

# Proverbs 2

Sunday 2/22/2004

We have a lot of fun in the Bible. I enjoyed that. That's good. Now, we have, I will tell you what, this is where God's blessing is. God knows what I really like, so God gave us three harmonica players in our church. You only heard one so far. John back here plays harmonica, and Woody plays harmonica. Woody plays everything. Oh boy, can you do trios with the harmonicas? I have heard of three amigos with three harmonicas. I will tell you what, I have never heard three harmonicas together. We have really good ones. You just dated yourself 41 years and counting. The harmonica, John, he is dead. The harmonica. I remember them. Did they not play for the inauguration of George Washington? I bet he wished they did. You guys get good. We will get a big bus, go around the country, you harmonica players hide them, and I will preach. That will be good.

## I. The Importance of Proverbs Chapter Two

Proverbs 2. It is good to have you here today. As I said earlier, we just have a fun time in the Word of God, and we love the book. There is nothing in this whole world better than just spending time with people that you love in the Bible. It is everything to us, and we just love it.

We have been focusing on Proverbs 2, and we have a ways to go here because Proverbs 2 is such a powerful, powerful thing. Once we take time to show you what He wants you to get from it, then we are going to take some time to show you what it does for you once you get it. It is going to be a great study.

We have talked about receiving the Word of God, hiding the commandments, inclining an ear unto wisdom, and applying our heart. Today we are going to be at verse 3, and I want to read the first five verses again, just so we keep a context here.

*My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;*

*So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;*

*Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;*

*If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;*

*Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.*

Father, we thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for those that are here. We also pray for all those that are sick today, that You will take care of them, especially the little kids, Lord. We just pray You will help them feel better, and Lord, just watch over them and take care of them and bring them back to health. We miss them today, but we also love them and pray for them, Lord. We just ask Your hand to be upon them today. Thank You, Lord, for all the things that You gave us last week. Thank You, Father, for today and for the opportunity to open up Your Word. Even now, we thank You, looking forward to Thursday night, another time in Your Word together. Help us, Father, just to be a church that cares about people, loving this book and loving God's people and any people, Lord, and showing them the Word of

God. Help us today to find those things that You have for us in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

## II. Crying After Knowledge and Lifting Up Your Voice

Today we are going to talk about Proverbs 2:3, which says, "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding." We are going to talk about the concept of crying after the Word of God and lifting up your voice.

Today is going to be a philosophical message. I woke up today in a philosophical mood. I want to ask you some questions, and then I want to look at some things. I want you to look deep inside yourself today, and maybe this will be a component in your life that you need. I know it is certainly something you are going to have to learn if you are ever going to learn the Bible.

The thing I want to ask is, do you have a prayer? I do not mean a "Hail Mary" prayer. I mean, when you look at the Word of God and you have time with God, do you have a prayer that you have consciously put together for the express purpose of asking God to teach you the Word of God?

I have had people all my life say, "I read the Bible, and I just cannot get anything out of it." I ask them, "How much time do you spend praying for God to give yourself, or how much do you ask the Lord to show you something?" They say, "I really do not, Bob. I spend 15 minutes in the morning. If I spend five minutes in prayer, I do not have 10 minutes left for the Bible." Well, maybe that is the problem. There needs to be an attitude about the Word of God and being taught the Word of God, just like there has to be an attitude of the Word of God being God's Word and what it will do for you in your life.

## III. Misconceptions About Prayer

I think that we do not understand today as God's people the concept of prayer. I get tired of saying this, and I pray you get tired of hearing me say it, but it is so true. Prayer is such a strange thing in our life today. It really is. It is like everything else in the Laodicean Church. The definitions and the real biblical concept have been lost in a sea of either misinformation or bad definitions.

We today as God's people, prayer is important to us. We like to give the impression, and I would say, if you would go into any church and you would ask people, "Do you pray? Do you know how to pray?" Everybody would probably say, "Yes." Prayer is something that to admit you do not know how to pray and to admit that you do not pray is a terrible thing for a Christian because we ought to pray. But the truth of the matter is, and I know this is true because I deal with people all the time and I know the spirit of where we are at today, the real concept of prayer and the real definition of prayer has been lost today.

## IV. The Old Testament Tabernacle and the Origin of Prayer

I know we have talked about this before. I know that the Old Testament examples that you find that actually take place in the Old Testament are there historically for a reason. Many of them, and we talked about this a while back, many of them have a doctrinal application to the future, but they also have an application to your own personal life in an inspirational way. In other words, Old Testament examples many times will translate into New Testament principles. A lot of times when you find something in the New Testament that you do not know how to define, or you do not know what to do with it, or you do not know how to deal with it, if you will go back and find the Old Testament example, it will explain it to you in such great detail. That is the beauty about the Old Testament and the New Testament working together. That is the beauty of God writing one book, a set of books in the Old Testament, another book in the New Testament, and one really explaining the other, and the other really just going together hand in hand. It is an incredible thing.

In Leviticus 10, in the first couple of verses there, you have a story, and maybe it is a story that you read and you just passed over, but it is something that I read many, many years ago that I asked myself the question why. It is the story of Nadab and Abihu. Nadab and Abihu were priests, and the Bible says that they offered strange fire before the Lord, and the Lord killed them. We read that, and depending on our busy schedule or how much investigative work we want to do, we will either look at that deeper or just gloss over that and move on with life. But the matter is that here are two men that the Bible says offered strange fire. What does that mean? They offered strange fire before the Lord, and because they did that, God killed them. What would be the big deal with God that two men would offer strange fire and God would kill them? There has to be some significance to that, and of course, there is.

