

I. The Defining Moments of a Church

If you don't have a Bible, we have a couple in the back here that you can borrow. In fact, you can have them if you want; we can give them away. This is one of those messages where you can just kind of sit back and listen to it as much as you can look at it. We are going to talk about a couple of things, and I will read it. So, if you would like a Bible, we have some back here, and we will be glad to take care of you.

I want you to turn to Jeremiah 6 first. I want you to get that in one hand, and then I want you to come over to 2 Samuel 6. We are going to be talking about those two passages of Scripture. As I said, today marks our first anniversary as a church. All my life I have been told, and I believe this is true, that when you start a church, the first couple of years, especially the first year, are the defining moments of your church. I believe that is true.

I know it is true when you are raising kids. It is just for the last ten years, all these secular child psychologists caught up with the Bible and finally figured out that by the time a child is two or three years old, all the character of their personality and their makeup has already been established and pattern-formed by what they have seen with mom and dad. Their character traits are fixed now for the rest of their lives. It took them a while to get caught up to the Bible, but that is what the Bible teaches.

So, I know if it is true of children and people, I know it is also true of churches because churches have characteristics just like people do. Churches have personalities. When you go over to Revelation 1, 2, and 3, you find there are seven churches. Those seven churches have distinct, different personalities; they have different characters. So, I really believe that the first year or the first couple of years of any church are probably the defining time for that church.

During that time, I believe you lay down a philosophy of ministry. During that time, I believe that you lay a foundation and a direction of where you are going to go and what God wants you to do. I think during that time, the people that God gives you are probably more special. I am not putting anybody above anybody else, the people that come in down the line five or ten years from now. But there is a certain quality about the people that God gives you when you start. Because it is those people that have to make the sacrifices. It is those people who have to pay their dues and pay the price so that five, six, seven, or ten years down the line, somebody can come into this church and have all the things that are here that you sacrificed to put into effect.

I really believe that. I believe that it is the men and women that God has given. I do not believe there are any accidents with God. I believe in this church that God has brought to us the people that He wanted us to have. I believe that it is those people that make the sacrifices that are really going to make the difference down the line for ministry. I understand that probably better than most of you here today. I have been in this for thirty-some years, teaching and preaching the Word of God, training young men and young ladies for the ministry. Looking across this room

today, I want you to know that God has brought us together for a work to build this church for the Lord Jesus Christ. I see the leadership for future generations.

Most churches find themselves in a dilemma. They get a pastor, the church grows, and suddenly when there is a need for leadership, they do not know what to do. They suddenly now have to look all around this country, calling Bible colleges or calling this and calling that, to try to find somebody to come in to fill the need of leadership. We will never have that problem. The first day I started pastoring this church is the day I started to train my replacement. Any man that starts to pastor a church that does not see that and see the need for that and begin to do that...

Now you say, "Well, who is that?" I have no idea. It is not a question for me of who it is. I know this: as long as I take young men and young ladies and train them and teach them in the Bible, when the need arises, the body of Christ will recognize who that person is. My job is to train you in the Bible. My job is to give you the Word of God to the degree that you have everything that you need. When God is ready, God will bring the leadership to the forefront, and it will not have to be a voting issue. Everybody in this body will recognize and understand who is right for that leadership position. That is the biblical way. That is what you get when you build a church based on the Word of God.

You get a solidarity of the Bible, Bible principles. The relationships we build right now in the Word of God, the one-on-one times that we have together teaching the Bible, our Thursday night Bible time where you can ask any question you want to ask about the Bible—all of those things build a solidarity of Bible doctrine that in time will produce a biblical ministry. In this world today, we have a lot of works that are for God. I am not interested in building a work for God. I am interested in building a work of God. A work that is based on the absolute principles of that book that give us every aspect of guidelines that we need. I am telling you, the relationships that we have now and are building now will be key to the leadership down the line.

So, I want to talk to you this morning about Jeremiah 6 and then in a few minutes, 2 Samuel 6. I want to read Jeremiah 6:16.

Now, Father, we thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. Help us to understand all of the things that we need to say and try to communicate today. We thank You for the time that we have here today where we can just enjoy our Bible and enjoy our fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We thank You for our dear friends that have come up from Osceola to minister to us. Lord, we do not take that lightly. We know, Father, that they have busy lives and busy schedules, and yet they have granted to be with us today. What a privilege it is to have them. Let us extend to them every courtesy and love them, Father. We thank You so much, Father, that You have touched their hearts to bless people with the talents and the gifts that You have given them. May You continue to bless them, Lord, and use them. May, for our people today, the Word of God and this message touch our hearts as a unity, Father, of just where we are at and what we need to accomplish. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The Old Paths

If you have looked at that little bookmark we gave you today, and you are a visitor here, you know that the name of our church is Old Paths Baptist Church. Now, I am not much on names. I really am not. I am not that kind of guy. If somebody would ask me, "What do you think a Baptist church should be called in the day and age we live?" I like "In Your Face Baptist Church" myself, but that is not going to work today. "Old Paths."

I must tell you, this was not my idea. My old buddy Mark back here, we were spending time studying the Word of God together. It was right before—in fact, I do not even think I told you we were starting a church yet or not; I do not remember if I did—but we were studying the Bible together. Mark said, "You know what? I want to share a verse with you, and I want to give you a verse that God gave me this week. That is a great verse." He turned me over to Jeremiah 6:16. I have read it many, many times, but it is one of those things that God lifted it out at the time that I needed it because I was contemplating starting a church. I really did not know what to call it because I have been in churches all my life, and I do not want to be just another church.

I have preached in churches all of my life, and I have seen every kind that there is. I am not critical of anybody, but I am telling you, I just do not want to build a church that is a church for the sake of being a church. I want to do something for God in the last years of my life, in the last days before Christ comes back. I want to take this thing seriously, and I know you do too.

