

# Nehemiah 3:13

Sunday 7/27/2003

We know that the book of Nehemiah is probably the best book in the Bible that really shows us how to build a church because it is found in the Old Testament. Now you might think that the best books about building a church, since the church is in the New Testament, would be a book in the New Testament. But that is not necessarily true. The Old Testament is a book written that shows you by examples and by pictures exactly what we need to do. We have already talked about it quite a bit, as a matter of fact, as we have come through Nehemiah chapter 3.

We know in the book of Nehemiah, they go back and they rebuild the walls. Those walls are the defenses around that city. That city of Jerusalem represents what the church represents today. The program of God in the Old Testament was the nation of Israel, centered in Jerusalem. God's program for the New Testament is the body of Christ, centered around a local church by which it reaches out to the world, to its community, to your friends, and your family. In time, it brings them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and to edify them.

There are nine gates. These nine gates are in disarray in Nehemiah's time. The city of Jerusalem has been destroyed, laid waste by the sieges of Nebuchadnezzar and Sennacherib as they came down and literally destroyed that city in the times that the Gentiles ushered in. But yet we begin to see that God allows them to go back and rebuild. The rebuilding is a picture of how to build a church.

Nine gates, nine being the number of fruitfulness. We talked about that a couple of weeks ago. Nine gates that are on this wall by which people enter into the city. Just by a wild coincidence, those same nine gates represent nine things that this church needs to have, that any church needs to have.

We talked about it the first week. We talked about the Sheep Gate, the aspect of sacrifice. Every church needs to understand that. The next week, we talked about the Fish Gate, how that a church needs to be a soul-winning church, winning people to Christ. Last week, we talked about the Old Gate. We talked about how that this church and other churches need to leave a heritage, a legacy. They need to have young people growing up understand the price that was paid for what we believe: the Bible that we use, the doctrines that we teach, and a heritage from the Lord, a history from the Lord of where we have come from.

Today, we are going to talk about the Valley Gate, found in Nehemiah 3:13.

*Nehemiah 3:13*

*The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate.*

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We ask You today, Lord, give us a good time in Your Word. We thank You, Father, for the book. We thank You for its truth. We thank You for those that are here today. We pray, Father, that the Word of God will be a challenge to them in

everything that we do this morning, that they will come away today a little stronger in the Lord. Lord, we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. For His sake, we ask it. Amen.

## I. The Valley Gate: Compassion for People

I want to have a little participation here this morning. I want you to find for me Proverbs 27:23. I am going to have that verse read here in a minute.

The Valley Gate deals with the aspect of compassion for people that this church has to have. People get in the valleys of life. We all go through the tough times in life, whether it is with your kids, whether you lose your job, your own personal problems, or maybe it is just a thing we all go through in human nature where we have the struggles of life. A church needs to be set up that it deals with those kinds of issues. We need to be a church that has compassion.

We need to be a church that preaches the Word of God, hard preaching from the Word of God, that preaches against sin, that preaches against all the things that the church stands for. Yet, at the same time, we never want to become judgmental of the fact that we do not have a compassionate heart for people. People in the church, in the ministry, people are going to have struggles. They are going to have heartaches. They are going to come into our group with all kinds of problems, with all kinds of baggage. They are going to have all kinds of circumstances in life that they have had to struggle through. We as a church are not going to be asked to stand there and be judgmental.

This church will never point their finger at anybody and be down on them because of where they are at, or what they have done, or where they have come from. I do not care where you have come from. I do not care what you have done. All I care about is right now in your life, do you want to do what God wants you to do? If that is the case, then it is my job and the job of this church to help you get there, to be everything that God wants you to be.

I want to talk about this Valley Gate. The first thing I want to talk about is my job.

*Proverbs 27:23*

*Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.*

Whether you know it or not, you are the flock. You are also the herd. My job as pastor is to be diligent in looking to your welfare. My job is to look at the flock that God has given me and to make sure that they have everything that they need. My job is to make sure that when I get up here and preach, I bring you something that is going to satisfy your soul and help you in your everyday life.

It does not do me any good. I know that the ministry is a balance. There will be times that we will preach on prophecy. There will be times that we will preach on certain issues. But balancing out the ministry and the preaching has to be for one reason: that is the fact that you get everything that you need.