I have talked to you before how the Old Testament tabernacle, the tabernacle that God gave Moses the pattern to make in the Old Testament, the one that they carried with them, that tabernacle is the most unbelievable example in all of the Bible that will teach you about historically, doctrinally things in the future, but most importantly, your own walk with the Lord. We have talked about this on Thursday night. How that tabernacle had three compartments: an outer court, an inner court, and then what was commonly called the Holy of Holies. This is all explained for you in Exodus 26. If you ever get a hold of it, Arthur W. Pink's book on the Gleanings in Exodus, he does a masterful job of laying this out, and it is an incredible thing to go through it. You will find that within that tabernacle, you have all the elements of the New Testament Christian life.

We have talked about it before; I am not going to dwell on all the other areas, but I want to dwell on one area about offering strange fire because it is the key to prayer. It is the key of lifting up your voice and asking God for something, and it is the key to understanding it.

Here is the deal. Back in the Old Testament, God gave that tabernacle. I do not have time to go into all the ramifications, but if you go to Hebrews 11 and 12, the Bible says that that tabernacle that He gave is also a picture of our universe. There are three compartments; the Bible says there are three heavens. It is an incredible picture of the universe. I do not have time to get into that. That is way over where we want to go this morning. But I am just giving you general

information that down the line we will pick up and come through our Thursday night Bible studies or as we study.

The doctrinal application is that that is a picture of the new heavens and the new earth. The historical application picture of it is that it is the place of worship where God pitched His tent with man. That is why Christ came, and that is why the Jews celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. It represented the time that God dwelt with them in the tabernacle. Hence, it is called the Feast of Tabernacles. It represents the time that God came and dwelt with them in the Old Testament.

God gives Moses the pattern for that. He tells him how to make everything. Everything in it has a purpose and a reason for it. Yet, when you look at it from a practical application, it represents your life and my life in our service for God. Every one of those pieces of furniture or components within that tabernacle represent something in your life and my life.

Nadab and Abihu were priests. The priest did his work within that tabernacle, that second compartment. He went from the first one where they had the brazen altar and the laver of water where the sacrifice was burnt on a brass grill, much like your charcoal grill. Then he went from there into the second compartment that had the showbread, a type of the Word of God, the seven golden candlesticks, a type of the Holy Spirit of God. We have talked about all this before. Then there was a third place where those priests never went. It is called the Holy of Holies. It represents the throne of God where God is. The only one that went in there was the high priest. That high priest is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The other sons of the priest are pictures of you and I. What a study that is to go back and look at that. We do not have time; that is not our message this morning.

We are talking about crying after and lifting up your voice. We are trying to get you a prayer today, or at least an understanding of how to really learn the Word of God, because learning the Word of God has nothing to do with your intellect or your ability to absorb or comprehend or whatever the case may be. It has to do with your ability of getting a hold of God and God saying, "Okay, I am going to give it to you." We are going to talk about that today.

They went in there, and they had the showbread. They had the candlestick, and up by the curtain. That curtain was an incredible thing. It blocked the light of God from the second area. If you want to get into the universe and talk about the light of God and why you cannot see it and what God put up there to see it, and that curtain that we have up there that science does not know what it is, that is a great Thursday night Bible study question, but we cannot deal with that either today.

You have this second compartment, and in it is everything that we need, and the priest, like you and I, did their work in there. The high priest went from that one into the third one. The high priest is a type of Christ, and he goes from the sacrifice of the brazen altar up through the second compartment. He is the only one that goes into the third apartment that sprinkles the blood on that. That is a picture of Christ. Christ died at the brazen altar at the first heaven, planet Earth. He went up through the second heaven and into the Holy of Holies and offered His sacrifice before God. That is the picture, real easy.

Right before you go into that, behind that curtain, there is what is called the altar of incense. The altar of incense in most churches today is the altar of nonsense, but in the Bible, it is the altar of incense. That incense was a little thing there that had bits of whatever in it that when you lit them, it would give off a smoke. That smoke is called, believe it or not, holy smoke. There are two kinds of smoke: there is holy smoke, and then there is unholy smoke. What do you think we get all these "holy smoke" phrases from? It comes from the Bible. "Jumping Jehoshaphat" comes from the Bible. "Make my day, man," from Dirty Harry, everybody thought he was talking about the second coming of Christ because that is the day in the Bible. When Christ comes back, I will not need a .44 Magnum to make my day; I just need Him to come back. That will make my day. Do not miss the boat.

What I am saying is that the Bible is relevant. Here is a picture where you have this altar of incense. When it was lit and it burnt, it brought up a smoke and a smell. That smoke and that smell filled that second compartment, and it drifted over into the third Holy of Holies. That smoke is a picture of prayer. That altar of incense is a picture of our prayer life. The thing that God killed those two men for is because the Bible says very clearly, and if you do not get anything else out of what I am saying, you need to understand this: the fire that burnt that incense had to come off the brazen altar where the sacrifice was killed.