I have been in churches called "Faith Baptist Church" that have no faith. I went to churches and preached to them, but they say "Grace Baptist Church," and they do not have any grace. Now, I like the term "Antioch Baptist Church." I like that because in Acts 11, they are first called Christians at Antioch. I preached at Antioch Baptist Church in Indiana years ago. You know what I found out? They had a church name of Antioch, but they had the Bible from Alexandria, Egypt. Contradiction of terms.

I have been in churches. I remember one was called "Lighthouse Ministries" over there in Chicago, someplace outside of Chicago. I was there twenty minutes, and I knew the light bulb had burned out twenty years ago. So, I did not know what to do, and I got the idea from Mark. You know what this country needs? You know what this world needs? It needs exactly what Jeremiah 6 says. It needs to get back to the old paths because it is the old paths and the old principles that absolutely fix for us what we need to do.

Jeremiah 6:16

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

III. Societal Decline and the Need for Old Paths

I do not know if you have noticed it or not, and I am not going to preach to you today. I am going to try to restrain myself, and I am just going to try to... I am not. I just want to... (Don't laugh, Jan, you probably brought the Kleenex for nothing, I am telling you.) But I am not going to preach today; I just want to talk to you.

Did you ever notice how in our society everybody wants to get back to the old days? It is incredible. Back in the 1940s, in the 50s, and even the 60s, the word "stress" was not in our vocabulary. A "midlife crisis" did not even exist. All these terms and problems that we have now have come... Our society has become so complicated. Christianity has become so complicated. Building a relationship with God has been stripped of its simplicity. Now we live in a religious world where, boy, you have to just have everything the way it is. It is no wonder people are miserable today.

In our own country, it is the same way. You notice how every political leader wants to identify himself with Harry Truman? It is incredible. Reagan died this week, and he was a great president. But already I saw the politicians jumping on the bandwagon. You see, Harry Truman had a policy. I never met Harry Truman; I was just a little kid when he died. But everybody likes his style. You know what his style was? He gave the appearance that in a world where it was communist and everything was coming out of World War II, that there was a line that was drawn. His little plaque on his desk simply said, "The buck stops here." Everybody likes that; that is catchy. So when politicians want to make you believe that they have something out of the past, that if you vote for them, you are voting for something that America looks back to. They want to identify themselves with Harry Truman. They want to identify themselves with John F. Kennedy. They want to identify themselves with Reagan—men who give the impression that they were solid in a time and gave stability in a time of instability.

You see it. Our country, people want to get back to traditional values back in the 40s and the 50s and the 60s. I guess there were homosexuals, but you never heard about it. That concept of same-sex marriages was... nobody in their right mind would have brought it up. The ACLU would have been out of business in a week; they had nothing to do. You see, that is the way it was. Right now on your television, if you have cable, you have a channel where you can go there and you see all the *Leave It to Beavers*, the *Munsters*, all of those things that we grew up with. Turn on your radio, the "Oldies 95." What do you hear? You hear the songs that we grew up with, a time that was less hectic, a time that we look back to in reflection, a time that was really good. Turn on the Statler Brothers and their old song, "I Remember When." Remember when it was that way? I do. But you see, we want to get back to that.

I guess I can say it this way; this sums it up: We have come from *Ozzy and Harriet*. Remember her? The model family. She is always walking around in a little dress, a little apron on. She does everything like she was like Ward Cleaver's wife. What a name, Ward! You have to live in the fifties to have a name Ward Cleaver. He is back there, and she is running around, and he has a... he wears a tie. He is mowing the grass in a tie. (Well, I should not say that, I still know some Baptist fundamental preachers who do that.) But anyway, he wore a tie wherever he went. The kids were polite. We went from that kind of mindset, *Ozzy and Harriet*. I grew up with that. Ricky Nelson going down to *Lonesome Town*. We have come from *Ozzy and Harriet* to *Ozzy Osbourne*. Am I a master of the obvious or what? That is where we are at.

In that time back then, I am telling you, back then the country was great. It was those old, big, basic, simple... When World War II broke out, young men were standing in line to fight for the country. It was a simpler time. It was a time where the country, believe it or not, was based on

God's principles. If you did not live back then or around that time, hey, you grew up today being born in the sixties and being a teenager in the seventies and eighties. That is a foreign concept to you.

I will tell you something else: churches were great. God was exalted. Sin was preached. Those old boys would get up there, and they would preach hell so hot you could feel the heat. Preachers were great. There was none of this... Today we live in a society that we want to hear what we want to hear. Back then, if you went to the Methodist Church, that boy got up and tore your hide off. You did not like that, got offended, went to the Lutheran Church. He would tear you up one side and down the other. You would have got offended, left there, went to the Baptist Church. He would nail you. Wherever you went, you got blasted with the Bible. Not today. You can find whatever you want to find to hear today to make you happy.

You cannot really preach today. I mean, you really cannot. They were back there. We talk about revivals today. Hey, America has not seen a revival since the 1930s. I am not kidding you. Those old boys back there would go into a town, and the guy would say, "What are you going to preach on Monday night?" "I am going to preach on hell." "Praise the Lord." "What are you going to preach on Tuesday night?" "I am going to preach on hell again." "Okay." "What are you going to preach on the next night?" "Hell." "What are you going to..." Seven nights in a row, he would preach on hell. You know what? They closed the bars. Everything would be shut down, and people would get saved by the hundred. Not today. You come to Kansas City and have a great revival, a great spiritual movement, and sin and ungodliness will go on like it was never affected. You know why? Because it is not affected. We have come to a place where we need to get back to the old paths.

