THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR FAITH

The Man in the Background of the Mirror
Tommy Brooks

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about the author

**Brother Tommy Brooks** has been a minister for 30 years and is currently the pulpit minister for the church of Christ at Highland Heights in Houston, Texas where he has been since 2007. During his time at the Highland Heights congregation, he has been successful in leading 80-100 people per year to obey the gospel. He regularly conducts workshops and personal evangelism classes to teach his methods for effectively sharing the gospel. He also hosts a nationwide conference call to share the gospel and provide encouraging lessons to promote spiritual development.

Brother Brooks has a strong belief in family and has been happily married to Sharon Brooks for 37 years. They three daughters: Yushekia, Tomekia, and Angela and one son, Thomas. He is also the author of *Life Without God Is Meaningless* (Ecclesiastes) and *Looking at the Man in the Mirror* (James) in the Cornerstone series.
how to use this study

Each lesson in this *The Cornerstone of Our Faith* study has four major parts.

Every lesson begins with an introductory section called *The Foundation*. In this section, the author will give background material to help prepare your mind and heart for God’s Word.

The second part of each lesson is called *The Cornerstone*. This section is always the heart of every lesson. The Bible is explored in detail to help us understand the text. Those who are accustomed to hearing African-American preaching can hear this section “preach.” God’s Word is powerfully presented so that all can understand.

The next section of each study is critical for the Word to fulfill its intended purpose. It is called *The Inscription*. Just as people take note of inscriptions on cornerstones or monuments, each lesson is written so as to drive home a point worth remembering and a principle worth following. It offers the encouragement to change attitudes or behaviors to align better with God’s Word. To *know* the Bible is one thing; to *do* it is another.

Every lesson ends with a series of thought-provoking *Discussion Questions* that help you explore God’s Word on a personal and a congregational level. These questions provide opportunities for group discussion and participation. Teachers can tell by the responses whether their students have really come to grips with the lesson.
In my last book, *Looking at the Man in the Mirror: A Study of the Book of James*, I encouraged the readers to take an introspective look at their lives by observing their reflection in the mirror, God’s Word – the Bible. So often the kind of person you are, as reflected in the mirror, may or may not reflect either the person you want to be or the person who is pleasing to God and who reflects a Christ-like Spirit on the other hand.

*The Man in the Background of the Mirror: Obtaining a Christ-Like Spirit* provides the reader a deeper look into the mirror, God’s Word. The first book’s focus was on you and how you measure up against God’s Word. This book’s focus is on you becoming more like the Word, the man in the background – Jesus, the Word (John 1:1). You no longer look into the mirror solely to see your reflection as it relates to God’s Word, but you also look to gain knowledge and understanding of how to become more like the Word – to obtain a Christ-like spirit.
lesson 1

Jesus

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (John 1:1-2). Sometimes and rightly so, we become so captivated with Christ our Savior as the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Great Shepherd, and the Son of God that we forget He was born fully human.

It is often said that during our lifetime, we live many roles and become many things to the different people who impact our lives. Sometimes we are the parent, while other times we are the child. On one hand, we are the aunt or uncle, yet on the other hand, we are the niece or nephew. Our lives are steadily evolving from one role to the other until we cease to exist. Jesus was different. In His lifetime, He lived two major roles. In one, He was human, and in the other, He was God. He took it upon Himself to be fully human and live as a man but at the same time, He never ceased to be the eternal God who has always existed and who created the world and everything in it (John 1:1-4).
Jesus – The Man

We know little regarding the physical appearance of Jesus, the man in the background of the mirror. Scripture tells us He was outside often, speaking to large crowds of people who were impressed with His oratory skills. We may infer from this, He was physically fit and had a strong voice capable of resonating out into large crowds. He went throughout all Galilee teaching and preaching the good news of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23-25).

Based on Jesus’ conversations and teachings, we’ve come to think of Him as always in control and God-like. However, being fully human, Scripture also tells us He displayed some of the same physical and emotional symptoms all humans experience. He showed signs of fatigue at Jacob’s well where He was wearied from a long journey. He sat by the well and asked a woman who came there to draw water to give Him a drink (John 4:6). Once He fell asleep on a boat outside of Capernaum after interacting all day with a multitude of people (Matthew 8:24).

There is an account of His experiencing anger and frustration when He went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves (Matthew 21:12-13). Later, on this same trip, He experienced hunger. He saw a fig tree with no fruit on it and cursed it from ever growing fruit again, meaning He was hungry and probably displeased with the fruitless production of the tree at this time (Matthew 21:18-19).