I do not know if you are aware of it or not, but the Bible affects your physical body. The Bible affects your emotional being. The Bible affects your spiritual being. There are three aspects to

you as a human being. When God designed the Bible and designed preaching, He designed it that it would have an effect on those three areas of your life.

When a person does not do what is right, for whatever reason, maybe they have never been saved or maybe they got saved and backslid, I do not know, and I do not care. But I know this: living a life in the world, living a life with worldly things, will bring you to the state where you are a mess emotionally, where you are a mess physically, and where you are a mess spiritually. This world, and dealing with the Valley Gate here, people are going to come into this church with those kinds of problems. They are going to be emotionally distraught. They are going to be spiritually deficient. They are going to be physically handicapped in some way, because let me tell you something, sin does not leave you any better than it finds you. You are going to come to the place where people come in here, that they are going to have those kinds of problems in their life.

The Valley Gate: reaching out with compassion to deal with people in their problems. Reaching out with compassion. Looking at the state of your flock. Understanding, first of all, that you people are number one. You are here. You are the ones that God has brought here today. You are the ones that decided to get up and go to church today. You are the ones that decided that there was something of value here that you needed to have. So my first and foremost is for you. You are number one. Sure, I want to help everybody I can, but not everybody is here today. You are. I am going to start with you. That is what the church is all about. That is what this Valley Gate is all about.

You all look like you are doing good today. You all look like you are on top of things. But you know what? That may not last long. Something may happen this week. You may lose your job. You may have a death in the family, God forbid. Something may go wrong. You may have a spiritual crisis in your life. I do not want you to call 911 unless somebody is breaking into your house. I do not want you to call family services. I do not want you to call Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine, and try to get some kind of psychology help. If you are saved and you belong to God, then you need to call the man that God has put in your life to help you through those times. That is me. That is what we are here for.

You are number one when it comes to the Valley Gate. I am going to help everybody I can. As long as you are part of this New Testament church, as long as you are coming here, and as long as you are supporting this work by being here and praying for us and all the other things that go along with it, you are going to be the number one priority on my list. Whatever you need spiritually, physically, emotionally, that is going to be my task. Why? That is my job: to look to the state of my flock, to look well to the herds. That is my job. I have to meet the needs of the people that God has given me.

I really believe this with all of my heart. I believe that as long as a man, and I believe that building, I have heard all kinds of seminars they have today where you go and you learn how to build a church. Everybody has their own idea. The church today has lost the value system that God has set down. So we will do anything to get people to come. Let me tell you something, just

because you have a large crowd in a big building does not mean you have a New Testament Bible-believing local church. It does not mean that at all. Anybody can get a crowd today.

I am telling you this, I do believe this. I do believe that God will not give you any more than you will take care of. I believe my job is to start here with the Valley Gate, working with the people that God has given me. People will come in. I will train you on Monday nights. We will have time together in the Word of God through our different various things we have when we study the Bible together. In time, you are going to grow spiritually. Some of you are already there. Some of you right now, if somebody came in here and they were struggling with something, you are able to help them.

I loved last Thursday night in our Bible study. It was a unique thing, and this has got to be God. We were down here and we started the Bible study. We were about 15, 20 minutes into it, and a nice-looking young couple came in. I did not know who it was. I thought they were part of the Steinmetz family. Everybody in the world is related to Steinmetz. Half this crowd is Steinmetz-related somehow. That is okay, I appreciate it. I thought surely there were some Jimmies or Pams, or somebody's fourth- or fifth-place cousin from the other side of the tracks. I just figured they were somebody we were related to. So I did not think much about it.

Afterwards, I talked to the guy. He told me that they had come here because they heard there was some missionary speaker. They drove in and came in, and they were down here and they talked to some people down here. They said, "Well, there is nobody here that is preaching from Africa in their mission, but there is a guy right down here if you want to go to a Bible study that will really meet your needs." So they showed up in Bible study. We had a great time with them, and probably they will be back, and probably we will have an opportunity to help them.

