

Proverbs 2

Sunday 3/21/2004

Open your Bibles this morning to Proverbs 2. As you are well aware, we have been dealing in the book of Proverbs. It has been really exciting and fun for me to teach this, simply because I know what it did in my life. I have learned a long time ago that teaching people the Bible is about 50% Bible and 50% showing people what God has done in your life through the Bible. What works for me will work for you, and what works for you will work for your kids and the people you work with, and the Word of God, however it goes.

We have been focusing on the book of Proverbs. I have also told you this before: if there is any book in the Bible that I would love to have total recall on, where I could just remember every aspect of it, every verse, every word, it would certainly be the book of Proverbs. Without a doubt, the book of Proverbs forms the foundation of everything in the Bible.

I have a little theory. I have never been able to prove this, but there are some things you learn about the Bible that, even though you cannot prove them, you just know the truth. Because you know they are true for you, you do not really care if anybody else believes you or not. One of the things I really believe is that God wrote the book of Proverbs as one of the wisdom books that really deals with all the issues of life. I believe that every story, every book in the Bible, everything else in the rest of the Bible, foundationally, will come back to a principle found in the book of Proverbs. I know that is true of life, and I believe also that it is true in the Word of God. It is one of those incredible books of the Bible that you should spend the rest of your life in, really coming through.

I gave you a breakdown of how Proverbs 1-7, every one of those chapters, starts out with the heading, "My son." It is inspirationally God giving you instruction as His son. From Proverbs 8-30, we have talked about how all those deal with an incredible set of one-liners, which, in each verse, sometimes word by word, really spell out the real issues of life that we have to deal with and how we should respond to them. Then, of course, when you get to Proverbs 31, you really get a picture of what your life and my life should be after we apply everything that the book of Proverbs says and follow its guidelines. Of course, that is the virtuous woman. The virtuous woman in the Bible is the church, a woman who is virtuous by virtue of what she got from Christ. It is an incredible thing. You can go through Proverbs 31 and find the work of the church, the body of Christ, laid out there in an incredibly detailed way. What a tremendous book it is.

We have been dealing with the biblical approach of how you and I can build our life with Christ. We talk over and over again about the day and age that we live in, the Laodicean Church. I have told you many times that our goal here at our church is to build a Philadelphia church in a Laodicean world. Of course, we know that any church will only be as strong as the individual people in it. Therefore, we are building Philadelphia lives. That is really what it is about: investing our lives in the Word of God.

I. The Investment in God's Word

So far, in Proverbs 2:1-5, we have talked about how you are to get into the Word of God, your attitude, and the aspects of truly learning the Bible. We talked about how we are to receive the Word of God; once you receive it, how you hide it, how you have to work and incline your ear, and then apply it to your heart. Then we talked about crying and lifting your voice in prayer to ask God to teach you the Bible, and then seeking and searching with an attitude of going through the Word of God. Then it came to the point in Proverbs 2:5 where it says when you do that, you will know who God is, to fear the Lord, and you will understand what God said, the knowledge of God.

Today, I want to continue here in Proverbs 2:6 and talk about some things, as far as time permits this morning, of what the Word of God does for you. When you make an investment in the Word of God, it pays dividends. Your investment is found in Proverbs 2:1-4. The payout on your investment, the dividend of what the Bible does for you, is this: when you invest your life in the Word of God, it has an effect on you. It changes some things. That is the way God designed it. When you invest your time doing it the right way, as we have talked about in Proverbs 2, then God does some things for you that really help you get and attain the goals that you want to have in your life.

I want to begin reading today in Proverbs 2. We will pick it up here in Proverbs 2:6.

Proverbs 2:6-11

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:

Father, we come to You today, humbly asking You to teach us Your Word. We know that a man can receive nothing unless it comes from heaven. We know that the Bible is Your book. It is written by You. It is preserved by Your hand. Lord, it is only taught by Your Spirit. I pray, Father, that each one of us this morning would look into our own heart and our own lives, and that in the quietness of this moment, as we seek Your face and seek Your favor, You would have us confess anything in our lives that would be displeasing to You, that would keep us from receiving whatever You have for us.

Lord, it has been a good week, but it has been a long week, and we have had to deal with the world. We have had to deal with unsaved situations. We have had to deal with just a lot of things. Lord, that is because that is the world that we live in. We know that those things can get us dirty. Lord, if we have not taken the time to cleanse ourselves with Your Word and ask You to forgive us for those daily sins that keep us from receiving the things of God, I pray, Father, even now You would have each one of us search our hearts and bring to You those things that You could

wash them in Your blood. Lord, give us the ability then to receive Bible doctrine today. We will thank You and praise You for all that You do. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

II. God Gives Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding

There are a number of things here that I want to look at today, and I want to help you understand how the Bible really works for you. We start out here in Proverbs 2:6-7, and it says this, and this is what God will do for you once you give to Him the things in Proverbs 2:1-4: "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

We have talked about this in pretty good detail, how there are three things that God gives you: knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. I have critiqued that for you in the biblical sense, the way the Bible teaches it. Knowledge is facts, and knowledge is learning the events that are around you, facts of whatever. But wisdom is taking those facts and doing something with them. You will find that a man who gets the facts about the stock market, and he studies the stock market, and he learns how the stock market works, in time, he gets wisdom about the stock market, and then he can make money, or whatever the case may be. A man who looks at the business world and wants to go into business for himself, he studies it. He does the investigation on it. He finds out the ins and the outs of it. Then, in time, through the process of doing it, learning more, getting more information, he gets insight into how to run a successful business. He now has the facts, and he now has the wisdom, and he knows how to make it all work.

It is true of anything in life. You see it all the time. I have used these illustrations before. You see it in the world where, when you sit down and you watch the 6 o'clock news, or you watch this, or you watch 60 Minutes, you learn that what you are getting is somebody is getting knowledge. He is taking that knowledge and processing it. He is adding to it a vast amount of more material. Through that, you get wisdom about the knowledge. You understand more than just the facts; you get the insight on what is going on.