Jesus not only experienced these human physical traits, but He also experienced the emotional reactions of human-kind as well. In the city of Nain, He came across a widow whose only son had died. He had compassion for her and told her not to weep (Luke 7:13). Once when entering the
city of Jerusalem, He was so emotional over some of the things He knew would take place there, He actually wept over it (Luke 19:41). He wept at the news of the death of His friend, Lazarus. These and other physical and emotional traits Jesus portrayed are a testament to His real and full humanity. What better way for a God to get His message across to humankind than to come in the form of a human!

We should understand, however, that although Jesus was fully human, He was not just another ordinary man. He differed from the rest of us in two ways. First, He was born to a virgin; He did not have a human father. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb (Matthew 1:18-25). Second, unlike any other human, Jesus was without sin. For example, in talking to some of the religious leaders who were descendants of Abraham and discussing whether they were of Abraham’s seed or Satan’s, Jesus asked if any of them could prove Him guilty of sin. Although they could not come up with any definitive proof that He had sinned, they concluded by accusing Him of being possessed with a demon (John 8:48-49).

There is no record of Jesus ever confessing sin, although He does want us to confess our sins (1 John 1:8-9; James 5:16). The Apostle Paul said Jesus became sin for us, but that He personally knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). As human, Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses, and in all ways has been tempted as we are, yet He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:4-11).

He loved people and wanted only the best for us. He loved to forgive and to help others in whatever way He could. Multitudes of the weary, pain-ridden, and heartsick came to Him and found healing and relief (Matthew 14:34-36). It is said of him that if all the deeds of kindness He did were written down, the world could not contain the books. This is the kind of human Jesus was (John 21:25) and the kind we should aspire to be. It is the kind we will be when we learn to obtain a Christ-like spirit.
Jesus – the Son of God

Although Jesus took it upon Himself to be fully human and to live as man, at no time did He ever stop being God. He has always existed – the Creator and Sustainer of all things and the source of eternal life (John 1:3; Colossians 1:17). The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Matthew records that He would become Immanuel: God with us (Matthew 1:23). Jesus truly was and is the Son of God. This is the foundation of all truth, and it is the confession and belief we must all make before baptism if we are to have an eternal life with Him (John 20:30-31; 1 John 4:15; Romans: 10:9-10). Jesus undeniably proclaimed His divinity when He told the Jews He existed before Abraham was born. He said, “Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58; Exodus 3:14).

There can be no mistake, Jesus is the eternal Son of God who voluntarily became a man to redeem lost humanity. This He did because of His love for us. Love is always the great equalizer. The more we love, the less we sin. When you are loving your neighbor as well as yourself, you become kinder, more patient, and more trusting. I believe it would serve all of us well if we, as Christians, put forth more effort to fulfill the Royal Law of love (James 2:8). This would mean less sinning – which we all do, whether overtly, covertly or inadvertently. “For we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Jesus was the most loving and compassionate man who ever lived. Although He was without sin, He knew the humans around Him struggled in this area of their lives. He was willing to forgive and sympathize with anyone who wanted to repent. One such case in point is the sinful woman who came before Him with an alabaster flask of fragrant oil. He was having a meal with the Pharisees who knew of the
woman’s sinful reputation. They were curious to see how Jesus would respond to her.

Jesus passed no judgment on the woman but sat patiently as she washed His feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with the perfume. Regardless of her sins, it took a tremendous amount of courage and desire to go boldly before Jesus, the Son of God, and without saying a word begin washing His feet. Although He was criticized by the Pharisees for interacting with this sinful woman, Jesus had to be impressed with her courage, compassion, and desire for forgiveness.

The Pharisees, like so many of us today, judged her by her outward appearance rather than what was on the inside. Jesus, on the other hand, probably just looked at them and shook His head in disbelief at their legalistic nature. He told them her sins, which were many, were forgiven, for she loved much (Luke 7:36-50). The fact that He was caring and forgiving toward the sinful woman assures us He will do no less toward us, the members of His church.

Jesus, the Christ, called Immanuel, God with us, was born fully human. He had a human birth but had no human father. John said he was flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Jesus established the most supreme example of a model human being. He set this example for us by displaying a spirit of service, meekness, gentleness, humility, forgiveness, unselfishness, kindness, compassion, submission and, most of all, a spirit driven by love.

**Discussion Questions**

1. So often the kind of person you are, as reflected in the mirror, may or may not reflect the person you want to be or the person who is pleasing to God. Why?
2. What is a Christ-like spirit?
3. Who is the Man in the background in the mirror and why is He there?
4. Based on His conversations and teachings, we’ve come to think of Jesus as always being under control and God-like. However, being fully human, Scripture also tells us He displayed some of the same physical and emotional traits all humans experience. What were some of these traits?
5. What is the confession and belief we must all make before baptism if we are to have an eternal life with God?
6. Discuss why the Pharisees, like so many of us today, judged people by their outward appearance.