The thing that I am trying to get at, and the most important thing, was not the fact that they came. Though I know that, I mean, here we are in Podunk 40 Highway, nowhere from nowhere, and God brings them here looking for somebody that is not here and gives them somebody that is here. That is God. But more important to me than that was after the Bible study was over, I saw my ladies just move right in, sit down, and talk with them. First this one, then that one, and then this one. Then the guys went to the guy, and everybody was just, you know what they were saying? They were not going up and saying, "Oh, hi, how are you? I have a lot of spiritual problems. You are here." That was not what they were doing. They were loving them. They were just talking to them and being there with them and being friendly with them. Let me tell you something, that is where the Valley Gate starts.

I hope there is never a person that comes through that door that somebody does not say to them and talk with them, and genuinely. I am not saying it is a canned thing that we do. You are the most genuine people that I know. I know when I see one of my ladies or one of my guys talking to somebody, I know that deep down inside they are doing it because they love people. That is where it is at. We do not have a lot of tricks that we try to get people to come. We just preach the Bible. I am not part of this modern movement that you have to have something, you know, and a big screen with all the Bible verses on it so you do not have to bring your Bible, and the songs up there so you do not have to open up a hymnal. Let me tell you something, I always want you to

bring your Bible. I always want you to open up your hymnal. That is just the way it is supposed to be. We will never be that.

I still believe with all of my heart, and Jesus said that, He said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." I believe a man preaches the Bible, believes the Bible, loves people, and exalts and lifts up Christ. God will take care of everything else. I believe that. I believe that is how you build in the Book of Acts. I believe that is how they built in the middle of the church age. I believe in the midst of the time that we are in, where the gates are knocked off the church walls today and people are not getting what they need, let me tell you something, I still believe that God will still do it the way He has always done it. That is the way we are going to do it. We are going to do it just like it is in the Bible. That is the only way I know how to do it. I believe that God will honor that.

## II. The Bible: A Complete Diet

So the gate, the Valley Gate, is compassion towards people. As I said before, you have emotional needs. You have physical needs. You have spiritual needs. My job is to take the Bible and to feed you.

As I say, I do not know all what you know about the Bible. I do not know where you are at with the Word of God. But I do know this: I know the Bible is a balanced diet that you need to have.

- In 1 Peter 2:1, the Bible is likened to milk. Babies need milk. So when babies come in here, young Christians, I try to cut that thing where they can go away, that anybody can leave, no matter where they are at, and get something from the Word of God.
- In Hebrews 5:12, the Bible is likened to meat.
- In Psalms 119:103, it is likened to honey.
- In Proverbs 7:2, it is likened to apples.
- In John chapter 4, it is likened to water.
- In Luke 4:4, it is likened to bread.
- In Psalms 78:24, it is likened to vegetables.

You know what you have? The Bible is a complete diet for your emotional, for your spiritual, and for your physical well-being. It is everything you need. Everything you need. My job is to make sure you eat right. That is the job of every parent. That is what you want your kids to do.

Everybody today is concerned about nutrition. It used to be called Kentucky Fried Chicken. Now they call it KFC because they do not want to put the word "fried" there where anybody will read it, because fried foods are bad. I still like the chicken. I do not care. He runs the Kentucky Fried Chicken. You can bring me some anytime. I like it. I eat it no matter what. No matter what you call it. Original. I do not like the crispy. I like the original.

Everybody is health conscious, and probably rightly so. There is not a day that goes by that the Food and Drug Administration does not say that something is going to give you cancer.

Everything you eat. I can tell you right now, I am not sure where you are at with God. I am not sure where you are at with the Bible. I am not sure where you are at anywhere. But I know this

about everybody here: we are all going to die of cancer, because whatever you eat is going to kill you in time, according to the Food and Drug Administration. Everything. Everything is bad. Pretty soon you are going to see warnings on your mom's apple pie that it is hazardous to your health. Everything in this country they are saying is not good. Maybe it is. Maybe it is not. I do not know.

I know this: this country is terrible. It is a sad thing when you can go to McDonald's and eat a bunch of that fast food and get out and get 400 pounds, and you sue McDonald's because you are overweight and you are not healthy, and it is their fault. I do not think so. Parents want their kids to eat right. When I was growing up, it was Wonder Bread. "Build strong bodies, 12 ways." It was all kinds of things. We were conscious about what we ate. Today we do not care. America is paying the price for it.