The difference between a Christian and the world, and what God gives you that the world cannot have, is this: the world can have knowledge, and the world can have wisdom, but the world cannot have understanding. Understanding is the missing equation that explains to us what God is doing in the equation. I used it before: you can look at history and you can study history, and you can see the facts. You can see all of the aspects, and you can learn those facts: Louis XIV, King Edward I, the Crusades, Pope Urban, whoever you want. You can get all of the facts, and then you can study history, and then you can stand up before a crowd in UMKC or whatever university or college you want to go to, and you can dictate history where people say, "Wow, that is really a great understanding of how our history lays out." You can do it with world history. You can do it with American history. You can do it in any aspect of anything in life. But the real missing key is, "What is God doing in history?" That is understanding.

Understanding will always be your perspective of standing back and seeing the knowledge, seeing the wisdom, but then understanding it from God's standpoint. You realize what God is doing because God is the God of history, just like He is the God of prophecy. God started His work in Genesis 1, and He does not finish that work until Revelation 22. So, when you have facts

and you have wisdom, but you do not have understanding, you do not have the completeness of what you are trying to understand because it will never be complete. Do you see it as what God is doing in anything? I do not care what it is. That is what the Bible does for you. It does not just give you knowledge and wisdom, but it also gives you understanding.

He says in Proverbs 2:6, "out of his mouth." "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding." It is clearly linked to the Word of God. Anytime you find God's mouth, God's words out of His mouth, God speaks, it is always going to be in relationship to His Word. When you get into the Word of God, when you do what Proverbs 2:1-4 tell you to do, you are going to come away with a superior intellect. I do not mean that you are going to be better than anybody else, but you are going to see things that other people do not see. You are going to understand when other people are confused. Other people are going to be limited by the facts and the wisdom of those facts, but you are going to see it from the most important standpoint of everything in the world: that is God's standpoint. It is what God is doing.

We get the idea that history is about what man has done to make the world a better place, or what man has done to get to the point where society gets to be a better place. The truth of the matter is that history is not about anything that man is doing. History is about what God is doing. If you do not see that, you do not have a perspective of history that is going to really show you much other than a lot of Gentiles killing each other and stepping over each other for the purpose of one ruling over the other. So, the first thing he says in Proverbs 2:6 is that the Lord will give wisdom, and will give us knowledge, and give us understanding.

III. The Soundness of God's Wisdom

The next thing he says is in Proverbs 2:7, and he says, "He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous." We talk about how God will give us wisdom, and we talk about how an unsaved man can have wisdom. There are two kinds of wisdom in this world. One of them is the wisdom that an unsaved man has, and an unsaved man can be a wise man. An unsaved man can be wise as far as limited to the things that he can see and understand. They may be good things. You may find a stockbroker who has a lot of wisdom about the stock market, and he can make you a lot of money or put your stocks in a place where you will not get hurt when everything falls down. You can find people who really understand how to do business, and because they have wisdom of the world in the business world, they will make a business work where many will not make it and it will fail. You are going to find unsaved people who have wisdom about how to raise their kids. They will realize that good values are good for your kids, and they will have a love for the kids that they will understand they have to discipline, and they put the right things in their life, and they have wisdom. They are lost. They are not saved, but they have worldly wisdom from that standpoint, and you are going to find in every aspect of life, there are people with worldly wisdom.

But then there is God's wisdom, and God's wisdom is defined in Proverbs 2:7 as "sound wisdom." That is an incredible phrase: "sound wisdom." Do you know why it is different from worldly wisdom? I am not saying worldly wisdom will not get you through life. I am not saying that there are not people out there who have a lot of wisdom in a lot of things, and we do not

benefit from it. The reason why we have electricity and running water and inside toilets and cars and automobiles and all the things that we have is because somebody developed worldly wisdom to a point that it made society somewhat a better place to live and made things easy for it. I do not know if that is good or that is bad, but that is the way it happened.

So, there is a difference between worldly wisdom that produces good results and sound wisdom that is God's wisdom, because sound wisdom is built on biblical principles, absolute standards by which the universe and the world run. Where a man with worldly wisdom may make some mistakes in his wisdom, he is not going to hit the stock market a thousand times in a row, and he is going to make bad calls, and there are going to be things that throw him off and he misses. This indicator was off, so it threw him off here because he has to depend on his own human spirit and what he sees around him, and his own brain mass and his brain power and his ingenuity and his tenacity. All of those things that make a man successful without God, he has to depend on that, and the best he can be, at times he will fail, make mistakes, because he is fallible.

But when it comes to sound wisdom, this is where it works better than anything else, because if you follow the wisdom of God, sound wisdom, it will never lead you down the wrong path. You will never make the wrong decision. The only wrong decision you will ever make is not to follow it. God's wisdom is sound because it is based on absolute, infallible principles that will never change. That is one thing that you have to understand about the Bible. I know the Bible is a lot of things, and I know the Bible covers a lot of areas, but one of the things the Bible does, and we have touched on this before, is the Bible sets down a consistency. That consistency never changes. That is why whatever worked in the book of Acts will work today. That is why whatever worked in the Old Testament, as far as the Ten Commandments and a righteous rule that you can follow, will work today. That is why God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That is why the main thing of the Bible you have to see is its consistency.

That is why you can rest in the Bible with sound wisdom when any other book written by saved people or lost people are always going to be suspect to a certain degree, because they are fallible. Even the best saved man, the best saved woman, the best unsaved man, and the best unsaved woman, no matter how wise they are, are prone to mistakes because they are human. That is why you never take anything anybody says, saved or lost, whether it is your preacher or whoever, over the sound doctrine of the Word of God. That has to be all of our basic foundation from which we operate. It is as simple as that.