I do not have time this morning to go into the ramifications of that in your prayer life, but it simply means this: the very basis of the understanding of what you are asking God needs to be understood in the light of the sacrifice that God made for you. Those two guys got the fire someplace else in the altar than in the altar of God out there in the brazen altar. Today in Christianity, I am telling you what the problem is with prayer. We do not know that. We are kindling our prayers with a fire that is strange to God. God is not killing us because God is a merciful God today. But I am telling you, if you do not understand, this is the problem with the Laodicean church. We have a whole bunch of God's people who go to church, who do all the things that church people are supposed to do, but they have no understanding of why they are doing what they do.

I appreciate the fact that most of you pray. My question to you today, and do not answer it to yourself, but my question to you is, do you know why you even pray? Or are you hung up with a standard doctrinal interpretation/teaching that everybody gets when you go to church?

You walk into the average bookstore; you will find 10,000 books on prayer. Prayer is a great moneymaker. Books on prayer are to Baptists what those little candles and penance are to the Roman Catholic church. You light some candles, put some money in the box; no money in the box, stay in purgatory. You do not put any money in, you can light the candle, it does not do any good. That is how they rip you off. Well, Baptists rip you off by selling you thousands of books because you are good people and you want to pray, and you know that prayer is important, but they write books about prayer that have absolutely nothing to do with the Bible's definition of where you need to light your prayer, where that fire has to come from.

You will walk in there, and here is the book you will pick up, and it falls into the category of, "If you can name it, you can claim it." "Whenever you ask in God's name, if you believe God will

give it to you, oh, let me hear you raise your hands today. If you believe it, you can have whatever you want. The reason why you do not have a new car, you do not have this, that is why if you give 50, you just give every dime you have today, when you go home, there will be a new car in your driveway." But go eat first so I can get out of town before you get there and find out it is not there until you want your money back. Name it, claim it.

You will find books on different types of prayer. This guy will speak about an accessory prayer, prayers of praise, prayers of thanksgiving. You will find books that deal with the attitude of prayer. You will find books, believe it or not, that deal with the position of your body in prayer. I read an article on prayer that a guy in a metropolitan church wrote last year, and he talked about the fact that the most important thing about prayer was the position of your body because the position of your body told God how contrite you really were. So you have to be on your knees, you have to fold your hands, you have to bow your head, because if you do not bow your head, then it is your pride looking. You will not bow your will to God. You have to close your eyes so you shut out all the other things. His position was, if you really want to get a hold of God, it is the position of your body. I do not know what that does if you are in an airplane flying over and it blows up and you get blown out of the plane at 60,000 feet and you are falling for three or four minutes. I guess the position of your body is everything, how you pray in that situation. I am telling you, prayer has nothing to do with the position of your body; that is so stupid I am not going to deal with it anymore.

I read a book actually; it talked about that if you are a Christian, the clothes that you have to wear to be the right kind of Christian, to have the right kind of power to God in prayer life. I am not kidding you. I am telling the truth. There was a book out a number of years ago that was given to pastors that talked about how pastors ought to dress to be godly to their people. How not to be too flashy, not conservative, but not flashy, but not dumpy either, and you had to have a tie, you had to wear a suit, and all those things. If you did not have a tie and a suit on, God just was not pleased with you. Like God is wearing a tie and suit. All kinds of weird stuff.

You have the books that talk about the fact that you have not because you ask not. You have books that deal with if prayer, you pray, and then they add in the component of fasting. Then they have books that talk about prayer and your faith. The last book I read on prayer was titled, "Prayer Changes Things, Having Power with God." When I read that book, I thought to myself, that is the crowning book for the Laodicean church because that is how most people look at the Bible. Most people look at the Bible like you and I, or at least me and you, look at an L.L. Bean catalog or a Lands' End or Sears and Roebuck. You flip through there and you see something you want, and then you order it. That is what we do with the Bible. That is our concept of the Bible. We think the Bible is a book that we order things from, and then prayer is our spiritual postal system by which the order gets delivered.

Never in my years have I ever read a book other than one book, one book that ever showed the origin of prayer from the Old Testament tabernacle and what that means. Only in one case in all of my life. Secondly, I only read one book in my life that ever showed what the greatest Christians that ever lived said about prayer.

When it comes to authority in your life as a Christian, it is not me. Never make it me because I am human, and I am certainly not infallible. I am certainly somebody that not intentionally, but I could be wrong, and I would not mislead you on purpose, but I could mislead you. I am as fallible as anybody else, and I can make mistakes just like anybody else does. So you do not ever want to make me your authority. You listen to what I say, but you prove all things and you hold fast to that which is good.

The greatest example for you and for me in everything as a Christian is the Apostle Paul and what he wrote. He writes three quarters of the New Testament. In those three quarters of the books that he writes, he gives everything from a doctrinal teaching standpoint that the church needs to have. Have you ever noticed that Paul's books, some of them are written to churches, some are written to individuals? The ones that are written to the churches are doctrinal positions of what the church needs to believe, needs to teach, and needs to understand. The ones written to individuals are written from a personal slant as an individual Christian, what you need. Incredible.

Where I teach what the authority teaches, you take it. Where I deviate from the Word of God to start to come up with all kinds of great concepts on my own, you drop kick me through the goal posts of life. We have to stay on the same page, and that page is out of a King James 1611 Authorized Version.