I was listening to a tape. John gave me those set of tapes. I listened to Bob Jones Sr. yesterday. I was driving over to do something and popped that in there. He was preaching this right after Grover Cleveland was president, down in Bob Jones University. In fact, they called it Bob Jones College back then. He was preaching on sluggards. Oh, what a message. That old boy had a voice that when he hit third gear, it just sounded like a crack of lightning. He had the ability to talk, and then he hit a point, and it would just come down like a knife cutting down through that place. I thought to myself, and he was a Methodist, I thought to myself, "Oh, if Bob Jones Sr. was alive today, he would have a heart attack if he walked past the first ashtray in the first Methodist Church in Kansas City." It has changed. It has changed.

I have watched these. I used to... I have had the advantage. I was born in 1950. I was born, and I remember I was trained by the last of the Philadelphia preachers. I heard these great men in person. I sat down. They taught me the Bible. They showed me. I heard many of them preach, and I have heard them. I have seen them. God used them. We think of Robert Schuller out in the Crystal Cathedral out there in California. Nobody knows the fact that his grandfather was one of the greatest hellfire damnation Methodist preachers on a circuit ride in this country the world has ever seen. What happened to granddad, the grandbaby?

Mordecai Ham, Gypsy Smith, old Baxter McLean. Old Baxter McLean used to get up there, and he would say, "If a two-bit, tin-horn preacher like me can get you people squirming on your seats

like you are sitting on a beehive, what are you going to do in a day that the eyes of the holy God pierce down through your naked soul?" Now that is preaching. I wish I had the rest of that sermon. I am telling you, R.G. Lee, "Payday Someday." J. Frank Norris, the Texas Tornado, used to tear up. He would say in his... he would pick out a full-page ad, and he would say, "On Sunday, I am going to name the ten most demon-possessed devils in Fort Worth, Texas." It would be the mayor, the police chief, and he would preach at them on Sunday. That has all changed now. It is all gone. There is no more preaching today. We teach.

The last of the Philadelphia preachers are gone, and the ones that are still alive are so old now that nobody takes them seriously. I remember one time seeing old Bob Jones Sr. before he died. He raised some kids who took over the school, who took it into apostasy, who rejected the Word of God, who did not believe the Word of God. I remember one time watching the old man sit on the platform, and one of the boys was getting up there and preaching the stupidest thing you have ever heard in your life. The old man tried to get up, and he tried to move, and I knew what he was going to do. His son stepped and put him back down in his seat and whispered something in his ear and patted him and kept him from getting up. I am telling you, that is where we are at. That old man knew what was happening. The last of the Philadelphia preachers are gone, replaced with men who have no power of God in their life.

We have replaced the power of the Holy Spirit of God with the power of positive thinking, with Madison Avenue techniques that bring about all the high-powered showmanship and all of the great displays of what we can do. Yet I find coming through my Bible, two books in the Bible that really detail what took place and what is happening. Two books in the Bible that parallel. One of them is the book of Joshua. We saw it last week as we are studying coming through each book of the Bible. Next week, we are going to look at the book of Joshua. That is the other book. The book of Joshua is, as we have already seen, Israel at its best. They are living for God. They are doing what is right. They are trusting God. In the book of Judges, we see Israel at their worst.

If there was ever a nation that needed and depended on the leadership of God, it was the nation of Israel. If there was ever a people that are dependent on the leaders to keep them out of apostasy, it is the body of Christ, the church. What we have got today in America in churches is a failure of leadership of men in the pulpit to take that Bible, stand on that Bible, and preach the Word of God without any apology to anybody. That is where we are at today.

Joshua told them in the last chapter, "Stay away from idols, stay in the book, stay on the old paths, keep the truth of God on fire in your hearts." When you get to the book of Judges, you find coming into play one of the great laws of the Bible called the law of human collapse. What happens to a nation, to a country, to a church, and to an individual when you take the Word of God out of your life and just do what you want to do? In fact, the whole book of Judges is laid out around one verse that is found in Judges 17:6. The whole book of Judges, because in the book of Judges, you find the stupidest, weirdest stuff going on you ever saw in your life. When I used to look at that as a young Christian, I used to scratch my head and I used to say, "What in the world is going on?" Then one day I figured it out. Judges 17:6. You know what the problem was? There was no king in Israel, and every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. You

know what is wrong in American churches today? There is no king anymore, and we are all doing whatever we want to do. We are all doing whatever we want to do.

I have a book in my library at home that is called *The Great Contradictions and Mistakes that God Made in the Bible*. You would think I would have gotten that from an unsaved man. I got that from a Christian. I got it from a college professor who gave it to his boy because I was teaching his boy that you could trust the Bible, and he was telling his boy that the Bible could not be trusted. That good, godly, scholarly man gave his boy a copy of a book that some infidel wrote, saved infidel, that pointed out all the mistakes that God made in the Bible, why you could not trust the Bible, and you had to trust education. He gave me the book. I still have it.

In that book, you find listed in Acts 13, one of the great mistakes that God made. According to these guys, God is so stupid He cannot figure anything out. In Acts 13, you have a terrible mistake that God made and an incredible contradiction in your Bible. Because in Acts 13, Paul is preaching, and he is preaching about the history of the nation of Israel. What he does, he is listing them an account of everything that God has done for them. He comes down and he adds up the years. He says, "And David reigned forty years, and Solomon reigned forty years," and he lays the whole thing out. When you take your pencil and you do the math, he lists out 573 years. Now, you go over to 2 Kings 6:1, and you will find they are talking about there, and they say that same time period is 480 years. You begin to scratch your head because obviously God made a mistake of 93 years. The scholars hold this up, and they say, "See, that is why you cannot trust the Bible."