I want you to know this: my job is to make sure you eat right spiritually. I mean, spiritually. When you come to Old Paths Baptist Church, you have your own personal cook. I spend hours a week perfecting this filet mignon, what I am giving you this morning. I spend time going through there that I put together the best party tray you ever had. When you come and eat here, as the old song says, "Come and dine, the Master calls, come and dine. You can feast at Jesus' table anytime." The Bible is a book that is a feast. It is unsearchable. It is an ongoing smorgasbord to make Colonel Billy's mouth water. I remember Colonel Billy. All right, bad choice. Nobody knows Colonel Billy anyway. But Betty Crocker would be standing in line to eat here, I promise you.

It is a book that gives you everything that you need. In the Valley Gate, people come in, they are down, they are hurting. They are hurting for one reason. I do not care what the problems are. I do not care where they have been. You can take and spend five or six hours telling me all about your situation, all about your problems. I can have 20, 30 people tell me different stories. The answer for all that would be the same: start eating right. Start eating the right things spiritually. You have spent too long as a junk food Christian. You have spent too long dieting and eating all the world's stuff that it gives you, all the slop the world wants you to have. You have spent too much time digesting all the things the world has. You have not eaten right.

I do not care if you are saved or you are lost. If your life is in a mess this morning, it is simply because it started with what you have been eating, because everything you take into your body has an effect on you physically, spiritually, and emotionally. You eat the right things, you are going to have the right balance. You eat the wrong things, you are going to have the wrong balance, and bang, you are going to wind up in the Valley Gate.

I do not know what you are depressed about this morning. I do not know what you are struggling with. I am saved, probably in a crowd this size, there are some people that are struggling. You all look nice and you all look smiles on your face, but that can be deceiving. We put on an act, we all do. We all want to look our best, but deep down inside we hide the real struggles. I understand that is just human nature. But I know in time there will be people come in that will be visibly distraught. They will have problems that go down very deep. We will have to deal with them on a regular basis and try to help them. But I am going to tell you something, the answer will always

be the same. We may have to vary it a little bit from person to person, personality to personality. But the answer will always be the same: start eating right.

### III. Daniel's Example: Eating God's Diet

Daniel chapter 1 has always been a favorite of mine in the Bible. Daniel has always been a favorite of mine. If we had ever had a boy, we would have called him Daniel or David. Maybe Daniel David. I do not know. I have one boy named Daniel. We are going to change Jason's name to David and then I will be happy.

Daniel chapter 1 is a great story. Daniel is a book that talks about a young Jewish boy who was taken captive by the nation of Babylon. He is taken down into Babylon, never to see his home again, never to see his family. As far as we know from the account, he is down there 70 years. He dies in Babylon and he never sees his family again. But while he is down there, it is a beautiful picture of your life and my life as a believer and the things that we are faced with in his life.

The Bible says, and I am just going to tell you the story for the sake of time this morning, the Bible said that Daniel is taken captive down there and they are the very best. Daniel and his friends are the very best young men that Israel has to offer. It also says that it does not say who, but somebody taught Daniel the Bible. Daniel knows the Word of God. The Bible says they are cunning in knowledge. They understand science. They have a good grasp of the Old Testament and they really know the Bible. Somebody spent some time with those boys.

When they get down in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar sends somebody down to give them a daily portion of the king's meat. He wants them to start to eat the food of Babylon. Babylon represents the world system. Babylon for us will represent the devil's crowd. That food, that daily portion that he wanted to give to the children of God, was just like the world today, wanting to give you a daily portion of its junk that will destroy your life and make you just like the world.

Nebuchadnezzar had a timetable. He said, "You feed these boys the food from Babylon. You feed them and they are going to stand before me in a period of time and we are going to look how my stuff and my food and my meat has changed them." The food from Babylon was the devil's crowd's food. It was meat offered to false idols. It suggested all the filth and ungodliness that went along with the nation of Babylon at that time.

Daniel, the Bible says, purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. He says, "I am not going to eat what the world wants to give me." He stayed eating with what God gave him. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Okay, here is what we will do. We are going to feed all these other people my food. We are going to let you eat what God wants you to eat. In 10 days we are going to compare it and we are going to see who is better. We will test." So the other people, they ate all that the devil had for them and all that the world and Nebuchadnezzar had for them. Daniel, he stayed with what God wanted to eat.