You are going to find that unsaved men will give you good advice. I think one of the greatest things that I ever heard was by Don Corleone. He said, "Keep your friends close and keep your enemies closer." That is good. The Bible says, "Let them do to you whatever they want because God is the one who is going to take care of you, and vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." You see, one is worldly wisdom that works for a group. The other one is sound wisdom, because the very best Don Corleone could say, he still got shot several times in the movie. The best wisdom that he had, there was some enemy out there that he just got let too close, or not close enough. With God, you do not have to worry about that. Do you know why? Because His teachings are sound. You can take them to the bank. You can stay with them.

Then Proverbs 2:7 says this: "He layeth up sound wisdom." That is a great concept. Do you know what He does? He stores it for you. In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there are some incredible stories, and they all have incredible teaching that really bring so much truth to our lives, even though it is written to the Jews. There is so much practical stuff in it. One of the stories, and you all know this story in the Gospels, is where He feeds the 5,000. I have looked at that story many, many times, and I thought, "Wow, what a great story that is," because there is a tremendous study line behind it that will give you tremendous insight into how God deals in your own life. We do not have time to deal with that this morning, but I want to show you this.

Here is a bunch of people that do not have anything to eat. There is one little guy that has five loaves and some fishes. Jesus takes those, and He multiplies it, and He feeds them. That is an incredible picture of how God takes care of us as children by feeding us, giving us His Word. If you go down through there, the whole story lays itself out point upon point of how God deals with us in the Word of God. One of the first things it says is that Jesus knew they did not have any food, and He asked them where they were going to get food because He wanted to prove them. In other words, sometimes God will ask you questions just to see what your answer is when He already knows what He is going to do.

He brought that crowd. He took them out into a desert, the Bible says, a deserted place. There He feeds them. Sometimes God has to get you into a desert when there is nothing else around so He can get your attention to give you what He wants. All the study is incredible. He makes this great miracle, and He feeds everybody, and the Bible says it very clearly: they can have as much as they want. That is true when it comes to the Bible. The only thing that will limit you with what you get from the Bible is you. You could have as much as you want. He says every man could have as much as they want, ate to their fill, however He says it. Then He says there were 12 baskets left over. I like leftovers. Twelve baskets left over. Do you know what Jesus says? He says, "Get all this stuff, pick up that nothing will be lost." Do you know why? Because you are not going to understand everything you read from the Bible right now when you read it, but that is okay. God is going to store it up for you anyhow. I promise you, nothing you read that you do not understand will be lost. You may not be able to eat it right now, but He will lay it up for you that you can eat it later when you better understand it. That is one of the greatest concepts that you will ever get out of the Bible.

Your mind and my mind are like a computer. The truth of the matter is, the modern-day computer that we have today is nothing more than a counterfeit of the greatest computer that man has ever seen, and that is your brain. As in a computer, it has incredible resources for information. You can get from it anything that you want. Literally, we live in what we commonly call the information age today. We went through the agricultural age, we went through the industrial age, and now we are in the information age. A man today, just by buying a Kansas City Star newspaper, can have more information in that newspaper than a man that lived in the 16th and 17th century would have amassed in his whole life. Incredible! Take it past that and go on the Internet, and you have an unlimited resource of anything you want to find. It is anything the rest of your life you could explore that and never digest all the information. But I am telling you, it is all stored in your computer. All you have to do is go through the process of calling it up, get

online, and the information will always be there. If you want to download it and put it into your computer, it will always be there until you dump it. Then I do not know if it really goes anywhere. Where does it go when you dump it? I looked underneath it, it does not fall on the floor. How do you do that? It says "bin," "dump bin," or "waste bin," or "recycle bin." Then I watch it, you push that button, this little arm throws a piece of paper in there. I am looking, "Where did it go? Is it still there, or is it gone?" I do not know anything about it. I do not like computers. They scare me. I think the CIA someplace is reading everything. What do you worry about the CIA? God is keeping track of everything you look at on it.

I look at that, and I think to myself, "Wow." That is the way my mind is. My mind is a much better computer than that, and my mind never forgets anything. Do you know what dreams are? People say, "Well, dreams are of God." At one time they were. Sure, God spoke to people by dreams. Somebody said, "Well, I went to sleep last night, and I had a dream that the devil was chasing me. I looked up, and I saw this light, and I ran toward a light. The closer I got to the light, the farther the devil was behind me. Finally, when I got right up next to the light, I turned around, and the devil was gone. Bob, did God give me that dream?" I said, "No. You should have cut off that last piece of pizza at six and dropped the last glass of beer, and you would not probably have had that problem." Dreams are not from God today. God did not give you a dream.

I had a guy tell me one time, he says, "I dreamed I was dying." He said, "Honest, Bob," he said, "I stepped out of my body. I looked back, and there was my wife sleeping, and there was my body. I started to move toward this great light. I started to move out, and I said, 'I believe.'" You hear all kinds of people talk about these deathbeds, "How I went to heaven and came back." I hear a guy say, "I went to hell and came back." But he did not describe the hell of the Bible. I do not think he went to hell and back. I think he went to Topeka, Kansas, or someplace, but it was not the hell of the Bible. He said, "I got toward this light, and I got close to this light. Right as I was, it was a big gate. Right as I got to step inside this gate, I heard this voice, and boom, the voice of God said, 'Not ready yet.'" He said, "I woke up, and I was back in my bed. What do you think of that?" Well, let me tell you what I think about it. I do not think it was God.

Do you know what dreams are? Dreams are your pop-ups in your computer. Dreams are all day long; your computer is going. You are downloading all day long. When your computer, you can shut it off and you can put it back in there, and you cannot do that with this one. You may not know it, but you are looking right now. You are seeing a tree. You are seeing that blue cargo bar. You are seeing the people out here. You are not even thinking about it, but your computer is downloading everything. Then you go to sleep at night. When you go to sleep at night, that is the closest point of you dying in your life other than dying. It is a picture of death because Jesus said, "She is not dead, she is sleeping." When you die, you go to bed. When you wake up in the morning, the sun comes up, a type of Christ, and you start over again. Your body and my body are built around the pre-millennial return and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ found in the Bible.

