pastor, had talked with these guys, a couple of months ago, and, really, just gave them direction about how we have all we need to be successful. And, I want to say this: There's nobody holding the women back from praying to God, from doing visitations, from studying the Word of God, hosting people at your house, worshiping the Lord, giving tithes, having fellowship, or doing whatever else it is you feel God is laying on your heart. It's not about positions. Really, what is it, anyway? It's just a different responsibility. But everybody has a calling in God. Everybody has something to do for the Lord. And, those things I just mentioned, that's just the tip of the iceberg. But those are things that God is also calling the men to do, but God is calling the women to do. I mean, there's no restrictions or limitations, and I just want to make that clear, that I appreciate what Pastor

Paine shared with Parrish and Andy, and passed on to us, and it really got me to thinking about how there isn't a limitation. There isn't anything that—God is leading you to do; these things are the most important things to do. And quite frankly, these are the kinds of things that keep oil in our lamps. These are the kind of things that keep us spiritually fruitful. So let's not try to compete with each other; there's room at the table for everybody. And choose your battles wisely.

Thank you for your time.