At the end of 10 days, they brought them to a place where they put them side by side. The Bible says after 10 days that the children of Israel were fairer and fatter. In fact, it says they were 10 times better than the other people. Let me tell you something, you will not beat this book. This

book will make you 10 times better spiritually, physically, and emotionally than anybody else or whatever they eat.

#### IV. The Pastor's Role and the Church's Mission

It is sickening me today that most people go to churches, and when they get to the Valley Gate in their life, they go in to see the pastor. The pastor is a very prestigious guy because it is a very prestigious office. They come in and they will say, "Pastor, you know, we are struggling with this. We are having problems in our marriage. I am having problems with this. My wife is having problems with this. We need help." That is what the church is for. That is the Valley Gate.

You come to this church and you tie to this church. You support this church. You pray for this church. So you come in to see the pastor. You sit down in his office and you go through all your problems. What does he do? In most cases, he is going to send you to somebody else. He is going to subcontract you out to some Christian psychologist. He is going to send you to some Christian counselor that specializes in your problem. In other words, he is going to give you the old Baptist two-step brush-off shuffle because he is busy being a pastor and he does not have time to deal with your rinky-dink problem. He may tell you something like, "Well, I know I am not really qualified for that particular area, but I know a professional over here that will really be able to help you." In other words, what he is saying is, "You know what? You are not my kind of people. I like to stand up and greet everybody on Sunday, and I like to preach, and I like to get paid big bucks, and I like to drive my nice car and my \$5,000 suits and have all this big building. But when it really comes down to getting my hands dirty with the common ordinary people, I am going to subcontract you out." Shame on you for that kind of attitude.

It is that kind of people that builds every church. Let me tell you something, there have been no churches built by millionaires. Oh, you may see them portrayed, you know, when somebody wants to get something going and they may bring somebody that donated millions and millions of dollars to a ministry. But let me tell you something, churches traditionally are built by men and women who sweat and who work and who scrape and sacrifice. That is part of the process of growing spiritually. Through that, God honors it and God brings a church to the place where it learns some lessons. It never forgets how it got to where it is at.

Let me tell you something, God help this church to ever get to the place where maybe it runs four or five hundred people and we get so big that we forget the time we were meeting in the old pavilion over here and we were scraping and scratching for everything we could get. God help us never forget that. That is where it starts. That is where the Valley Gate is. God help us to ever come to the place where anybody in this room or who comes through that door that needs help, that we send them someplace else. That is our job. That is my job.

I do not want to spend the rest of my life ministering to the inanimate objects. I do not want to run around chasing people who do not want to get caught. We are spending time running out here doing all kinds of pastoral things, meeting with all the other big pastors, having lunches and breakfasts and talking around and telling all kinds of stories about your ministry and all that. My life is right here with you. We are in this together. I am your pastor. You are my people. Together

we will sink or swim. We will make it or break it, but we will do it based on what this book says. My life will be given to you, and I will die, if God gives me the opportunity and time, standing here preaching to you, helping you be the very best man or woman God wants you to be. After 10 days, they brought Daniel and the others together. Daniel and the children of Israel were 10 times better. So that book is the right diet.

When somebody gets down into the Valley Gate, the Valley Gate will be a place where people come in that are hurting. That does not mean you do not preach hard. That does not mean you do not lay out the Word of God directly, but it means you have the compassion in your heart that you will take somebody right where they are at. Both preachers want you to clean your life up, clean yourself up, get rid of your problems, and then we will accept you. Let me tell you something, I will take you right where you are at. I will stand at the top of the spiritual stairs and look down to the spiritual basement and say, "Come on up here, be with us." I will walk down those stairs and take you in my arms, and I will walk you up one step at a time to get you to be where God wants you to be. We are in this together. We are in this together. We will sink or swim together, but we are in this together.

The book of Nehemiah says there needs to be a Valley Gate. There needs to be a gate of compassion that when people come in, we meet their needs, we love them, we are there for them, and what you see is what you get. There are no false agendas because this world is filled with junk food Christians. This world and all it has to offer in its daily proportion is just like it was in Nebuchadnezzar's time, and it will destroy you spiritually. It will destroy you emotionally, and it will destroy you physically, and it will leave you wrecked and ruined in your life and your marriage with your kids. People walk around despondent, wondering what went wrong, when it is so simple and basic: you have just been eating off the wrong table.

