

## I. Introduction to Personal Relationship with God

Alright, we have your Bibles this morning. Let's turn back to Proverbs chapter 2. As you know, we have been talking about how to build your own personal relationship with the Lord. We've been trying to cover all the different aspects of it that really help you understand the fundamentals of what it really means to have that personal walk with the Lord. We've talked about personal promises. We've talked about your own personal relationship. We've talked about what it means for Him to be your own personal Savior. We have been coming through some different passages that really, really, I think, just give it all the definitions that we need that really help us understand what God wants us to get out of the Word of God in a relationship with Him.

We talked about Proverbs 2. It says, "Father, we thank Thee and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You so much. We thank You, Father, for everything that You've given us today. Help us to learn Your Word, to apply it to our hearts, and to become, Lord, all things to You, Lord, and then to all men, Lord, that we might reach men and women for the cause of Christ. Help us today, Father, to apply the Word of God to our hearts and our lives, to learn from it. And we'll thank You and praise in Jesus' name for the sake we ask it. Amen."

Now we talked the last time, as I said, it talked about, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee." Last time we talked about the hiding of the Word of God, the commandments, and probably gave you one of the greatest studies that you will ever undertake in the Word of God for your own personal relationship with the Lord. That is the study, as we talked about last week, of the kings of Israel. Those 41 kings—in fact, it was pointed out to me afterwards, I preached on the 41 kings in Israel, we had 41 people here last week. So I don't know if that means anything or not, but it was kind of a neat deal. I guess maybe one for everybody here. But you can go through those 41 kings and you'll find everything you need to understand about loving God with your perfect heart by seeing men who do what's right, but God doesn't count it as being right because it's based on their attitude toward the Word of God. What a tremendous study it was.

## II. Incline Thine Ear Unto Wisdom

Now today we're going to move on into verse 2, and I want to talk about another phrase. As I've said, these are just absolutely loaded in here. Probably nothing in the Word of God really helped me focus on my own personal relationship with God better than Proverbs chapter 2. It says down here in verse 2, "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom." Incline thine ear unto wisdom.

Most of us as God's people, we really don't understand the vast difference between God and us. There are some reasons for that. Our society over the years, if you watch it very carefully, has really eroded and degraded its own concepts of God and the Word of God. Whatever the unsaved world does, however they go, it always has an impact on Bible Christianity. Now it shouldn't be that way. It should be just the opposite. Bible Christianity ought to impact and change the world.

That's the way God intended for it. That's why He called His disciples and called us the salt of the world. We are a preservative. When you have the Word of God and you preach the Word of God, the church of Jesus Christ has a preserving effect on society.

That's why up to about 1950 you saw America as a different nation. America might have been an unsaved nation, but it may have had a lot of problems. They had a lot of other false religions, but the overall concept was that America had a reverence for God and America had a respect for the Word of God. They still prayed in schools. I remember as a kid growing up that at our Easter pageants, when we had Easter and Christmas, we had a preacher come in and he preached to us out of the Bible about the birth of Christ or the death of Christ. You can't do that anymore. Because of that, because society has eroded, because the churches have eroded, and Christians have no salt, they have no preserving factor anymore. So what happens is as society begins to deteriorate, so does the aspect and the concept of God. That's why most of God's people today—I exclude you of that—but most of God's people, your average person out there that just goes to church, tries to figure it out on their own. The average person out there really doesn't understand the difference between them and God.