I have been asked this all my life. People will say to me, they will come to Bible study, and we will get a lot of good stuff, and they will hear the preaching, and they will come up to me alone someplace, and they will say, "Hey, let me ask you a question. What is the greatest thing God ever showed you?" They are expecting me to say, "Well, the Antichrist is Clinton, or Hillary, or whoever," and come up with some great revelation and all this stuff. Let me tell you something. The greatest thing God ever showed me about myself came from the Apostle Paul, and it was about prayer. This is not a lesson on prayer this morning. I am getting ready to show you something, but you need to understand something before. The greatest thing God ever showed me. The greatest thing God ever showed me was about prayer. It is a shocker because it is not what you think. It is not like, "God showed me how to pray for the lost people in such a way that thousands of people will get saved." "God showed me the key to prayer." "God had the key to prayer that most people do not have. Therefore, hang out with me, stick with me, and I will show you the secrets of the universe beyond belief, beyond dimension." No, that is not what He showed me.

Do you know what the greatest thing He ever showed me? Do not turn to it; I want you to just listen to me. The greatest thing He ever showed me was Romans 8:26. It is a shocker. When he says the greatest thing He told me is I have an infirmity, and do you know what my infirmity is? I do not know what to pray for.

*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

Not only do I not know how to pray, I do not know how to pray for the right things when I do pray. Back to that book, "Prayer Changes Things, Having Power with God." That is where God's

people are at today. They think prayer is my way, a nice way to change God's mind so I will not have to go through the nasty things in life. They think that prayer is something that I grab a hold of in great earnest when I am in great need, that through prayer I can change God's mind. If that does not work, I will just fast because when I fast and do not eat, God says, "Well, I better answer your prayer because you are going to starve to death." What in the world are we thinking? We do not understand the Bible definition of prayer. We do not understand the Bible definition of fasting. Fasting was not given to anyone. Go back to the Old Testament. Find out the biblical definition of fasting. It has nothing to do with getting your prayers answered, just like prayer has nothing to do with you changing God's mind.

I will say this: as a Christian, there are things that you and I have a right to ask God to change, and there are things that we do not have a right to ask God to change. Prayer is not your avenue to get what you want in life versus the bad things. Prayer was not given to change anything. Prayer was given to put you on the same wavelength of God, Exodus 26, to accept what God's will is, no matter how hard it is, understanding, going back to the sacrifice on the brazen altar, that whatever you have to go through, He went through it first. Why? Because the next verse says, "For all things work together for good." My job as a Christian is to understand the biblical definition of prayer and then to find out in my life as a Christian the things that I have a right to ask God to change and the things that I do not have a right to ask God to change. It is as simple as that.

I will give you an example: Hezekiah. Under the Old Testament law, he was a good king. We looked at him a couple of weeks ago. He came along too late, too little too late, but he did what was right, and he was a good king. In the Old Testament, if you did what was right and was righteous, you had the ability with God to ask God to come down and do some things. We do not have that here, but in the Old Testament, it is a different setup. There under law, we are under grace. God gives some concessions. In the Old Testament, if you were righteous and did what was right, you could ask God to give you riches, and God would have to give you riches. That is why over there in the Gospels when Jesus said, "It was harder for a rich camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to go to heaven," all the disciples looked at each other and said, "Well, then who can be saved?" Because in the Old Testament, riches was a sign of godliness.

In the Old Testament, if you did what was right, you could ask God to kill your enemies. If they were legitimate enemies and they were stopping you from doing what God could do, David did it. You could say, "God, avenge me. God, take care of my enemies," and God would come down and whack them. You could ask God for a longer life. You could ask God for a number of things. That is Hezekiah. Hezekiah gets to the point. The prophet comes in and says, "Get your house in order. You are going to die." What does Hezekiah do? Hezekiah does the same thing we would all do. He goes to God and wants to change God's mind. "Certainly, God, You cannot get along without me." He winds around, and he throws up all the right things that he did. He brings out his scorecard and says, "Hey, look, under the Old Testament law, I did all these things, and I am asking You to change it." God said, "Hey, careful what you wish for. Hezekiah, you think staying down here a little longer is better than coming up and pouting around with Me?" Hezekiah said, "I love You, and I love all the things, but You know what? Just give me a little more time." God

says, "Okay, we will give you 15 more years." He could not even believe that. He had to have a sign from God, like we do. He asked for the sundial to go back. We have our own little things that we ask for. "God, show me, tell me this is really okay. Just show me, Lord, just have a car run through the red light. Okay, there it is, Lord. God, I am glad You showed me that."

He comes down there, and he says, "God, You have to give me 15 more years." In those 15 more years, he has a boy; that boy's name is Manasseh. He does more to put Israel in the grave than almost any other man other than Ahab. Hezekiah would have been better off to go home with God when God wanted him to go. He stayed around 15 more years and produced one of the most wicked kings that Israel ever had. We do not always see it from God's standpoint. We do not always see it the way God sees it. Prayer, I am not saying there are not some things you can ask God to change. I am saying you need to have understanding in the things that you ask Him about.

## V. David's Prayer for Understanding in Psalms 119

I said all that to say this, and this is not a study on prayer this morning. When it comes to the Bible, you have a right to ask God to teach you. You have a right to ask God to teach you the Bible. You have a right to go to God and say, "Oh God, teach me Your Word." In fact, it ought to be so prevalent in your life. It ought to be so powerful in your life that it is something that is there all the time.