Oh, how many times I have heard in somebody teaching or somebody on the radio or somebody in their book saying, "Now that is why you cannot have faith in a translation because it is made of man, and it has mistakes in it. It has contradictions in it." Oh, no, there are 500 so-called contradictions in the Bible. They say, "You cannot trust it because here is the place where obviously one guy back here writing in Kings made a mistake adding it up. Paul wrote it over here, and you have a discrepancy of 93 years." Well, the answer to that 93 years discrepancy is found in the book of Judges. You will find going through the book of Judges that God lists the times that the nation of Israel were following other gods and forsook the Word of God and got off the old paths. When you list the time that they are in bondage to the Moabites, the Canaanites, the Jebusites, and all those other groups, you will find that those years add up to 93 years. In other words, God, listen to me, God does not count the time that you are out of that book.

I said all that to say this: I know the book of Revelation 1, 2, and 3 teaches very clearly the seven periods of church history. I know it starts, and so do most of you. I know it starts with the church at Ephesus in 33 A.D., winds up and comes through Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia—the greatest period of church history—and winds up with Laodicea. That is Revelation 3:14-22, I think. I know that Laodicea is the last church, and I know that Laodicea means "justice of the people." I also know this: I know that the Laodicean church is the only church in that seven-church period where God has absolutely nothing good to say about it. I know this: it is the only church that has no representative angel. God says, "You are not cold, you are not in apostasy, and you are not hot, you are not on fire; you are lukewarm. Because you are

neither cold nor hot, I am going to spew you out of My mouth." We call it the church that makes God sick in a world where there are so many doctors. It is the only church of the seven that has no representative angel before God's throne. In Revelation 3:20, it is the church that has kicked God's Son out of the church, and He is standing at the door knocking, trying to get back in.

You have heard me say it. If you have known me thirty years, you have heard me say it forty years. You have heard me say it over and over and over again that you can build a Philadelphia church in a Laodicean church period. My job is to build Philadelphia Christians in a Laodicean church period. That is the job of every pastor. That is the job of every church. I do not care what you call it, but for me, we have to get back—I understand it—we have to get back to the old paths, the paths that worked in a world that does not work anymore in Christianity. I am telling you, we need to build a Philadelphia church in a Laodicean church period.

IV. The Ox Cart Syndrome

Now, with that in mind, as an introduction, the message is short. Because even though I am filled with the Holy Spirit of God and I am preaching this morning, I have got visions of a big chicken leg in my mind. I know there has got to be Methodist in me someplace.

Let us turn to 2 Samuel 6. I want to tell you a story, and I want to talk to you about a story in the Bible.

2 Samuel 6:1-8

Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him, from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.

And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day.

I do not know if you have ever got into the Bible to any depth or not, but you know what, as a young man coming through the Bible, I must confess to you, there were places in the Bible that made me a little nervous. Ever see those places in the Bible where seemingly God is having a bad day? When I used to come through the Bible, when I would read some of these places where it seemed like that Christ was so out of character, I would step back and I would say, "You know what, I wonder what is going on here, this bothers me." When I read that story of Uzziah, it bothered me. If you look at 2 Samuel 6:8, it bothered David.

I am telling you, as I was growing up and studying the Bible as a young man, there were places in the Bible where I could not figure out what God was doing, that was so out of character. For instance, I remember one time reading in Matthew 15, the story of the Canaanite woman that comes to Christ, that has prayer requests, she gets turned down four times flat. When she comes to Him, she puts everything in the right tent. She says, "O son of David," she calls Him Lord. She does what the scribes and Pharisees failed to do. She recognizes who He is. He has nothing to do with her. She comes back, as only a whining woman can. He shuts her down again. She comes back and goes to the disciples this time and says, "Hey, look, my daughter is vexed. I need some help." They go over to Christ and they say, "Hey, look, Lord, will You take care of this lady so we can send her on down the road? Because she is bugging us to death. We are trying to sell the concessions out here, and she is getting in the way."

Finally, oh, finally, oh, get the ACLU. Finally, she comes up and she says, "Lord, have mercy on me." You know what He does? He brings up her race. She is a Gentile. He calls her the female word for dog, which is "darling." He insults her. He brings up her race. "Why should I take from the Jews and give to a dog?" Did she get a lawyer? No. Did she get posters and march around? No. Did she call the ACLU? No. Did she play the race card? No. You know what you got there? You got one of the greatest studies of why sometimes we do not get our prayers answered and what God wants us to see from unanswered prayer. Incredible. Incredible.

I used to read in the Old Testament where God would tell the nation of Israel to go in, and He would say, "You kill every man, you kill every woman, you kill every child, you kill all the animals." Oh, is God having a bad day here or what? Children? Animals? Women and children? Well, hey, in our society, it is "women and children first." God said, "Okay, kill them first. I do not care, but kill them." I did not understand that. Now I do. I know how that fits into God's scheme of things, and I understand why.

I remember one time reading in 1 Kings. When Solomon, who was supposed to be the wisest man that ever lived, two women come in, they were a harlot with one baby. They gave him this story. "Well, this is my baby." She says, "No, it is mine." The Bible says that Solomon is the wisest man that ever lived. I am reading this as a young guy, and Solomon's answer was, "No problem, bring me a sword." "Well, what are you going to do?" "Well, cut the baby in half. You can take this half, you can take that half." I looked at that as a young Christian, and I thought, "Wow, what kind of wisdom is that?" I understand what kind of wisdom it is now. In fact, I have learned over the years that when you find a place like that that is out of character for God and out of character for the nature of Christ, you probably got one of the greatest chapters that is going to

teach you a great spirit of truth better than any other thing in the Bible. It is true. All of those places teach you something that is unbelievable.

Now, in 2 Samuel 6, that is one of those places. We have the story of the Ark of the Lord being brought on a cart. Two guys, Uzziah and Ahio, driving that cart. If you go over into the other account, I think it is in Chronicles, it says the Ark stumbled. When the Ark stumbles, that cart shakes, and the Ark of the Lord begins to fall over. Uzziah puts up his hand to keep the Ark of God from falling. Now, what is wrong with that? The Ark is falling, and he raises up his hand to keep that Ark from falling out of that cart, and God killed him. Oh, the unsearchable riches of that old book.