When you go to sleep at night, it is the only time that your brain is in neutral. You have all of these film clips floating around in your brain. All this downloaded material from the time you started downloading as a little baby, it is all in there. You have forgotten it. You do not remember

it. The educated people call it your subconscious. Everything you have seen and experienced is still in there. You say, "Well, Bob, I just forgot." No, you did not forget. It was just in the recycle bin, but you never really got rid of it. That is why something that happened 30 years ago is still like it happened yesterday. Why? Because the same thing at night. I know movies that were made back in 1950 that you can go home and watch this afternoon on the family channel or this channel or whatever, and the action channel, and it looks like they were just made. They were made back in the 1950s. You have thoughts in there that come back just like it was yesterday, or 20 years ago.

So you are sleeping at night, and you are just there, and all these, your computer has got all this information. Now it is just kind of floating around in there because you are not controlled. You are sleeping, and you are out of it. Now, depending on what you do with your body and all those things, there are a lot of factors. Basically, it is like this: this is a piece of film strip from Freddy Krueger. This is a video from The Ten Commandments. Here is The Passion of the Christ. Here is The Thing That Ate New York. Here is Jaws 1, Jaws 2. Here is our family reunion back here. Here is my mother-in-law's birthday party. Here is this, and all floating around, and suddenly, in the middle of that thing, all those pieces of film connect. Suddenly, here comes your mother after Freddy Krueger, after Jaws 2, and here comes The Thing That Ate New York. It is the weirdest thing you ever saw in your life. You wake up and you say, "Wow, that did not make any sense."

Or we have the deep-seated passions within us that we have, that we want to experience things: God, heaven, hell, our dead loved ones. We have that deep passion inside us. So we go to sleep at night. All those film clips start moving around in our subconscious, and suddenly it becomes Grandma's birthday 1980. It becomes this or becomes that. Right in the middle, the weirdest things happen. Here is your grandmother, and she is over here, and you are having that party. Suddenly, here comes your dead uncle that died back in the 16th century, showing up at the party. You are "wow, wow." Then he looks like your mother, even though it is your uncle. It just gets so confusing. Why? That computer is still running. When you sleep, you do not have any control over it. It is not God. God speaks to you. He speaks to you through this book. I do not put any stock in dreams.

I do not know what my deal is. I tell my wife this: I do not ever dream. Lately, I have been having some wild ones. I usually just sleep, I am up, and I am gone. But lately, the last couple of weeks, I do not know if it is the medicine I am on for my hypertension or what. I do not know. But I have just been having the most unbelievable, not nightmares, but weird dreams. You are a fireman, and you go to the fire, and then suddenly you are the fire truck. But I know they are not from God. I know that that is the way my subconscious is.

I know this also: the Bible says God's day begins at night. "The evening and the morning were the first day," "the evening and the morning were the second day." Our day begins in the morning. God's day begins at night. So I know this: the last thing you put in your mind when you go to bed is the first thing you are putting in on God's day. Then God can structure your day, the whole night through. If the last thing you go to bed on is the Word of God, you are doing good. If you go to bed on nine pieces of pepperoni pizza, you are doing bad. If you go to bed on Psalms

119, you are doing good. If you go on NBC News or whatever, you are in bad shape. That is just a little something extra you can have. God's day begins at night.

God lays up. When I invest my life into that book, God stores it. It is in my computer. This is my computer by which everything I need. If I go to my laptop or my computer and I need to find something out, I just type in something, and in a minute, up it is. Then I can search it down and find it wherever I want. When I put this thing, the Word of God, the sound doctrine, in my mind, in my computer, when I download the Word of God more than anything else, then when I get into a situation, when I need something, when I am teaching, when I am preaching, when you are discipling or you are talking to somebody and witnessing to them, you do not have to go to your mouse and hit "open" and get the file. The Holy Spirit of God does that for you, and He brings up what you downloaded because He lays up sound doctrine and sound wisdom for you. Nothing you read in the Bible will ever be lost. You do not understand it all. The Holy Spirit of God says, "Gather it up. He cannot eat it right now. She cannot digest it right now. We will store it, download it. Three years from now, four years from now, five years from now, when she gets a grasp on some other things or she learns some things, it will be valuable." That is the great thing about the Bible. You never waste it.

Some people say, "Well, I am reading this right now. I understand some of it, but I do not understand all of it, and it is kind of confusing." That is okay. Get what you can. You are downloading it. I have things in my mind or in my Bible I have been reading, and suddenly, out of the clear blue, something will hit me that I read 10 years ago that I had absolutely forgotten about, that God will recall it, and it will open up a whole concept I never thought about. Do you know why? He layeth up sound wisdom.

IV. God as a Buckler and Protector

Also, in Proverbs 2:7, it says that "he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly." A buckler in the Bible is a shield. That word "buckler" is an old English word, and it means more than just a shield. If we were in the book of Ephesians in the New Testament, this would be the shield of faith by which you are able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. So this buckler here, to them that walk uprightly, is your protection. God protects you. He gives you the ability to be protected. That protection is something that when the world comes after you, or life goes sour for you, or you have struggle in life, when you do what is right with the Word of God, the Word of God protects you. It becomes a buckler, a shield.

But the word "buckler" carries with it more than that, because the word "buckler" also suggests that it will sustain you. We use the word, "it is going to buckle." In England, they use the word, "buck up, lad." In other words, "hold yourself up." The Word of God not only protects you, but it holds you up from caving in, because there are times in life when caving in seems like the thing to do. The Word of God will, because He lays up sound wisdom, wisdom that is built on the absolute principles of God. It will keep you from buckling in the bad situations of life. It will sustain you and hold you up when nothing else will.