I promise you, and I do not wish this on anybody, just for the point of illustration. Maybe some of you have been there, maybe some of you have not. I know that some of you are very godly here, and you handle things in the right way. I am just saying this: the average Christian today, if they found out they had some terrible terminal disease and they were going to die, not like "we can fix this" or "it does not look good, but we are going to do it." No, no. He went in, and the doctor said, "You have one year to live." I promise you, if you are a saved person, the average norm, saved person, every minute of your life for the next year, you are going to be conscious of the fact, "Oh God, do not let me die. Oh God, help me." It is going to be constant. It is not going to be something you are going to forget and say, "Oh yeah, two weeks ago, doctor told me I was going to die in a year. I forgot that." No, it is not going to be that way. You are going to think about it every moment of your life, and you are going to be talking about it with God every moment of your life. I do not care. First thing you get up in the morning, I know how human nature is. You sleep good, and you wake up, and everything is peaceful. Then for a moment, it comes into your mind, and then your day is wrecked. Then you get up, you try to forget it, and you see something on the air, or you are driving down the road, and you see a big billboard, "Newcomers and Son," and you think about it again. You get it out of your mind, you think about it, and then a good friend calls and says, "Hey, I heard you got some disease. You are going to die. We want you to know we are praying for your brother." That ruins your day. It is something that you just constantly go into God with it.

Let me tell you something. Being fine, healthy, and good as you are today, that ought to be the same attitude you have about learning the Word of God. It ought to be never out of your mind. It ought to be a constant thing. "Oh, God, teach me that book. Teach me that book." You need a

prayer today. You need a prayer. You need to understand what it means to cry out and lift up your voice.

Take your Bible and turn to Psalms 119. You might know we were coming back here. Psalms 119. This is where the greatest man who ever lived, who had a heart after God, 176 verses, that is a prayer. David writes this down as a prayer. He is asking and telling. He is not only asking, he is telling. He is making a deal with God. In this psalm, we find three statements of David that God says that he makes a deal. There is nothing wrong with making a deal with God. He made one with you. He said, "I died on the cross for you. If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." That is a deal. You can make a deal with God. David did. In Psalms 119:1-176, you have 176 petitions of a prayer. Every one of those petitions has to do with God giving you something about the Word of God.

Let me just say this. Every one of those 176 fall into the three categories of David's own statement about crying out and lifting up. When you read through that, you are going to see David's first statement. David's first statement, it is so clear. It is not that he writes this out, "This is my statement, statement number one." No, but it becomes so clear what he is saying as you read down through here.

The first statement that David makes in these 176 verses, he says:

- 1.) This book, God's Word, is the greatest book in all the world, and I love it without measure.

That is the first thing that comes out of this thing. When you start reading through Psalms 119:1-176, the first thing that smacks you right between the eyes is David says, "This is the greatest book the world has ever seen. God, there is nothing that can attain to Your Word. I love it beyond everything else in this planet." That is the first statement that comes out of this because David had a prayer, and David's prayer is, "Oh God, teach me Your Word." His prayer is an incredible prayer, and I am going to show you how to put a prayer together out of here.

The second statement he makes:

- 2.) Oh God, not only do I know it is the greatest book in all the world, and I love it beyond measure, but God, I have got to have it. I have got to have Your Word.

All day long, your mind is bombarded. You are doing your work, you are doing your job, but inside you are excited about something that God gave you. It just lights you to the place where it just magnifies something more and more. I will give you an example. Yesterday morning, I spent some time, and I worked on this, finished this up a little bit. Then I am in the middle of putting my notes around, and I have been trying to spend time getting that done. I would work in Matthew, and I have been thinking about something based on some of the things that you guys have said, stuff that I have known for a long time, but I have just never had the time just to correlate it all together. I was coming through there, and I was over there in Matthew, and I started coming through, and I saw one note that I had put in there probably 20, 25 years ago, and I had forgotten it was even there. That one little note and that one little concept. I had to take 20

minutes to recoup myself. It turned the lights on. It put a concept that I had been working through and thinking about and trying to find the right pieces. I had to stand back, and I just, the rest of my day, I would not have cared what happened. It would not have made any difference if I had started the car and the engine would have blown up, and I just started the other car, and it would have blown up. It would not have made a difference if I came back and the house was on fire. I would have just said, "Wow, God, what a great time we had this morning." All that does, it just fires you up to get more from the Word of God.

Not only do you say, "God, it is the greatest book the world has ever seen," but when God starts showing you this thing, it is like I told some of you guys a while back. The Bible is like a big picture book, a picture puzzle with a thousand pieces. The way to put those puzzles together is to get all the flat pieces and build the corners around it. Then you work from the outside in, and as you begin to come one piece at a time, a picture starts to emerge. You read your Bible, and you study your Bible, and you pray over your Bible, and you ask God. You get a tough spot where you cannot get something. You just begin to get on your knees, and you begin to ask God to give you something. Sometimes God is so good. Sometimes that book is so marvelous. Sometimes God will just get over there, and He is laughing in the corner, and you are wondering what He is laughing at. You are putting these puzzle pieces together, and you say, "I have got this piece and this piece and this piece and this piece. I can kind of see it, but I am missing about nine pieces, and it is one piece at a time. I will just stay with it." About that time, God walks over and says, "Here, here are the nine you are looking for. Have fun." Those pieces not only fall on the table, they go into the puzzle by themselves, and that picture just goes, and suddenly you see it. Suddenly the lights are on, the alarms are going off. Suddenly everything just bells and whistles are going off. God just gave you a great revelation.