I'll give you another example. Remember, and you all know that back in the 1950s and sixties, look at the movies that were made that had to do with God. Who doesn't really like to watch *The Ten Commandments*? I know it's a movie. I know it's got, you know, the guys that were the advisors on it were Roman Catholic priests and they always go that way. I know, but you know what? When old Moses is standing there on the mountain, that burning Bush, and that voice booms out of that Bush, I mean, I don't know about you, it gives me goose pimples, man. When they're going down there through the Red Sea, I don't—and they didn't have all the computer generated stuff back then—I don't know how they did it, but I mean, there it is, man. The water, that Red Sea pulled back, boy, and they're going through it. To me, that's impressive. I know it was a movie made by unsaved people, but my point is this: in that movie, they had respect for God. It wasn't like they portrayed God as some infinite, infinitesimal being out there that nobody—it was true to the concept and really the greatness of God. They didn't come up at the end and say, "Well, that miracle about the Red Sea, it really didn't happen. That burning Bush, you know, it was just a light reflection off a beer can." No, no, it was absolutely portrayed as God is who He says He is.

I like *Ben-Hur*. Now that brings you up around the—I like that chariot race, it's great. I like the wicked evil guy when he gets trampled under the horses. I can run that thing back all the time and just watch that thing. I like that. He got what he deserved. I like *Ben-Hur*, a Judah Ben-Hur. I like that. For me, I know it's a movie and you know what, there probably wasn't a guy named Ben-Hur. I don't know. I know that probably the guy that got killed under the chariot horses, he probably didn't exist either. But I'll tell you when it shows that picture of the rain coming down and the thunder and the lightning and the rocks rending, and it cuts to that picture of showing Jesus hanging on the cross with the blood and the crown, I'll tell you what, I know it's a movie, but it puts goose pimples on the back of my neck. My point being is this: that was made by unsaved people. You think those guys really believed that the guy, that picture of Christ hanging on the cross, was dying for the sins of the world? No, it was Hollywood trying to make a movie,

but I'm telling you, it shows that back then, this country still had a reverence for God and an understanding of God.

Now, that was back then. We've changed a lot, haven't we? Now we can't have Ten Commandments in the courthouse. I remember back in the 70s, I had a talk with a relative of mine and he went and saw—this is showing how it goes—he went and saw the movie *Oh, God!*, where God was portrayed by the old cigar-smoking George Burns. I remember him saying to me, he actually believed that God enjoyed watching that movie too. He thought that, "Well, it was funny. It was humorous. And because it was funny and humorous, God can look at that." Then we go a little bit farther. Now we have *Bruce Almighty*. Now God is not just depicted as an old cranky, snare-spoken man. He's now depicted as somebody who likes to go around and do all practical jokes, blow up women's dresses. The generation today looks at that and they think, "Wow, God..." No, He does not. That's the problem. We have lost the concept of the holiness of God. But that's Romans chapter 1. That's what we do best as Gentiles. We bring down the glory of an uncorruptible God, unlike the corruptible man. That's what we do. That's what Gentiles do.

Because of that, we lose the concept today and don't understand the concept when we read that verse there, "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom." We don't really understand the impact of that because I'm telling you something: it's not a natural thing for you and me to find out things about God. That's not my nature. It's not my character. My Bible says in Romans chapter 3 that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, that there is none that seeketh, there is none that understandeth. What we do, Gentiles have always done it, they take the glory and the concept of the holiness of God and try to drag Him down to a cigar-smoking old man or a practical joker who likes the sins of this world. If you were God for a day, all the foolish things that you would do, and I'm telling you, that's not God. That is the concept that America has of God. That's why we look at sin in our lives. We look at sin in other people's lives or sin in the world, and we just shrug and think God understands. No, no, no. You need to understand, I need to understand that God is holy and I am not. The difference between His holiness is my depravity. That's what separates me from God. That's why the Bible says I could never get to God. There's nothing, no good works, no righteous acts, nothing that I could do that would allow me to have fellowship with God.