This book will be everything you need. It will take the most malnourished Christian and make them strong. It will take the weakest man and give him power. It will take the frailest woman and give her the ability to stand and be everything God wants her to be. It will take the most sickly Christian in this world and give them the fortitude to stand before God and do something for God.

*Proverbs 25:28*

*He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, and without walls.*

That is where America is at. That is where American Christians are at. That is where the world is at. They are emotionally busted and broke because they have let their spirit run wild. They have tried and done and allowed themselves to do everything without any restraint. 20-30 years later, they pay the price for it. They pay the price for it. They pay the price for it. You say, "Good for them." No, sir. Let me tell you something, we all can look back in our past and see where we screwed up big time. Do not you ever point your finger at anybody and say, "Well, they are there because that is what they deserve." No, man. Let me tell you something, they are there because of this old world. Maybe they made some bad choices. Maybe they did some stupid things. Is there anybody here that has not done stupid things? You take them and you love them. You take what you have learned from where you are at and go back and help them every step of the way,

but point them to the fact that it is the book. It is the book. It is the Word of God. Nothing in this world that is outside the local church and the Word of God will solve a man's problems. It is the book. It is the book.

## V. Asa's Example: Seeking God or Physicians

Take your Bibles and turn back to 2 Chronicles chapter 16. In 2 Chronicles, you are going to find a bunch of lists of kings. These are the kings of Israel after David. There are some good kings. There are some bad kings. They start with the sons of Solomon and then they go on down through there. Kings and Chronicles is the recording of the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel. God gives you great detail about some of them. He just says a few words about other ones. But every one of them is a case point to study. Every one of them will show you something about your life or something you are going to struggle with in life or something that you have been through in life. They will give you great insight. These are the leaders of the nation of Israel.

As I said, Israel after Solomon begins to degrade. Solomon's two boys split the kingdom and things go downhill from there. As you read through Kings and Chronicles, you find there is a good king, two bad ones, maybe a good one, and then five more bad ones. But Israel begins to degenerate to the place that it brings us up to Daniel with the destruction of Jerusalem and the times of the Gentiles and the captivity that we have talked about already.

But here is a man called Asa. Asa is a unique king. I love to study the kings of Israel from a practical standpoint because it shows us in principle so many things we need to learn. We have been talking about a Valley Gate. We have been talking about people with problems. We have been talking about people with needs. We have been talking about this church hanging up on its wall, the Valley Gate, right next to the Old Gate, right next to the Sheep Gate, right next to the Fish Gate. One more gate this church puts into effect for people to come through that have needs.

Now look at Asa. He starts out being a good king. But look what happens to him. There is a lot more on him here, but these three or four verses here starting with verse 11 really say all we need to say today.

*2 Chronicles 16:11-12*

*And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.*

*And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.*

Let me just stop there a minute. He is diseased in his feet. He is diseased in his feet. I do not know if you know what that means, spiritually or not. That means for you and me that translates to this: he started to have a problem with his walk with God. The disease was in his feet. The Bible says, "walking in the light as He is in the light, having fellowship one with another." Your daily walk with God, when you start to get diseased in your feet, you start to have some problems with your walk with God.

Asa started out as a good king. He did a lot of right things and then he gets diseased in his feet. He starts to have some problems in his walk, just like I will, you will, I have, you will, you have had. He starts to have some problems. In the 39th year of his reign, he was diseased in his feet until his disease was exceedingly great. It got worse and worse and worse and worse. Look what he did. Yet in his disease, he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. He thought there was somebody greater than God that could help him. He said to himself, "I have a problem with my walk with God, but I am not going to take it to God or God's program or God's man. I am going to take it to the physician. I am going to take it to the psychologist. I am going to take it to the Christian counselor. I am going to take it to the psychiatrist. I am going to take it to the world. I am going to try to get..." And the Bible says that he died. He died. He died.

Let me tell you something, my friend, this book has everything you need to fix any problem you are going to get into. I do not care what it is. It has everything you need. I have dealt with people and their problems for nigh on to probably 40 years. If there is anything I have said more than anything else, and I repeat it over and over again, and some of you have heard this a thousand times, but it bears to hear it again. When somebody would come in and they talk to me and they would tell me their story, maybe it is a husband and wife going through marital problems. Maybe it is some young man coming in and he is just struggling with something, maybe drugs, alcohol, I do not know. Maybe it is some gal, she has come in and she has got some kind of problem. I let them go, let them talk. I let them get it all out of their system because that is good for them. I need to know where they are at, but it really does not make any difference where they are at. I am going to give the same answer to them that I give to everybody. Now I may have to fix it a little bit here or put some little things in different here or may have to adjust a little bit. But the bottom line is, I have already said, the problem is their diet.