Do you know what that does? It not only says to you the first statement that that book is the greatest book the world has ever seen. You come away from that saying, "Oh God, I have got to have it, and I am not leaving Your side in any case till You give it to me. Not only do I love it, it is the greatest book. Oh God, I am sticking right here. I am going to dog You. I am going to stay with You. I am not leaving Your side. You are not getting out of my sight. I want that book." It permeates everything in your life.

Outside the Word of God and what God has done in my life, there have been three things in my life that have taught me more about the Bible and God than anything else. That is the way God designs it. God gives you the examples in the Bible, gives you the principles, and then He will give you illustrations in life that coincide with the Bible that you can learn from. If you are paying attention, it accelerates your growth process. If you are a dunce or a bugwit, you do not get it. I like that word, bugwit. If you do not get it, if you walk around and you have your own head and your problems so much, you will never see it. But if you see the Bible and you see the things that are out there, then you learn from it.

I will tell you the first thing that God used to teach me outside the Word of God, some of the greatest lessons in life: my wife. That is why God gives you a good wife. A good wife will teach. Now you can take two positions. You can be the macho man, with the nacho bean dip, that nobody is going to tell you what to do. You can walk around, and you are the servant, you do

this, you do that. "I will make the decisions." In that case, you are a bugwit. Or you can understand that she is a help meet. God gave her to you as a help meet. That word "meet," it is not "mate," it is "meet." Australians have mates. God's people have meets. God gave the animals mates. A lion saw a female lion, said, "That is my mate." The dog saw the other female dog and said, "That is my mate." When Adam saw his, he said, "That is my meet." She is going to help meet my deficiencies in my mind and my brain because she makes the other half of me up.

The second thing was my kids. When you have kids, you understand how stupid you look to God sometimes. Because once you understand the concept that I am to love my kids like Christ loved me, and you are putting that role model to be like a type of Christ to them, oh, boy, then you have to walk the line. You watch them with their struggle with authority, their struggles with this, their struggle with that. You understand why you have struggles as a Christian. You can either learn from the things in life, or you can just be oblivious, be a bugwit to the things in life.

My third thing, this is probably the goofiest of the three, but it is true: my dogs. I am a dog freak. I am a dog freak because I am a Christian. I think if you are a Christian, you need to have a dog. Because the Bible says in an unsaved state, you are a dog. Unsaved man is a picture of a dog in the Bible. We look over there, we read over there, we said over there, we are talking about the dog in the book of Proverbs, and Peter, we are talking about the dog returning under his vomit, and eating his own vomit. We think that, "Oh, I just cannot think of that." Before you were saved, what are you talking about? You went back to that vomit pit every Friday night, every Saturday night.

My prayer every morning when I get up is this: "Oh, God, help me be as good as my dogs think I really am." I have three labs, a black one, a brown one, and a white one. Shem, Ham, and Japheth. I am biblical. Now, the black one, her name is Tinker. She is a class act. She is the best dog the world has ever seen. But she has her own streak of independence. She loves me. She wants to be with me. But there come times when she says, "Okay, I want to do the dog thing." Now, her dog thing is playing ball. She will chase the tennis ball till you die. I have never seen a dog in my life get more. In fact, I do not even use my arm. My arm gave out years ago. I take a tennis racket, and we go up to the field, and I will just whack that thing, and she will run down there. When she comes back up, you just have to see her face. She will lay that ball down there, and she will back up, and she will back up, and she has her arms spread, and her tail is going, and her eyes are as bright as laser beams. She is looking at that thing, and I will tell you what, I have done it where I have said, "Okay," and I have, and she has been from here six feet away, and I have whacked that thing on the ground like it was shot out of a gun, and she catches it in her mouth. She has come back and brought that back with blood on it where her lip is cut, but that ball hits her so hard. She is a professional ball player. She will play ball. I mean, I took her home one time, and she was so tired. She just flopped and rolled down the hill. I thought she was dead, and she was so tired, and she will play till she dies. She loves me. She wants to be around me, but there are times when she wants to do her dog thing, that she is a professional ball player. I am going out and doing my thing.

Then we have Daisy. Daisy is a little white one, younger than Tinker. She is a lovely little gal. The best thing she does is she sleeps on her back with her legs right up in the air with her head

off, and she sleeps sound, snoring like any man you ever saw in your life. She loves me. She likes to play ball too. She is learning from the big sister, but she has her moments when she just wants to do her own thing. I am sitting on the couch watching television. One of them will get in the other chair. The other one will get underneath over there or sleeping on the floor, and they will be over there, and they just do their thing. They chew their bones. They do their stuff, and they love me. They are good, but they are independent. They take care of their, they do their own dog things.

Then there is Buddy. Buddy is the big old brown lab. I will tell you what, there is not a dumber dog in the world than Buddy. I think he has Down syndrome myself. Tinker hits the ball. She does not just go. She meets that ball with an equal force, and she grabs it. I will tell you what, I have seen where Daisy, she is not quite as, she is younger. She is not quite as coordinated, and she will, but she catches it. I will throw it up in the air. Daisy will drop, turn around, and grab that ball and come down. It will bounce off of Daisy's nose, and Tinker will go through the air, rock, and grab that ball. Now, Buddy, you throw the ball, and it hits him in the nose. He goes, "Huh?" Throw the ball up in the air. He jumps up, he loses his balance. He falls over on his back, and he just lays there and looks at you. He is not a ball player. He only does one thing good, and I cannot mention that in a mixed crowd. But he does them all over the yard, and he does it well.