Oh, Isaiah says it best in Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1. What a great verse. He says,

*Isaiah 6:1*

*In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

He says, "Holy, holy, holy." And then he says, when he looks at himself compared to looking at God's glory, he says, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Because when you see the glory of God and you understand the glory of God, what it does, it exposes how you and I really are. Do you realize that the Ten Commandments were never given for anybody to keep? We got people all the time, "Well, how do you think you go to heaven? Well, follow the Golden Rule, keep the Ten Commandments." They were never given

for you and I to keep. No man can keep them. You see, when I kept them all but just one, the Bible says, if you keep them all, you break one, you're guilty of them all. They were never given for you and I to keep. They were given to show man how far he fell short of what God's perfection was. Because you and I have to understand that God is holy and I am not. I cannot have fellowship with God on my own. If it wasn't the fact that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost, if it wasn't the fact that He was a true light, the light of every man that came into the world, we would have no relationship with God whatsoever.

But God fixed that. Oh, thank God that He did. Because God's original plan, ladies and gentlemen, was to have fellowship with us. That's why He created us. In eternity past, God looked down and said, "I'm going to have a kingdom and I want to have fellowship with men and women that love Me, that want to be with Me, that we can have the joy and the bliss without any problems and we can have all that together." But God said, "You know what? My creation, I made it. I put it down in the garden. I taught them the Bible. I did everything. And you know what? They still turned their back on Me and people all down through the history will always turn their back on Me because I'm not a God who is going to make you without a free will." Given a free will, you and I will make the wrong choice every time. Before we get too hard on Adam and Eve, God, pick any man and woman in here and put them down in the garden without the knowledge you've got now and see how well you do. That's our state.

Oh, but God fixed that. Because God wanted to have fellowship with me. First John chapter 2, verse 1 says that Jesus Christ was our advocate. That means a go-between. Oh, and it's great doctrine here. In verse 2 of First John chapter 2, verse 2 says, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." What a big word that is. Propitiation. The word propitiation or the doctrine of propitiation means a reconciling of two opposing parties. God was over here and He was holy. I was over here and I was sinful and there was no way that I could get together. That's why God came down and took on the body of a man and bridged that gap by being the advocate and the propitiation that Jesus Christ reconciled through the death of the cross. My sinfulness and God's holiness, that now today we can have fellowship with Him.

Now I said all that to say this. Once you understand that, once you realize that you are reconciled to God, that you can have fellowship by the advocate Jesus Christ, the propitiation for our sin, then you understand exactly what verse 2 is saying here when He says, "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom." The word incline means you have to put your mind to it. Somebody says, "I'm inclined to do this." It means you have to put purpose to it. What I'm saying is this: once you understand the difference between me and God, and it's realized even after you're saved, you still have an old sin nature. You realize and understand that it's not a natural thing for you and I to learn and understand the things of God.

### III. Understanding God's Thoughts and Ways

Now, you know, when you look at the Bible, you think it's hard. The Bible isn't really hard. You know what you're really up against when it comes to the Bible? This makes it appear hard, but there's a process by which it isn't really hard, but it looks hard because it is from this aspect:

when you look at the Bible, what you're trying to do is you're trying to understand an infinite God with a finite mind. You're trying to understand a God who is perfect and is holy. When He hates something, He hates it with a perfect hatred. Now, how do I do that? When He loves somebody, He loves it with a perfect love. How do I do that? Because as a human, you and I, we always have ulterior motives. I love you, but I want something from you. I hate you, but it's because I don't like the way you looked. I don't like the way you said something or I don't like what you did to me. So we don't understand how when God hates and God loves, there's no ulterior motive. It's perfect because God is perfect. It's hard for me as an individual to come to the Bible and get God's mind when I'm in such a godless state. Even though I'm saved, I have the Holy Spirit of God. I have an old sin nature that always wants to go against God no matter what. That's why the Bible says I have to crucify it. That's what the Bible says. I have to reckon it dead and all those things. But the basic problem is that I'm trying to figure out an infinite God with a finite mind.