## VI. The Bible: The Owner's Manual for Life

I always say this, I have said this at least a hundred thousand times, and I am not exaggerating. I say, "You know what?" They are all done now. They have told me their problem. I said, "Let me ask you a question. How stupid would this be? I go home this afternoon and my wife says to me, 'Honey, the refrigerator is not working.'" Well, being the great home mechanic that I am, and seeing how it is probably going to cost me two or three hundred dollars for somebody to come out and tell me something is wrong with it, it is not really wrong with it, and then just kind of rip me off, I am going to try to fix it myself. So what do I do?

The first thing you do is find the owner's manual that came with the refrigerator because every appliance you buy today is going to have an owner's manual with it. Your car has one, it tells you about all the little buttons on there that you do not know. Your microwave has one. Your refrigerator has one. It tells you, your camera has one. It starts out something like this: if you have a camera, it says, "Troubleshooting. Take picture, no picture shows up. Check batteries, use lens uncovered." They get dumber as you go down because you get dumber as they go down. "Did you really pick the camera up?" You did. No, you come right down the line.

So I look through the kitchen and I am looking through the drawers, as organized as my drawers are, trying to find everything. I finally come up the steps and I have a little book in my hand and

my wife says, "Well, did you find it, honey?" I said, "No, I did not. I did not find the handbook for the refrigerator, but I got the one for the microwave." She looks at me, she says, "Honey, I love you. Are you telling me you are going to try to fix the refrigerator with a handbook from the microwave?" Sure. I love you to death, but just let me, do not take this wrong. That is my wife's favorite expression: "Do not take this wrong." That is ridiculous. How are you going to fix the refrigerator with a handbook from the microwave? They are two different designs. They do not even have the same function. It is absolutely ludicrous.

I have used that example a thousand times because it is ludicrous and it is ridiculous. It will never happen. But let me just say this to you: I stand a better chance of fixing my refrigerator with a handbook from the microwave than you do trying to run your life outside the handbook and a guidebook that God gave for human beings to operate by. See, God made you. When God made you, He said, "You know what? They are going to be problematic little creatures. These carbon-14 units are going to have all kinds of little malfunctions in them. So I am going to write an owner's manual and a handbook that is going to tell them exactly that when the light does not come on, check this. When the picture does not show up, look here." I am going to give them an owner's manual and a handbook that is going to tell them everything about life and give them everything they do. Not only that, it is going to be a spiritual cookbook. I am going to show them how to handpick the diet for them spiritually. It is going to give them everything they need.

Let me tell you something, trying to fix your problems in your life with another manual outside the one God gave you is impossible. This book has everything in it that you need. This book has everything in it to fix any problem that you have ever had, that you have right now, or you even contemplate having. It will take care of you no matter what. Our job is to take care of what God gives us. My job is to stand here in my living room, in our Bible study, in your home, wherever God lays us out. My job is to take this Bible and to always give you the very best I can to help you get spiritually, physically, and emotionally everything you need.

Every person that comes in at that Valley Gate, every person that comes in, we need to look at as somebody that God has given us that we are going to rally around. We are going to help. We are going to be there, and we are going to take the owner's manual for that unit. We are going to help them figure out and understand exactly where they are at and how they get out of the situation they have gotten into. Taking care of what God gives you. Reach out to those who are out.

## VII. Building the Church Today

Building a church today, my friend, is easier than ever. It is easier than ever. I have read all kinds of stuff. I have had guys tell me, "Well, it is a lot different now, you know, it has got a lot harder today than it used to be." Let me tell you something, I believe it is easier today than it ever was, because people's problems are a lot worse today. Let me tell you something, if a whole city had some incurable disease, and there were only one or two doctors in that whole city that had the cure for that disease, that believed in the cure, well, you would get a lot of people coming to get you when they start to see the things start working and this person is really doing well.