But I want to tell you something. That dog will never leave my side. If I am sitting over at my desk, studying my Bible, look around. Tinker, she is in the blue recliner with her leg kicked out. She is sleeping. Daisy is on her back on the coffee table with her legs straight up in the air, head over. Buddy, you are down around my feet. I will be doing something all of a sudden. I feel this cold nose on my back. I will look around, and he is wrapped himself around my chair where I cannot move that chair. He does not know. He is going to sleep, but he is going to sleep in the position that if I move, he knows. I am sitting on the couch. He has got to have his head somewhere on my body. Maybe it is on my foot. Maybe it is on my leg. Maybe it is on my, but someplace he has got to be connected with me some way that no matter where I am, Buddy has made his mind up that I am not going anywhere that Buddy does not know where I go. He has got it figured out. He may never catch a ball. He may never be the excellent. You will never see him in a dog Olympics on Pet Channel. Never happened. But I am telling you, he will never leave my side. He wants one thing in life and one thing only. One thing. He does not care about ball. He does not care about going out. He does not want to go for a walk. He wants one thing in life, and that is to be by my side and me never be separated from him.

How many times I have looked at that, and I have said to God with tears running down my face, "God, that is the way I want to be. I want to be so touched on You that You do not move that I do not know it." That is what I am talking about. "Oh God, I have got to have it, and I am not leaving Your side till You give it to me."

Some people look at that, and they say, "Well, that is a goofy thing." Hey, go over to Matthew 15, and you will find a woman over there that did the same thing. She came to Jesus, and Jesus told her no the first time. She stuck with Him. He told her no the second time. She stuck even closer. He told her no the third time, and then He racially insulted her by calling her a derogatory name, and she looked at Him and said, "You are right, Lord. Now can I have what I need because

I am not leaving Your side till You give it to me?" Do you know what He called her? A dog. He says, "I am not giving you this. Why should I take what I have got for Israel and give it to you dogs, Gentiles?" She looks at Him and she says, "You are right. 100% Lord, but you know what? I am Your dog, and Proverbs says the righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." Now how about it? He said, "Great is thy faith, woman." Only two women in the Bible. The Bible says they were great. Remember that little thing I gave you about who walked with God, who was God's friend, who God loved. Well, there are only two women in the Bible. The Bible says they were great. You want to be a great woman. You want to be a great Christian. Study those two women, and one of them is right there. Now her name is not given in my little note along the side of my wide margin Bible. I have given her a name. What do you think it is? Buddy.

The third thing:

- 3.) Lord, I will make You a deal. You give me that book, and I will tell everybody and anybody about You and Your Word.

Lord, I believe this book is the greatest thing in the world. Oh God, I have got to have it. And then the third thing, Lord, if You give it to me, I will make You a deal. If You let me get that book, I will tell everybody I meet.

## VI. My Personal Prayer for Understanding

I am going to share something with you this morning. About 30 years ago, I recognized this, and I took Psalms 119:1-176, knowing what it is, the heart of God, the soul of God, the prayer for David to learn the Word of God. I wanted to be like David, even though I am not. I wanted to be. I still want to be, even though I am not. I want to be. That is my goal. That is my desire. I know I am not. I want to be. I want to show you my prayer. Do you know what I used to do sometimes? I would sit down in the room, and I would put a chair there, and I would sit in this chair. Before I would ever study my Bible, I would read this to God. I would say, "God, this is what I am asking You for. God, I will make You a deal. I will make You a deal. I will make You a deal. You give me this book, and I will tell everybody about it. You give me this book, and I will not be afraid to tell anybody the story. You give me this book, and I will take on anybody, anytime, anyplace, anywhere, because I know, Lord, that this is Your book."

I am telling you, at some point in your life, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but at some point, you need to get you a prayer because the Bible says you have to cry out and lift up your voice for understanding. When I came through this, I saw the three statements that David made. Then I also saw the characteristics of David's life that come out of this. I started my prayer. I am just going to read you through it. It is very quick.

I started with Psalms 119:9.

*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

Because I realized that I had to get clean to get God's Word.

Then I jumped down to Psalms 119:11.

*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

I jumped down to Psalms 119:16. I have it marked in my Bible. Every Bible I have got has that prayer.

*I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

I jumped down to Psalms 119:18. And here it comes.

*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.*

That is a prayer. That is a prayer.

I come to Psalms 119:27.

*Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.*

Make me, because, Lord, it is not natural for me. I am a sinner. I am like what we talked about a couple of weeks ago. His thoughts are not my thoughts. God, make me.

Then Psalms 119:33.

*Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.*

*Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

Psalms 119:46.

*I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*

Then I jump over to Psalms 119:89.

*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

Psalms 119:97.

*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

Psalms 119:98.

*Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

Psalms 119:99.

*I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.*

Psalms 119:100.

*I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*

Psalms 119:105.

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Psalms 119:113.

*I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.*

Psalms 119:127.

*Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.*

Psalms 119:136. This happened too often.

*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*

Psalms 119:140.

*Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.*

Psalms 119:162.

*I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.*

Psalms 119:163.

*I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.*

And then lastly, I close my prayer with this. Psalms 119:176.

*I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.*

You see, that took longer than a lot of God's people spend reading their Bible, but you only get out of something what you put into it. You wonder why you cannot get anything from God in the Word of God? It is not because your IQ had nothing to do with that. It has to do with the fact that you have taken the time to ask God to teach you those things.