So we see there in Proverbs 2:6-7, there are some tremendous things. He says, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom." You have to program. You have to get online with God with this computer brain that God has given you, and that is what the Bible means when it says, "Let this mind be in you" (Philippians 2:5). You put the Word of God, program it in your computer, and it will override everything else. You do not have a question of, "Well, I had a dream last night and this and that." You understand what your mind is. It is a computer with millions and millions and billions and trillions of pieces of information that you have put into your mind, into your brain, that you have processed—some good, some bad, some indifferent, some you do not even know you have, some you have forgotten as far as recall years ago—but it is still there. If you can do that with Edna's birthday party 30 years ago, what can you do if you put the Word of God in it? God will bring it up, and God will keep you. He will be a buckler to you.

V. Keeping the Paths of Judgment

Then Proverbs 2:8: "He keepeth the paths of judgment." These are so practical for you to understand what the Word of God does for you once you do with it what you need to do. "He keepeth the paths of judgment." This is a good one. All my life I have heard people say, "Don't judge me." I have heard this religious crowd all my life say, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." The Bible says in Matthew 7:1, to which I always would say, "Wrong dispensation." Matthew 7 is not to me. Matthew 7 is the constitution of the kingdom that God is going to establish when He comes back in the Second Coming of Christ. He says, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." No, the doctrine is taught in Paul's writing to the church in 1 Corinthians 2:15, when he says, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things."

You have to make judgments every day in your life. You have to. Judgment is a path. Life is a path. You have to walk on it. That is why the Bible says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." Every day in your life, you have to make judgments. You make them in everything. Everything you have to do. That is why I think what we did last Thursday night, and I try to make it very clear, but you still have people who are going to hear what they want to hear. But I try to make it very clear when we are talking about The Passion of the Christ, I am not mad at anybody. I do not care. I was not doing it because I was being critical. I was doing it because as a Christian, when I am faced with something like that, that is going to have an impact on my life, I have to make a judgment about it. I have one or two ways to do it: I can jump on the bandwagon with everybody else and let my emotions just flurry in the wind, or I can go back to sound wisdom and I can find out what God's opinion of it is, and then make that opinion my opinion.

I am telling you, I did that not just because I wanted to take a swipe at it. I could care less about taking a swipe at it. I wanted to do it to teach you, my people, how, as an example, that that is just one thing. I am going to tell you right now, watch it very carefully because they are all coming down the pike. I have been watching this thing for quite a while. I have not really said anything about it, but do you know who the next big hitter is going to be? Mary Magdalene. Oh, yes. I have been watching this thing for the last six or seven months, and now there was a big

article in the Star about it yesterday: Mary Magdalene. Do you know what they are saying now? You can get any number of books today that say, one, she was Jesus's wife or secret lover, all the way up to the fact that she was the 13th apostle. What they are saying is, and this is where it is going, all these women who want to be preachers, all these women who have a problem with authority and want to be what they are not supposed to be in the Bible, they are now rallying around Mary Magdalene. They are saying that the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John suppressed her because of their male chauvinist attitude, that she was really the kingpin, that Jesus spent more time around her. She is the only one who was there at the resurrection, and she was really the kingpin, and they did not like it because they are male. One writer comes out and says that she was the wife of Jesus secretly. The other one said that Jesus had sexual relations with her. The other one says that she was the 13th apostle, all the way up that they put her on the same standard as Mary.

I am telling you, it is coming, and you are going to have to deal with that at work with all the women's libbers and all this crowd that believe in all of this stuff, and they are going to say, "See, there it is." Now they are claiming that the Bible itself was written to suppress her, to keep her down so that the male figure could be dominant. They even go so far as to say that it was slander when the Bible says that Jesus cast out seven demons out of Mary Magdalene. That was a lie because they wanted to keep her down. Let us all break into a chorus of "Let My People Go." "I Have a Dream." I am telling you, it is the same stuff.

I am telling you, your whole life is faced with those kinds of things where you have to hear it, you have to listen to it, you have to experience it, and then you have to make a judgment about it. Do you know why you are lucky today? You are lucky today for one reason: because you have a book that lays these things out for you. I am going to tell you, and I am just going to say this, it is true, do not get mad at me: we live in a world today where they want the Bible as far away from being a final authority, absolute standard as can be. Why? So this kind of stuff can flourish. Because if you get rid of the Bible, you do not have any absolute standard.

I am going to tell you right now, it is not the world's fault, it is God's people's fault. I could take you right now to any new translation you want to get. Do not bring me a new NIV or an old NIV or an ASV. I will go over to Mark 16, and I will show you a footnote in your Bible that says, even though it is in your Bible, the last eight verses of that chapter are not to be trusted. They are spurious. They are not really in the Bible. "We put them in because of tradition, but you cannot trust them." I will take you over there in John 5, one of the greatest miracles you find. Remember the story about the guy down by the pool of Siloam down there in Bethesda, and every year the water moved, and the first one that dipped his toe in it got healed? Every Bible scholar on this planet, just about, that does not believe this book, says that should not be in your Bible. You go over to 1 John 5:7, where it talks about the three that bear record in heaven, the greatest verse in the Bible on the Trinity. You will find a footnote that says, "This verse is not found in the best manuscripts."

Now I am going to ask you a question: if you cannot trust your Bible there, then maybe Mary Magdalene really was what everybody else says she was. Where do we draw the line? What is truth and what is not? If you are left to your own discretion to decide what is and what is not, we

are all in trouble. There has to be, has to be, has to be somewhere in this world, one absolute, infallible standard, because the Bible says it will keep you in the paths of judgment. You are going to be faced with a whole bunch of movies about Mary Magdalene. You are going to be faced with book after book how she was this and she was that. None of it is going to be in the Bible because people are going to come to it, and they are going to buy it, and they are going to believe it because 40 years ago, Bible-believing men and women took this book out from under your nose and said, "You cannot trust it." Now, where the world says you cannot trust it, we all go, "Oh, I am all upset as a Christian." So your preacher tells you, "You cannot trust it." What is the difference? There is no difference.