We have here what I call the ox cart syndrome. We have here one of the greatest pictures, if not the greatest picture in all the Old Testament, of what is wrong today in American Christianity. Typified by a story back here of a man named Uzziah, who tried to help God out by keeping that cart. I am telling you, it looks like a good thing. The thing that you need to see here is there is a great lesson.

When I preach, I do not expect you to remember everything because I cannot. When I hear somebody preach, I mean, I would like to, I know most of you would like to, but let us face it. We drift off, we drift in, we drift off, we focus on things, we do not focus. We just do not have a lot of retention span, at least I do not. But when I preach, I always like to send you home with at least one thing you do not forget. Today you are going to get three things. If you cannot get the other two, then you just get this one. But this thing you want to take with you today. What you want to take with you today out of this story of what I am saying about the old paths and where we are at is simply this:

Good motives do not give you the right to violate the principles of the Word of God.

Now, take that home with you. Tuck that away someplace. Take it with you because good motives do not give you the right to violate the principles of the Word of God.

Do you ever wonder why God gave us the Bible? The Bible says in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." The Bible was written to keep you from sin. The Bible was written to give you God's opinion and principles about everything in life, and that we are to stay with the Bible. That ark was a type of Christ. That ark, as a type of Christ, as you probably already know, was the center of what God held holy with the nation of Israel. It was the focal point. It was the focal point of God's relationship with that Jew. It gives us the understanding that today in Christianity, we have a lot of things in Christianity that are Christian. We have a lot of things that are spiritual. But I must confess to you today, I am not interested in things that are Christian. I am not interested in things that are spiritual. I am interested in things that are biblical. I am interested in things that are scriptural, based on the Word of God. The Bible was given to me to keep me between the white lines. It is the final authority, and I am telling you.

Now you may not agree with this, you may not believe this, that is okay. But I am telling you, you will find out in the judgment seat of Christ that there are some things that God holds holy

that are non-negotiable. If you are going to be successful with God in any ministry, you better figure out what those things are. 2 Samuel 6:7 says, "God smote him there for his error." Uzziah had the right motive; he did not seem to need the right thing. But 2 Samuel 6:7 says, God killed him for his error.

Uzziah, like a lot of God's people, had evidently lost his Bible someplace. I mean, I do not know how else to tell you. Evidently, he had lost, and maybe everybody else did, because 2 Samuel 6:5 says, they are all dancing around, praising God, having a great time, praising the Lord. Everybody is having a great time except God. God is not pleased here. We live in a day and age in Christianity, just like the book of Judges I have already said, where there is no king. There is no authority. We live in a day and age where in Christianity, the end justifies the means. I will do what I want, and nobody can tell me any different. If it feels good, and is spiritual, and I get a nice warm, tingly feeling, and I get a nice warm feeling, then it must be God. Who cares what the Bible says? Who cares what the absolute final authority is? The bottom line is, if I feel good about it, it must be good.

This whole concept here, and you have got to see this, this whole concept about this ox cart is wrong, totally. The ox cart, the Bible says it is a new cart. That was not God's way of carrying the ark. If you will go back and study your scriptures, you will find that that is a Philistine concept. The Philistines are a picture of the world system. They hated God. They hated God's people, and they hated everything about God. It was Goliath who walked up and down the valleys, disdaining God and the people of God, making fun of them, and he is a Philistine.

V. The Problem of Disregard for God's Word

Remember back in 1 Samuel 11, 12, 13 in there, you have a man by the name of Saul. Saul is the perfect picture of the twentieth-century modern-day preacher. Saul makes an alliance with the Philistines. He makes an alliance with the world. He brings them in, and he justifies all his life. Saul's method was, his method, or his end, always justified the means. He is a picture of Bible Christianity leaving the old paths and going into this spiritual Christian gobbledygook thing that has no direction to it, no doctrine, no foundation that confuses God's people. You see every characteristic in Saul's life.

- First thing he does in 1 Samuel 13:19, he takes the Word of God from the people.
- One of the other things he does in 1 Samuel 13:8, he is famous for sending his guys out to do the work and then taking all the credit for it when he did not do anything himself.
- In 1 Samuel 14:24, he puts them under an oath that has nothing to do with anything in the Bible. It makes them weak so they cannot fight in battle. He blames the people then when they lose the battle.
- In 1 Samuel 13:8, he is offering sacrifices, and he has no business doing that. He is not a priest.
- He leaves his own son in 1 Samuel 14 to die on the battlefield so he can escape because he is the king.

All of his life, he has a total and complete disregard for anything the Bible says. In fact, Saul never learned the greatest lesson taught probably throughout the Old Testament. This is the second thing you will want to take home with you, found in 1 Samuel 15:22.

1 Samuel 15:22

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

God does not care what you sacrifice. God does not care what you do if you are not willing to obey what He said. Let me remind you, the Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:5, that Paul says that a man strives for the masteries, yet he is not crowned because he does not strive lawfully.

2 Timothy 2:5

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

Listen, that ox cart was not how God told them to do it. It is a picture of the church today, leaving the old paths, refusing to go back to the Word of God, adopting a world system. You know what? They put that ark on that cart because it was easier to carry that way. It was more acceptable. They wanted to make the burden of that ark easy for the people. God's way was to take poles, staves. There were rings on the side of it. Slide those rings through, and you carry that ark on your shoulders. Exodus 25:12-15.

Christians today, they are soft, easy to offend. They are lukewarm. There is no depth. There is no doctrine. They are blown about by everything that they hear. You see, pastors today gravitate to that. We live in a world and a society that is completely taking any backbone of discipline out of the structure of our society and our country.