In Isaiah chapter 55, verse 8 and 9, God simply says this:

*Isaiah 55:8-9*

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Now you see that's the problem. You see that with your kids. When my kids were growing up and they were just little kids, I've told you this before, but it bears repeating. We had a tradition in our house. Every year it was called The Wizard of Oz. My kids were just little. Barb grew up watching The Wizard of Oz. I grew up watching Combat!, Gallant Men, Twelve O'Clock High, Up Periscope, Sands of Iwo Jima. But that's a cultural difference between a man and a woman. I'll never forget, my kids loved The Wizard of Oz. We sat down there, it's a neat movie. I think there's a lot of Bible in it. I mean, unsaved man writes it and he goes on down there, you've got to watch it, you've got to rent it this afternoon or watch the next day and just watch how it fits all the Bible. They're following a yellow brick road to a beautiful Emerald City. But it, you know, it isn't the city. You know, The Wizard of Oz has one line in it. It'll teach you more about history and life and what goes on in the United States than any other thing that you'll read anywhere else other than the Bible. You know that?

We sit down there, we probably miss it, the greatest line in that Bible. Once you understand you've got The Wizard of Oz, that mystical, magical place that's going to get you back home. And where I'm going in Kansas—no offense for you folks from Kansas—but that's not where my home is. But I got a yellow brick road and Dorothy. Oh, she's down there. She's trying to get to the city where the man will fix all her problems and solve everything she's got. You got the devil, you got the Wicked Witch of the North, South, East, or West over there. You got the three guys that show up there, you know, the Tin Man, the Wolf Man, and the Straw Guy, you know, and all those. And they're down through there. The greatest line in that movie, they finally got to Oz, fake city. They're seeing the lightning and the flashing and the noise and the booming and all of this stuff. They're looking around and they're saying, "Wow, this is a great city. This must be

what I'm looking for." And then suddenly, one of them looks over and a curtain just kind of pulled back. There's some old guy in there pulling the levers and making everything happen. The greatest line in the movie is that booming voice that says, "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain." Just watch the illusion in front of you. Well, you see, I got a book that takes me behind the curtain. So I don't get hung up with the illusion out in front of me.

Now you all go, there'll be a sale on Wizard of Oz tapes this afternoon, I promise you. Greatest line in a movie. I watched that with my kids and I walked, they came away with one thing. I came away with something else. I thought, "Boy, isn't that the world? It's got an illusion out there that it's really the right place." And then when you start to look here or ask questions about here, you hear this booming voice from the pulpit, this booming voice from some brotherly Christian, "Don't concern yourself with that man behind the curtain. Just watch the illusion."

I'll never forget my kids sitting down there and they watched that thing. They got a lot of neat things. I like the little guys. The little guy looks like little monkeys. I like the guys that go, "Oh!" I like that, man. I've always put myself in that place. Okay, they're down there. What would I do? I'd get up on those rocks with two M6s and put down enfilade fire and I'd cut those little monkeys down to nothing. That's what I do. I'd put three snipers up on the castle and anytime that old Wicked Witch of the North, South, East, or West came out, we'd blow off her broom tail. But that's just me. My kids didn't think like that, but they're sitting down there and they're watching that. That thing's like two and a half hours. They're watching that and all the next week they saw it one time, one time. And the next week, they knew Dorothy, they knew who the Tin Man was, they knew who the Wolf Guy was, they knew who the Straw Man was, they knew who the Wicked Witch. They were singing "Ding Dong, the Witch is Dead." Now they're singing all the songs. They saw the movie one time. On top of that, we try to get them to learn their memory verses and it would take us four weeks working on one verse to learn one Bible verse in memory. You know why? It isn't natural for us to hear the things of God. You have to work at it. It's a lot easier to pick up the things of the world. It's a lot easier.