David made three statements:

- 1.) He says, "This is the greatest book the world has ever seen. I love it."
- 2.) He says, "Oh God, I am not leaving Your side till You give it to me."
- 3.) He said, "Lord, I will make You a deal. You give me that book, and I will tell everybody about it."

From that 176 verses, you find the characteristics of David's life.

- The Cleansing of David: In Psalms 119:9, you find the cleansing of David. You have to get clean. David knows he has to get clean, but more importantly, knows how to get clean. David understood that being clean before God was the key.
- The Mission of David: The second thing you see in here is the mission of David. David understood that God was going to use him to stand before kings of the world to tell the story of Christ.
- The Wisdom of David: Then you see the third thing, the wisdom of David. Psalms 119:89, "The Word was settled in heaven." David said, "You know what? There is nothing else in this

world that is going to beat this book, and I am going to invest my life in learning everything about it."

The cleansing of David, the mission of David, the understanding and the wisdom of David all led to the attitude of David. The attitude was, "You know what, God? I love You. I love You. I do not care what happens in life. I do not care the ups and the downs. I do not care if I fall or I stand. I am always going to remember that Your book is the book."

## VII. Conclusion: The Necessity of a Personal Prayer for Understanding

"Cryeth and lifted up thy voice for understanding." A prayer, you and I, as God's people, if you want to learn that book, it is more than just reading it and studying it. It is more than just coming to church and coming to Thursday night and putting your notes down. It is coming to the place where you have a time with God that you on your own, do not steal my prayer. There are 176 verses in there. That is about 10 billion different prayers. The combinations of 176 are not even computable on a computer. It is billions and billions and billions of combinations. Every Christian in this world could go there and put their prayer together, not maybe the same way I did it. I have no standard for it. I am just telling you what I needed, what I did. God taught me that book.

I am telling you, if you do not lift up your voice and cry, if you do not ask God, if you do not develop that thing, and you say, "God, I know it is Your book, and the only way I am going to learn it is not through Bob, not through Old Paths, not through going to Bible study." Those are all good, and they will all help. But the bottom line is if You do not open my understanding and You do not give me those things and You do not open up my eyes and I can behold wondrous things out of my law, I am not getting anything. Lots of times because we do not get the book, because we do not understand prayer.

As a Christian, there are things you have a right to ask, and things you do not have a right to ask. That is not our study this morning. I am not getting into it, but it all goes back to that tabernacle where that brazen altar, where that fire came off that thing, and God killed two men because they got the fire from the wrong place. In our prayer life, too many times we get the fire that lights our prayers from the wrong place.

I am telling you, I am here to help you. I want every one of you to stand so dumb to Christ and have to back up dump trucks to haul it all away. But it is going to take you understanding that the world we live in, it is tough. The world we live in is going to battle you down every chance it can. That is why we as a church have to take ourselves and build the foundation of the Word of God, take the new people that God gives us and love them and teach them and train them in the Bible. We have to do what God wants us to do because there is a day coming we are all going to stand before God.

I am telling you, there is not any reason on this planet why you as a Christian should not have everything that God wants you to have. You have to cry out, and you have to lift up your voice

for that book. God will give it to you, but you have to ask Him for it. You have to show Him how bad you want it. Do you remember your mom and dad did not always give you everything when you were growing up? They made you shovel the snow, cut the grass. Maybe it was a bicycle you wanted. Dad could have gone out and bought it, but he did not. He made you mow the lawn, made you do this for all summer long, and then you got it. Do you know why? Because when you ask for something and you work for something, God will give it to you, and it means more to you.

Why God gave the book and laid it down here, and look what man has done with it. God sent His Son, look what man did with Him. But when it comes to understanding that book, God draws a line, and He says, "I will give it to you, but giving it to you and you have it in your hand does not mean you understand it." The understanding comes when I open your understanding, when I give you the great things, or when I build a relationship with you that the secret things that are Mine become yours. When you open up that jewelry box of your heart, and I hide those treasures in there, that is when it becomes real, and that is when it becomes yours, and that only happens when you get that place in your life.

You say, "God, this book is the greatest book this world has ever seen, and I understand it. I know that there is no other Bible, there is no other book in this world that is Your Word, and this is it. God, I am not leaving Your side. My head is going to be at Your feet, around Your throne. My cold nose is going to be in Your back. I am going to be there. You are not moving that I do not know where You are at because I am going with You. Oh God, I will make You a deal. You give this unworthy dog who deserves hell. You give me that book and allow me to have a precious portion of that perfect book, the most perfect book this world has ever seen, and I promise You, God, I promise You I will not be afraid of anybody, and I will never compromise with that book You give me. I will make You that deal. I know what You want, You know what I want. You give it to me, and I will be one You can count on. I cannot say I will live a perfect life. I cannot say I will not make some mistakes, but I will say one thing, Lord, when it comes to this book, there will be no other book go forth out of my mouth, and everybody will know when I die what book he believed or what he stood for." That is the key. That is what it makes. That is what it takes to be the man, the woman God wants you to be. You need a prayer. You are not a glorious, flowery prayer, but you need to have a prayer that you say to God, "God, teach me this." Spend time giving it to God. God loves to hear His Word. Take some time, some time in a room, and just open up the book and read it back to Him. Every head bowed and every eye closed.