I have a couple of notoriety things in my life that I am very proud of. First thing is I already told you is that I bridged the gap between the Philadelphia guys and the Laodicean guys, so I got to see both. The second thing I am really proud of is I got to eat at the first McDonald's restaurants in the United States of America. 1958. Remember, now you go to McDonald's, and there is a sign up there, "Twenty billion sold." There were only six, not six million, six sold when I went. I think I was the seventh hamburger in Canton, Ohio. The first McDonald's. Hamburgers were fifteen cents apiece, and fries were a dime. Oh, I will never forget the first time I ever had a frozen dinner. They called them TV dinners back then. I remember having a TV dinner. I remember sitting down, and I will tell you what, that thing nobody ever told me to put in the oven. That is tough.

You see, we grew up in a society here. Here is how it comes. Now, this is going from Ozzy and Harriet to Ozzy Osbourne in another fashion. Remember when you used to sit around the family table, and Mom cooked dinner, you sit around and talk? Now, I am not fighting anything or anybody, but our society began to change because the whole thing got to become very slick and very fast. The first thing they did was, "Well, Mom cannot cook because she is working," you know, all those things. "Get TV dinners. It makes it faster." So you got TV dinners. I remember

having them. Then you did not have enough for big guys like us, so they got "Hearty Man Meals," the extra portions. Then that was not fast enough, so they got McDonald's. That was faster yet. You just go in, and it is there. Then that was not fast enough. The fast food place had to have a fast drive-through place so you get the fast food faster.

No, I hate drive-throughs. I do, because they never give you all your order. You are two miles down. You know what? I do not care what you do with God or the Word of God in your life. You cheat me out of my Big Mac, and you are going to have problems. You drive down there. You are halfway home, and you know you have got to have one of them fries. You reach down there, you have the fry, and you look in the bag, and suddenly, "Hey, where is my Big 'N Tasty?" It is gone. No, no, it is not gone. It was never there. I figured up one time, I have lost five thousand dollars in lost food. No, it is okay. When you go to McDonald's, eat on the inside, you want to get even. When you go up to throw your food away, throw the whole tray away. Those trays cost them sixty cents apiece. I am making it up. You get me, I will get you. You are not fooling with me. I got you.

But you know what? The fast food was not fast enough. We had to get faster food because our society was moving faster. Then that was not enough. Burger King, everybody got into it. Then Burger King said, "Not only are we faster, you can have it your way at Burger King. You can have it any way you want it." Our whole society began to gear because of giving you exactly what you want.

You know what? When my mom and dad, my dad was something like thirty years old before he owned his first car. They did not buy a house until after they were married. No, I am not fighting anything. But you know what? They did not have credit cards back then. They just could not run out and buy. They had to earn money and save money, and it taught great valuable principles. Not today. Run out and get it. We are in such a fast society; we do not want to wait for anything. We do not. We are so spoiled with everything right now, "when I want it my way, and I want it now." We are so spoiled and so corrupted by society that that has crept into our own.

You realize, ladies, I was out the mall a couple of months ago walking around, and I happened to walk through Dillard's or one of those places. There are 275 shades of one lipstick. Now tell me, I am like old Bob Jones Sr. I know one of these guys that preach on makeup. Bob Jones Sr. said, "If the barn door needs paint, paint it." I am with him. But come on now, 275 shades of lipstick. How many lips do you have anyhow? My kids were growing up and said, "Come on, let us go." They would say, "Dad, I am putting my face on." "Well, spend a little more time on it, would you? Because there is something..." I mean, come on. No, no, we are living in it. We have got everything. We are undisciplined. We want everything right now.

Remember how when we used to go to school, the next thing you could have would be a new pair of jeans. Go get your pair of Levi's. They were brand new, and they looked new. When you walked to school, you would go to school, and you would have new jeans on, and you were okay. Get your pair of them motorcycle boots with the buckles on the side. You were hot. Now, you know what? When society went on, the new look was not in. Everybody wore the faded jeans, and a good pair of jeans were really good. You wore them, washed 150 times, 200 times, and

then again, then you wanted to wear. Oh, but you see our society, fast food was enough fast. Fast food was enough fast. Drive-through was enough. Credit cards are enough. Nothing is enough. Your jeans are enough.

Now I was in Abercrombie & Fitch the other day walking by there down in the plaza, and I saw a pair of blue jeans with a nice cut out, ripped. Looked like they were ready to be thrown away for 75 bucks. What kind of society do we have that we cannot wait until our blue jeans wear out to be in style? We have to buy them already worn out. So we are in. You know what is wrong with us? We are in. But when it comes to God, we are out.

Now you take that same mindset. That is what Christians want. And pastors give them that. You go to church on Sunday morning. You are lucky if you get a twenty-minute message. If you do, it is about how much money we need. No Bible, no preaching. You know what? You do not want to come on Sunday morning because you are a little sleepy person. You do not want to get up. You want to sleep in. No problem. We have a church service on Saturday night for all you sluggards that do not want to get up. So do not worry about it. We are going to reach our country and our world. If you do not want to come on Sunday morning, we will make a special service for you. In spite of the fact, the Bible says in Acts 1, 2, and 3, they met on the first day of the week. Forget that. Forget that. No, no, no. The end will justify the means. We will give you as Christians everything you want.

You do not like their service? Hey, we have a traditional service and a contemporary service. For you older folks who are almost dead, we have the old style services where you are stuck in the mud. For you flashers, shakers, and movers, people who are on the move in the up-and-coming generation, we have a contemporary. We sing the old hymns over here. We sing "There's Power, Power, Power, Power in the Blood" over here. It is, "Oh, oh, oh, oh, He loves me. I think He does. But if He doesn't, oh, I don't know." Oh, give me a break. What are you saying? I have been into those things, praise band. Praise band. Now I am a guy involved for praise. I would just like to know if anybody playing in the praise band can take me in the Bible and show me the definition of biblical praise. That is all. It is not about getting up there and swaying around and saying, and you close your eyes. You could be in a nightclub someplace. You know what you are talking about.