I'd say the average Christian probably knows more secular songs about the world, and I like secular songs. I don't have a problem with that. I'm not one of these guys that tells you you can't listen to all kinds of music. I think once you know the book and have the book, you'll be a judge for yourself and you know what you can listen to and what you can't. You know what? I learn from everything. When I hear Beethoven, I know where that fits in the history and where that fits in the relationship to the Bible and all that. When I hear that other guy, Dick Wagner, I know where he comes from, you know, and where he writes from, Wagner and all those things, you know. When I hear Mozart, I know where he's coming from and it all fits into the history. So I don't have a problem with it. When I hear the Beach Boys, I know where they fit. When I hear the Statler Brothers, I know where they fit. I mean, I don't have a problem with it. I really don't. But you know what? The average Christian probably knows more secular songs and listens to it and gets them in their heads and their heart than they do the songs of Zion. That's just a matter of fact. You know why? I'm telling you why. Because you have to work at learning something from God. It doesn't come natural because He's holy and I'm not. When the Bible says we have to incline our ear, it means you've got to work at it. You're just not going to get saved and walk out

there with your big mouth open and the Word of God is going to fall in it. Your foot probably will fall in it, but not the Word of God. Isaiah 55 says that His thoughts aren't your thoughts. It isn't the same. Because of that, man always tries to bring God down to man's level. That's where it's at. That's what you and I are up against. I'm telling you, I want to talk to you today about how to learn the Word of God. It starts by once you receive it, once you hide it, and then you've got to look at it.

*Isaiah 65:2*

*I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;*

The bottom line is you and I, as God's children, even though we're saved, even though we have the Holy Spirit of God that leads and guides us into all truth, you have to have a willingness to change your thoughts to be like His thoughts.

#### IV. The Workman and Rightly Dividing Truth

Alright, here comes our main verse for today. Second Timothy chapter 2, verse 15. When you leave here today, you're going to know what this verse means. Second Timothy chapter 2, verse 15 says this:

*2 Timothy 2:15*

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

Now that's a simple verse. That's an easy verse, but oh, let's break it down into components.

- 1.) Study
- 2.) Approved unto God
- 3.) A Workman
- 4.) Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

#### V. Three Ways to Study the Bible

Okay, now study. Three of them. Want to study the Bible? Here it comes. Here's how you study.

- 1.) Study to Show Thyself Approved
- 2.) Study to Answer
- 3.) Study to Be Quiet

#### VI. The Process of Learning and Discipleship

Now here's how the whole process works in closing. Here's how it works. Before you got saved, you're alienated from God's love. You have nothing that God wants, nothing to give to God. He has everything that we need. But I can't get to God. Oh, the Bible says He was a true light that lighteth every man. Oh, the Bible says the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. The Bible says, Bible says in the book of Romans, in the people of Ephesians, that God gave a measure of grace and a measure of faith to every man. You know what that means? That means God gives to every man and woman just enough grace and enough faith to get saved. You don't have enough grace, enough faith to understand all the great things of the Bible. You don't need to. You have enough grace and enough faith to understand that you need a Savior. God gives that by measure to every man. When a person gets that, they take that measure of faith and they ask Christ to come into heart. God saves them. God saves them. That's the first step.

Second step is you find your church. Better yet, you get your man, pastor of that church. Timothy tells, I mean you want the greatest study of how to do it? First and Second Timothy, that's the model. That's the model. A man taking a younger man and teaching him the Bible because he got something that younger man he wants him to do. That's the model. Paul, Paul was in a church. Timothy got saved through that process. Paul took him and Paul taught him and then Paul told him this,

*2 Timothy 2:2*

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

You find somebody to teach you the Bible. You find somebody that will spend the time to work with you, whatever you got. The most important thing in your life you have to do is find God as quickly as you can to get the Word of God. So you need to find you somebody that will give you whatever time you need to learn that book. You do your part, I do mine. Don't come and sit down with me and just say, "Well, you know what, I don't know. What we did today, I didn't really read the Bible much this week. I just didn't get into it and it was snowing. Besides that, the Academy Awards was on." But here I am, don't come to me that way. You come to me saying, "I'm going to suck your brains out and there ain't going to be nothing left in you when I'm done." That's when we're going to get something done. That's where we're at. You get somebody that will teach you the Bible and he teaches you the Bible. You know why? Because down the line he wants you to teach somebody the Bible. Down the line he wants you to take somebody and do the same thing. See right now I can do it. God willing if it ever happens, we get two, three hundred people, I won't be able to do it all the time. So I got to reproduce myself and some of you sharp guys and gals right now that I know that will take that Word of God, love that Word of God and do something with it and then give it to somebody else. So we'll clear off a spot and let's go to work. A workman.