Your whole life is going to be one of having to stay on that path of judgment. Your whole life is going to be faced with things that you, for your family—who your daughter dates, who their kids run around with, who they marry, who they do this, who they do that—your own life, about your wife and your husband, what you allow into your personal life, what you read, what you do not. Everything in your life, you are going to be impacted by people in your life that impact you wrongly or rightly, and you are going to have to make a decision: "I cannot be with them anymore." You do not make that decision based on your emotional whim. You make that decision based on sound wisdom. But you are going to have to make that call. I gave you the great, and I will continue to do it. When things come up, we will take time on Thursday night and go through it. Again, I was not fighting the movie. I could care less. But as a Christian, when I am faced with it, I have to deal with it and make a judgment about me. I cannot make it for you. You are my people. I am your pastor. I want to show you how to make it. But ultimately, at the end of the day, you have to make it.

VI. God Preserves His Saints

Then the next thing, "He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints" (Proverbs 2:8). Let me just say something to you. As a Christian, not everything that is going to happen to you is going to be good. That does not mean that it is bad from God's standpoint. But we as human beings, we allow our emotions sometimes to get ahead of the Word of God, and maybe we do not always see things the way they are at the time. That is just human. We have all been there and done that. But the truth of the matter is, you have to realize no matter what happens in this life, once you are saved, you are His. God is going to preserve you just like He preserved His Word. God is going to get you home to heaven and take care of you in spite of yourself and myself. You are going to realize that through life, tough times are going to come. Maybe you have not experienced them yet. Maybe you have. I do not know. I am not saying this with any particular thing in mind. I am saying it is a general truth that it is going to happen.

I have a hard time listening to Christian radio today. It just drives me nuts. You get these little things, none of it is true. It all has this false, effeminate concept. None of it is true. It is just spiritual gas. It leaves you empty. You have this little thing where they have these little places where you call up and you get the thought for the day. You call it up there, and it is just an effeminate male voice. If this guy is not gay, he is missing the best chance he has had all day. It is effeminate. I am a man. If I want something from a man, I want a man. I want somebody up

there to say, "Look, guy, stay in the fight. Hang in there, son. He is coming." That is what I want. You get this little guy in here, and he says, "This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice." What is that doing for me? Yes, it is only half true. Yes, it is the Lord's day. Yes, I am glad and rejoice. But what you ought to say is this: "Hey, pal, God made today. It is His day. Give thanks for all things. But I have some news for you: you are going to get it in the neck today." I can do something with that. But this effeminate stuff, that is not me. Maybe that is you. I do not know. Maybe a lady needs that. I do not know. Maybe I am just speaking of the male show. I am just telling you, I do not see Christianity that way. I think Christianity is a, you are a soldier in a warfare. Jesus Christ is the Captain of my salvation. I am in a war locked in a battle that is greater than any battle.

I have been around army guys. If I have to go into a battle and I have to be in a foxhole with somebody at three o'clock in the morning, when the flares go off and they come over the hill, I do not want somebody looking over my shoulder that looks at me and says, "This is the day the Lord hath made." That is not what I am looking for. No. I want somebody to look over their shoulder and say, "Hey, they made it this far, but let us get some of them." That is the guy I am looking for. That is the way it is in Christianity. We are in a war. I am going to tell you something: if you learn anything in time, you are going to learn that if you are saved, God is going to preserve you. He is going to preserve you. You better understand this life is a veil of tears. The devil is going to kick you six ways from Sunday. Your family is going to hate you. Your friends are going to hate you, especially if you love this book. You are going to have people that are going to dump you, dump on you, and dump everywhere around you. So what?

You will find in time, 20, 30 years from now maybe, there will be two great stories in the Bible that are your favorites. They are my favorites. The first one is my favorite. It goes right along with God preserving you. The first one is old Joseph back there in Genesis. You know the story. He is back there, and he is the favorite of his father with all the other boys. They envy against him. I am not saying that Joseph was perfect. I do not believe he was. I believe there are some things that he, reading between the lines back there, I think there are probably some things that he did that probably incited it. We are all human. But be that as it may, he got it. His brethren sold him into Egypt, and the Pharaoh down there, went back, made up this elaborate scheme, went back and told his father that he is dead and all this stuff. How the hand of God, what goes around comes around. There they are. They get into a famine, no food. Father says, "Go to Egypt and buy corn." They walk into Pharaoh, and lo and behold, who do they see? Now, he is number two in the kingdom. He could have had their heads cut off. He could have done everything in the world to them. But he did not. Do you know why? Because he understood something, and it is something you better learn. There are bad things in this life that are going to happen to you. Some because of some of the dumb things we did, some because of the fact you get it for believing the book. But whether it is or whether it is not, the bottom line is you better understand that if you love that book and you love God, He will preserve your way, and you can stand there. This story will be so real because he says in Genesis 50:20, talking to his brother:

Genesis 50:20

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Do you know what he understood? He understood that God would preserve you. That bad times are going to come, and you better grasp it, that God will preserve you. No matter what anybody does that is evil to you, that means it for your evil, if you love that book, God means it for your good.

Daniel is my next one. Daniel 6. Daniel is my favorite guy in the Bible. He is incredible in the Old Testament. Next time I preach, it will be somebody else, but today he is my favorite. You know the story. He gets thrown in the lions' den. I am not saying Daniel did everything right. In fact, they bow down and worship over there. He did not say, "Get up." He kind of enjoyed it. He is a high-ranking guy in the kingdom. He got thrown down the lions' den. Tough place to be. In this life, there are some times that you are going to get thrown in the lions' den. Let me give you a piece of advice: do not ever worry about being thrown in the lions' den as long as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah goes in with you. Take it to the bank. Preserve the way.