Oh, you know what? You do not want to bring your Bible to church. No problem. We put it up on the big screen. You do not need your Bible anymore. No, no, you do not want to bring your Bible. It is heavy. If you walk out someplace, people are going to see it. No, no, do not worry about it. Do not bring your Bible. We will put it up here. You can follow the bouncing boob who is preaching behind the pulpit and watch what is going on. You do not want to sing. No problem. Do not pick up a hymnal. We will put the little songs up here. Let me tell you something. You can laugh at that, or you can get mad at me. But I want to tell you something. You give human nature that out of not bringing your Bible and not getting in your Bible. That Bible says you are to hide that Word in your heart. Psalms 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." We live in a day and age where it is like Burger

King: "Have it the way you want it." You do not like this. "I do not want to offend you. I am going to tell you whatever you want to hear because we want your bucks." You are not church members anymore; you are giving units. Oh yeah.

You know what? We have made it so easy for you. You do not have to bring your Bible. Just look up here. We do not need hymnals. Look up here. Oh no, the offering. Do not make anything about the offering personal between you and God. Do not pray and ask God and search the Scriptures in your heart and thank God. Do not even think about it. We have direct deposit now. What are we doing? I will tell you what we are doing. We are putting the Lord Jesus Christ on a new ox cart, and He is not happy. You are. He is not. He is not. I am telling you.

You go to a Bible study. It is a sit around, and everybody reads from a different translation, and then you sit around and say, "What do you think of that?" "Well, I think it means that." "Oh, Johnny, that is so good." "What do you think it meant?" "Oh, so good." "What do you... what do you think it meant?" "Oh, are not we just all enjoying the fellowship?" You see, this is what the great thing about God is. We can all have our own beliefs about the same God and get along. Wrong ox cart. Wrong ox cart.

People go to church. They go to church. That kind of mindset produces this. You get so spoiled. You have it your way. You get so lazy and lack a duty attitude when you come to church. Here is what you do. This is you. "Oh, hi. So nice to see you today. What happened to your hand? Good to see you. A little warm in here. There is that woman over there. I do not like her. Hi. Hate you. Look, look, look. She is... she is... there is the preacher. You know what? He is a nice guy, but he yells so much. I tell you what. And I tell you what, you know, his son leads a song thing up there, and you know what? They do not still sing the songs I like. And you know what? It is awful warm in here. You know what? The lighting is so bad in here. You know what? They put the songs up on the screen. But you know what? I cannot see it from back here. And you know, and then the pastor gets up, you know, and he just... his wife, you know, I like him, but his wife, you know, and you know, and I do not think their kids are like everybody else think they should be."

You know what you do? You go in there and you judge the music. You judge the sound. You judge the seats. You judge the people. You judge the preacher. You judge his wife. You judge everything in that building except yourself. That is why you are here today, by the way. You are here to let the Holy Spirit of God look down inside you and find out what is wrong. Keep it right. Keep it wrong and judge yourself. Will you judge anything? But see, Christianity, off the old paths, it is about everything else. It is about what you want. It is the new cart. It is the ox cart. It is the Philistine way. It is the worldly way. That is the way it is.

I am telling you, people spend their whole life going from church to church to church to church to find out exactly what they want to hear. I never understood this. I have people that do not like me because of the way I preach. And I have not preached yet. Well, a little bit. I have moved in here, but you have got to help. That is my passion. I never saw anybody. I never saw anybody. I had people come. I had a lady say to me about eight months ago, she came in. She said, "Well, I really liked your church." But she said, "You know what? When you start really getting fired up and preaching, you know what? I just... I just... I think you are talking to me." And I said, "Well,

I am." She says, "Well, I do not... I do not... I do not think I am going to come back." She says, "I just felt too uncomfortable." I could not understand that.

You ever go to a ballgame? You are sitting down there, and you have seats up there anyplace where you are at. Chiefs game, they snap that ball, a guy runs back, and boy, he pulls that ball down there, and a guy breaks through. You are down there, and she is sitting down there in the seats, and everybody just stands up and screams and yells, and she stands up and screams. They yell. Does she leave and never go to the football game because the guy both sides of her were yelling? So therefore she must think they are yelling at her. What is wrong with that passion? What is wrong when you go to a football game? You see 68 million idiots doing the wave. Well, I can do it. I got it down. I am not out. I can do it. I can wave with the best of them. But the bottom line is what is wrong? Why can they have the passion about what they love, and we cannot have the passion about what we love?

I like football, but I do not get too excited about some guy chasing a dead pig down the end of the field to catch it. I like baseball, but I do not care. I told you before, RBI is a "really big ice cream" to me. I do not care what goes on down there. I just... I like it. I enjoy it. But you know what? I have a passion about this because that is going to go. Heaven on earth is going to pass away, but the book is going to stand. That was preaching, by the way.

You see, I am under a mandate. Jeremiah 48:10 says, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." When I get into the pulpit, I am not to tell you how nice you are. I am not to paint all a lollygagging picture of every day. I am to get into the Word of God, take the book as a sword, Hebrews 4, and I am to draw blood. I am to preach.

One time as a young man, I was working at a fair, passing out tracts and winning people to Christ. I saw in his thing, they had a guy who put a woman on a big round thing, strapped her up there, and then he spun her. She is spinning around. Then he went back to a table, picked up a bunch of knives and went. He perfectly outlined that woman and never hit her. I walked away and I said, "God, help me never to preach that way. Help me never to take that book and hit all around where you are at and not hit where you are at."