You follow the pattern. You study to show thyself approved. You study to answer and you study to be quiet. You learn how to use it. How do you do that? By witnessing work, by getting your tail burned, by getting out there and saying the dumbest thing and somebody just blasting you and getting you. You know how you learn how to fight? You learn how to be a good fighter by

getting whipped a couple of times. That's how you learn how to fight. You say a guy that's got scars all over his face and his nose is crooked and he's got scars on his head and his forehead, stay away from him. You say, "Well, he loses a lot of fights." Yeah, but he learns how to fight in the process of losing a lot of fights. That's what you got to do. You see your job as your mission field. You go there, you begin to work, you talk to people and you learn. You learn how to use the three types of studies. You learn how to answer. You learn how the book goes and you learn when to keep your mouth shut and you learn and you learn and you learn.

Then as we talked about in the book of Isaiah chapter 28 a couple of weeks ago, we lay the foundation, we build the courses, the doctrine and then here a little, there a little, here a little, there a little. You come to Thursday night, you come this Sunday morning, we have our time in the Word of God and we build together the Word of God and we start to put it here and put it here and build it here and build it here and build it here. Then the Bible says the next process is that you add some things to your faith along the way.

## VII. Adding to Your Faith

Second Peter chapter 1, verse 5. Once you get to that point in your life then you begin to add some things and it comes to the natural process of putting the Word of God and learning how to work toward learning that book. He says this:

*2 Peter 1:5-8*

*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;*

*And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;*

*And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

*For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And those things, I wish we had time to go through them this morning, those things start with virtue which is moral rightness and build into your life right up to charity which is the epitome of love in the Bible even though all the new translations change the word to love your King James Bible kept it the way it should be charity because charity is the biblical expression of love unconditional. But I don't know if you caught it or not. He says right there that a Christian that is saved and on his way to heaven can be unfruitful in his knowledge of God. You betcha. You know why? You have to work at it. You have to work at it. You have to incline your ear unto wisdom. It isn't going to come naturally. I can help you. I can lead you. I can show you. I can guide you. I can keep you straight in the Word of God. I can help you get those things and I have all the things and I can save you what took me 30 years of my life to learn. I can cut the time in half for you. But you know what? That's the way it's supposed to work by the way. The guy that taught me cut his 50 years in half for me. That's the way it works. The guy you will teach you will cut his time and that's the way it's supposed to work. You commit what you've got to faithful men who will teach others. That's the way it's that's the process. It isn't me stand up here and you down here and me just be your pastor and float around in a big car someplace and just be

untouchable and unreachable. No, no, no. It is you and me in the trenches together shoulder by shoulder side by side same mud unused the same mud on me and we're in the book together. That is the way that it has to work. But you have to do the work. I can't do it for you. You have to study to show myself approved. You have to study the answer and you have to study to be quiet. It takes some work. It takes some work. It's never easy but it ain't really ever hard because it's like the job you love to do. I mean how can you not just love God and the Word of God and not want to get into that thing and learn everything you can. I'm telling you when I got into it it changed my life and I know I'm weird. I know I don't ask you to be like me. God don't be like me. Don't even think like me. Be your own person. But I'm telling you what boy when you see the heavens when you see all that God made and when you see all that in that book there isn't much in his life that really really excites me anymore. I have learned one thing. All that glitters is not gold. Gold's in here. But you've got to work to dig it out. It's a gold mine. On your way out pick up your pick, pick up your shovel, pick up your bucket. Go to work. Father.