Let me tell you something, I believe this book. I believe this book will fix any problem you have got. I believe that we just stand on this book and you preach this book and you take this book and you give it to people, God, without a sign out front. He proved it last Thursday night. I have no sign out here. There were some people that God just said, "Get in your car. You think there is somebody over here that you want to hear. I have somebody I want you to hear." He brought them right here. Got to do that. Nobody said, "Well, why do not you bring 100 that way today?" We are not ready for them yet. God will never give you any more than you are going to deal with. He will give them to you. It is like somebody said one time, "You know, sure, God owns a cattle on a thousand hills." No question about it. But sometimes He just gives it to you one hamburger at a time. God just does it in His own time, in His own way.

When you are ready, there are people right here right now that God is preparing your heart that someday somebody is going to come in that door. I am going to say to you, "Hey, can you work with this person for me and help them be the greatest thing God ever does in your life?" Some of you already can do that. Some of you are not too far from doing that. Some of you someplace down the line, you will be doing exactly that. You know why? That is the job of this church. That is the job of this church. The job of this church is to reproduce itself. My job is to reproduce myself into you. Your job is to reproduce yourself into somebody else. We do that by accepting people where they are at, hand in hand. We go from there, hard preaching from a compassionate heart.

When you meet people at the Valley Gate, my job is to build you, exhort you, encourage you, rebuke you, and to help you. When we find ourselves at the Valley Gate, shaking hands and meeting people and somebody comes in, we just take this old book. We do exactly what you hear a thousand times a day on the radio and the television: "Oh, come to our fitness center. We will give you a personal trainer. That personal trainer will make sure you do your reps right. You will make sure you do all the right exercises. You will do everything for you. You will work right with you." And you know what? It works. It works. When you get somebody that keeps you accountable and helps you there, it works because we as individuals, we are not too accountable to ourselves sometimes. You can go now where they have diet places where a person can go, and they work. Everybody wants to cash in on people's weaknesses and say, "You know what? Let me put a team around you that will help you accomplish your goal in all the areas that really do not matter in eternity." What matters in eternity is where your soul is at. The teams that we want to build, the job that we want to do, will just get you through this life. It will get you beyond this life into eternity with God forever. That is our job. That is our job.

## VIII. The Valley Gate: Unconditional Love

The Valley Gate. We are building a church. That church has to have these gates. We have to have gates that people understand about sacrifice. They have to have a gate that people come in and they understand about soul winning. We have to have gates where people come in and they understand and they are taught and our children understand our heritage from where we have come from. There has to be a gate when someone is in the church, that we are not so busy being a church, that I am not so busy being a pastor, that I am not so busy being this and being that. We

are so busy doing things that we have missed that person coming in who is struggling with where they are at in life right now. That is our job. That is our job.

I am your pastor. Please do not call me pastor. Call me Bob. I am no better than you. I do not believe there is anybody in here, and I have had guys say, "Brother, that is not to have your people call you by your first name. It is degrading to the pastor's office. Have them call you pastor. Have them call you pastor. Have them call you preacher. Have them call you brother. Do not have them call you Bob. Have them call you Bob. That takes away dignity from the office." I dare say there is anybody here to think my dignity is shattered as a pastor if you call me Bob. That is my name. I am Bob. I may be a pastor, but I was Bob before I was a pastor. I am Bob. Now if you have a hang-up, you want to call me pastor? That is fine. I do not care. You can call me whatever you want. If you do not call me by Bob, I probably will not look your way or when you say my name. But call me whatever you want. I do not care.

I am telling you, I am just one of you. I am no better than you. I am not any higher than you. I may hold an office in this church, but I do not believe there is anybody in this room that does not understand that office. That office has nothing to do with what you call me. It has to do with what we are. It has to do with where we are. It has to do with what we believe about this book because this book is everything that we need to get us through everything in life. I am not worried about what we call each other. I am worried about what we do with each other, how we love each other, how we are there for each other, how that you have a church that you have come to that you know people love you unconditionally. We will not love you because you do what is right. We will not just love you when you do what is wrong. We just love you all the time no matter what. We will try to be to you everything we can be, starting with this group and then moving out as God brings them in, because this church has to have a Valley Gate. We have to have a place where we meet people where they are at and love them where they are at.

Let us have every head bowed and every eye closed.