VII. Understanding Equity and Balance

Then he says this, he is down here in Proverbs 2:9: "Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." He says, "Then shalt thou understand righteousness." That is who God is. "Judgment" is what God said. Then he says, you get "equity." Do you know what equity is? That is balance. That is keeping things in perspective. That is the toughest thing sometimes to do. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:25, "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." Balance.

He says in 1 Corinthians 6, "All things are lawful unto me." I am under grace. All things are lawful. I am not under the law. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." That means not always wise to do. "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." You see, I have liberty in Christ. I can do whatever I want to do within reason that is not a direct violation of the Word of God. That is a lot of things. But my goal in life as a Christian is to stay balanced. Balance is the key to me keeping on the right path. There are lots of things out there that I can do, but if I do them, there is a danger that they will control me more than I will control my life. That can be anything. There is not anything in your life, in my life, that should control you more than this book does. Not your job. Not making money. Not this, not that, not anything. Or anything you get into. You can do all kinds of things. There is nothing wrong with it. There are so many things as a child of God that you can do.

I know you have this little clique of groups that try to put you in shackles and chains and do not let you think for yourself. The bottom line is, I learned a long time ago, as a pastor, it is not my job to legislate morals. It is my job to preach the truth and then put that truth in your heart, and then the Holy Spirit of God, if you are disciplined, will take that truth and deal in your heart, and you have to make the judgment call. My job is not to dress you. My job is not to tell you this or tell you that. My job is every time I stand in this pulpit to give you sound wisdom. There is nothing in our lives that should run us. You know as well as I do, when it happens, we get out of

balance. We lose our perspective, and we do dumb things, or we ruin this or we ruin that. We get into bondage of this, and you cannot. That is why you have to understand that when you do what Proverbs 2:1-4 tell you to do, this is what God does for you. He will keep you on the paths of judgment. He will preserve you, and He will help you understand balance in your life.

VIII. The Discretion of God's Word

Lastly, and this to me is the most valuable thing. The Bible does a lot of things for us, but if I were to pick one thing that God gives me through His Word that is the most valuable thing that I am going to use in my life, and you are going to need in your life, it is this thing right here.

Proverbs 2:10-11:

Proverbs 2:10-11

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:

When you get wisdom and you get knowledge and you get understanding, do you know what it produces in the biblical sense? It produces discretion. Do you know what discretion is? It is discernment. Do you know what discernment does for you? It tells you what is real and what is phony. In this world, 99.9999% of it is phony, and less than one millionth of a percent is real. You and I as Christians have the obligation to be able to discern what is real and what is phony. When you get out of balance, when you get your emotions involved, when you get all these other things out of whack, that is tough. When you are bombarded with this and that, and everybody at work says, "Oh, this is it," and whatever the fad is now, wherever the wind blows, and it is going to keep on blowing and keep on coming, you have to have discernment.

I had a kid one time that I disciplined, and he worked for the federal government. He worked in the aspect of dealing with counterfeit. That has always intrigued me because I always thought, "My, those guys." I never fully understood to what elaborate things. Counterfeiting is an art. I asked him one time, "Man, you must have to go to school 30 years. How do you spot counterfeit?" I said, "Obviously there is some that is bad, but I know there is some that is absolutely incredibly good. All day long, how do you ever investigate anything? You have to be keeping up on all the new techniques. You have to look at all the new phony money, and you have to put in your mind." I said, "Do you carry pictures of them around in your wallet? How do you do it? How do you ever amass the knowledge to know what all the phony money looks like?" Do you know what he told me? He said, "Well, that is not how they teach us. They do not teach us to study phony hundred-dollar bills. They teach us to study a real hundred-dollar bill. When you know what a real hundred-dollar bill looks like, the phonies always stand out like they had neon signs in them." I thought to myself after that, "Boy, that guy taught me more that day than I taught him."

But that is what this book does. I do not have to go out there and investigate all the things that are out there. I have an absolute standard that tells me what sound wisdom is and gives me sound doctrine. When you study the real book, the book shows you very clearly what the phonies are.

This is the greatest single thing the Bible will do for you as a Christian, outside of saving you. Do you know what it does? It gives you the ability to read the fine print of life.

I have dealt with people for 35 years of my life. I have learned one thing about human nature: I realize that this book that I have got in my hands, one of the other things it does is that it critiques human nature to such a degree that it is unbelievable. If you want to find out what is phony, study what is real. I learned a long time ago, you deal with people, people will lie to you. They will mislead you. They will hide. They will do everything in the world except just give you the truth. I have found that if you just study what is real, I will tell you one of the stories, and I have told you some of this before, but I remember years ago as a young guy, I was reading the story of Solomon in 1 Kings 3. This story is where Solomon talks about how wise he is. I am thinking to myself, "Wow." Then he tells this story. Two women came into him, and they had a baby. They come up before the king, and he was hearing all the issues that day. They tell him this story. The one woman says, "I had a baby, she had a baby, and my baby rolled over and died or whatever the case, and she took my baby, and this is really my baby, and she says it is hers." The other lady said, "No, King, this is my baby. It is really not hers. It was her baby to die."

Now, he has a dilemma, and I have found myself in those dilemmas many, many times, dealing with people and telling me about who is right, who is wrong, who did this, she said what, and all these things. I do not know who is telling the truth. I will tell you something else: Solomon did not know. The Bible is very good to tell you, they are both harlots. He did not know them. He had no idea who was telling the truth, and there are some times when a husband and a wife come in, and she says this, he says that, you have no idea who is telling the truth. Solomon just said this, he says, "Okay, I know how we will deal with this. Bring me a sword." He brought that sword out. He says, "Okay, here is what we will do. I will just whack the baby in half. You can have one half, you can have the other. Everybody happy with that?" The real mother said, because she loved the baby, and she would rather have the baby go to somebody else than die, the real mother said, "No, give it to her."

When I read that story, I have to confess, as a young Christian, when God started showing me these things, this was one of these things that laid around in a basket for a long time before I figured it out. I will never forget, I got looking at that, and I thought to myself, "That is the strangest thing." Because right at the end of that chapter, the Bible says the whole world wondered at the wisdom of Solomon over this deal. I thought to myself, "Well, what happened if that would not have worked out? And they both would have said, 'Okay,' would he have cut the baby in half?" I said, "I am not sure I see the wisdom in that." Then years later, God brought one of those 12 baskets with the fragments in it that I was talking about. I got over there to Hebrews 4, and I saw where the Word of God was:

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

I learned a great counseling principle. You have two people come in, say, "He said, she said." You do not have to decide who is right and who is wrong. Just put them under a sword, the Word of God. Say, "Come to this church, get involved in the Bible, be here Thursday night, be here Sunday morning, let so-and-so disciple you, let so-and-so disciple you." Do not worry about whose problem it is, just get into the Bible, it will solve your problems. Do you know what that sword will do? It will always produce who is telling the truth and who is not. You can do a lot of things. You can fake this, you can fake that, you can fake your eyebrows, you can fake your hair, you can fake your hair color, you can fake this, you can fake that. You cannot fake being a true child of God walking in the light. You cannot do it. You will trip yourself up.

I will give you another one. Sometime after that, I was eating some more, and God brought another basket. How do we get back there in Genesis? In Genesis 27, you know the story of Isaac, Jacob, and Esau. You all know the story. Jacob gets a scheme with his mother to deceive Isaac to get the blessing. Go back and study the scheme. It is an elaborate scheme, which I have learned years after that. Some of the things that people would tell me were very elaborate. Sometimes they involve other people to bring off the deception. A lot of times, as they did in Genesis, they will even bring God into it to try to make it real. But there is always a way around that. Put them under the authority of the Word of God.

In the deception, what does Jacob do? The Bible says that Jacob was a plain man. Esau was a hairy man. Isaac is blind. He does not know who is who. What happened? He went out there, and his mother made up some stew, chili, whatever, and brought it in there. She put this big hairy coat on him. He walks in there, and his father is blind. His father is kind of suspect right off the bat. He says, "How did you find it so quickly, son?" "God brought it to me, Dad." See how they always bring God into it? That appeased Isaac, kind of. He comes over there, he brings it, and Isaac feels him. What a classic statement he says. He says, "I am confused. This is the voice of Jacob, but it feels like Esau." How many times have I walked out of a situation and said to myself, "Sounded like Jacob. Sure felt like Esau." There was a deception.

If the old man would have carried that principle all the way to the end, because the Bible says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). If he had investigated a little bit farther, checked it out, and just held him accountable, he would have found a great principle. I just do not listen to what a man says. I watch what a man does. I just do not listen to the voice. I will check out the hands. If Isaac would have just said, "Come here, let me check this out. How come you sound like Esau, and your hands feel like Jacob, and your hands feel like Esau? Get over here and let me get a good feel on you. Well, you are a deceiver." But he did not. He comes in and says, "Bob, I want to do what is right. I want to do this. I want to do that." Sounds like Jacob. Watch what they do. You can say anything, but "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45), and in time, the attitude will always produce the wrong action. Remember Thursday night? What will happen is you will really see what you have when you listen to the voice and then you check out the hands. Do you know what that is called in the Bible? Accountability.

Do you want to know if I am doing what is right or not? Accountability. Listen to what I say. Watch what I do. That is your job. That is my job for you, your job for me. I am accountable for

you. You are accountable for me. When you understand sound wisdom, biblical principles like Solomon and the sword producing the truth, and the voice versus the hands not being right at a deception, and you learn those principles, and you learn human nature, and you can go through those two stories, and you can find every circumstance you are going to get in, and you are going to find those things, and you put problems to it that tells you what this is and what that is and all the things that go with it. Let me tell you something. You will get discernment. Not based on this book I read on counseling, or this book on this, or this book here. You will get it on the absolute standard that has sound wisdom that will give you discretion and make you, and let you make the value judgments you need to make based on absolute truth.

You will learn something. Do you know why most preachers and most counselors get deceived in the first place? They make a fatal mistake. They want the person that they are working with many times, and I have told you this over the years. They are working with somebody. They say they want to do what is right. That is great. They say they want to clean their life up. I will give you the benefit of the doubt, and I will give you whatever time it takes, but I will not want you to do right more than you do. Because the moment you do, you will be deceived. The moment you want that person to come to church more than they want to come, the more that person, you want that person to do what is right more than they do, you will shortcut God's standards, and you will get into a situation where you will become vulnerable, and you will be deceived. No, no, no. Follow the guidelines of sound wisdom. Put them under the authority of the book. Listen to what they say. Voice of Jacob, make sure it matches up that it is not the hands of Esau. Simple. Discretion.

You look in this life, the Bible will do one thing for you. It will give you the discretion and the discernment to look at this world full of phony things and discern what is real versus what is phony. I am telling you, you need to do that first for yourself, second for your family, third for your ministry, and for your rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. I do not put them in the order that are important. I put them in the order that we deal with them in life. Because ultimately you will give an account to Christ for everything. But I am telling you, that is what you need to do. That is what the Bible does for you. You just do not study it and do all those things that I told you about just for the fact so you can say, "I know the Bible." When you invest your life into it and you do what it says, it gives you something back, and it preserves you. It keeps you on the right path.

IX. Conclusion and Future Study

Next week, we are going to look at the two things that it gives you discernment about. One of them is the evil man and the strange woman. Next week, we are going to come to this point. You have a good foundation about what it does for you now. Next week, the two things that will make you or break you in this world. When you are done with this thing in Proverbs 2, you will have everything you need, everything you need to combat this world and to stay on top of it, that it does not deceive you, that you have the discretion and discernment to know what is real and what is phony. Let us bow our heads and close our eyes.