I know some of you do not like that, but I am like the Missouri state trooper that you will probably see any day now. No, no, you see him on the news, you see him all the time on the TV, about this seat buckle thing. "Click it or ticket." Big old guy with a big old Smokey the Bear hat saying, "It is the law." Very frankly, you click it, or you can get a ticket. Because I would rather, I would rather have you mad at me than dead. That inspires me to give me the ticket. I would not even speed. I want to help you out. Well, see, I am going to like that. He said, "Click it or ticket." I say, "Believe it or leave it." I would rather have you mad at me than to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and point your finger at me and say, "You did not tell me the truth." I have a mandate. I have a mandate. My only agenda is to preach and teach the Word of God and give it to God's people the way God wants them to have it.

VI. The Burden of Ministry

That ark was to be carried on the shoulders. Here is the third thing you want to take home. Putting it on the cart and making it easy for everybody to carry that thing took the burden off of God's people for the ministry. You are saved on your way to heaven. Where is your burden this morning? What burden do you have? What are you carrying for the Lord? God designed that ark to be carried on their shoulders, to bear the weight and the burden. It makes you take responsibility for your own personal accountability for the ministry.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

God does not think it is unreasonable for you and me to bear the burden of His ministry based on the price He paid on Calvary for your soul and mine. Maybe you do. He does not. My preaching will never be to make your comfort level better. I will not aim my preaching at your comfort level. I will aim my preaching at your conscious level and try to get you to understand the price that Christ paid on Calvary's cross and the responsibility to the ministry and the burden. I will not make it easier. I will make it as the Bible says, "bearing His reproach." And yes, I am preaching now.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

This is my reasonable service. No, I am done. But I want to give my people something before we go today. We are the Old Paths Baptist Church. I am not much on names, but I will stick to the old path. I am sorry. You may like me. You may not like me. Some people love me. Some people hate me. Some people just love to hate me. But be that as it may, I will stick with the book. I do not know what else to tell you.

VII. The Band of Brothers

But I want to say this. Stephen Ambrose, who is a military historian, runs the D-Day Museum. I have known of him for years and years and years. I read his work years ago. He wrote a book, which is called *Band of Brothers*. The story of *Band of Brothers* is a story about Easy Company of the 101st Airborne Division that jumped into Normandy. One of the most moving things I have ever read. Of course, they made a movie about it on television, which was really good. But the book to me was quite incredible.

I watched those old boys who now are in their 80s and 90s. We are losing about 1,200 of them a day, dying. I watched those old boys talk about the camaraderie that they went through back there. These boys went from D-Day, landed in Sainte-Mère-Église, up through Holland, in the Battle of the Bulge, up into Holland, at Nijmegen and Market Garden. They were only about—

out of the whole company, which is 200 guys—there was only something like 20, 30 original guys. Everybody else had been killed. Of course, they had replacements come in. I have watched those old boys talk eighty years after those battles were over. They cannot get through a sentence about talking about the people that they served with without crying. It wells up. You know why? Because there is something about going through battle with somebody that makes you a brother.

Now, when Ambrose wrote that book, he was talking about probably the greatest generation in our country, and I do not argue with anybody, they were a great generation. But my friend, the true band of brothers, was not Easy Company with the 101st Airborne Division. The true band of brothers is God's people when they band together for this warfare, to stand in these last days before the Lord comes back.

The Bible says in Proverbs 17:17, that a friend loveth at all times, but a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 17:17

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

It is going to take that today. No church will stand and do anything for God without facing the adversity. That adversity will have to be something we all share, we all carry that burden. It is not something that you can do when you are undisciplined. It is not something you can do when you have it your way all the way you want it all the time. It is not something that you can do. It does not build any steel in your backbone or any courage in your character. It comes at a point where you can just do your own thing in the face of adversity. It takes men and women who have committed to be a soldier for the Lord Jesus Christ and understand that Jesus Christ is the captain of our salvation, and He told us to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. That is the band of brothers. That is the band of brothers.

I want to tell you something. Today, in my life, I am the happiest, most contented man that you will ever find anywhere. I am so thankful for my own family that God has given me. My wife will be my best friend. For Kelly, Jason, Jamie, and Danny, to have my family ministering with me, with you. It is more than I could ever want. Having you, and I am telling you, you folks are special to us. We love you more than you will ever know. There is never a burden when I pick up the phone at whatever time, and you need me. It is not, "Well, so and so, I have got to..." No, no, no. You are our people. You belong to us, and we belong to you. We are brothers born for adversity. We are a band of brothers. I love you. I love you more than I know how to say.

You know what? I am so content with that. In the world that we live in right now in Christianity, every preacher just about in this world wants to be the main chandelier in the ballroom, and they fight, jockeying for political positions. You know what? I am so content with just being the light bulb on the back porch. I am so content with just having you and that book, at having the time together. Watching God train you guys. Watch you young ladies growing up. Watch you people coming in with problems and watching God do the miraculous things in your life to mold you and make you. Right now you look at the weight of the world on your shoulders, and you do not see it as the molding factor of solidarity that is going to bring you up and make you stronger, the

young man or a young lady for Christ. I am telling you, you know how you get there? You get there by staying on the old paths.

I want to give you this. I have waited a year to give you this. God gave me this verse when we started our church, but I could not give it to you then. I want to say something to you. This is our first anniversary, but I hope it is our last. I hope the next one we have is up in heaven. Is that strange talk to some of you? You do not understand that? That is okay. My people understand it. Because the last prayer in that Bible is, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Now I will tell you, as much as I love you and I love what I am doing, and I am so content, and we have got everything the way we want it. You know what? If He shut the thing down right now and took us home, He would be okay with me. He would be all right with me. Because you see, that is what it is all about anyhow.

I want to give you this. I like reading Paul's writings. Paul writes to seven churches. When he writes to seven churches, you can see his relationship with these different churches. Some churches he does not get along with very well. Other churches he gets along with okay. There are some churches he gets along with so well that you can actually see the difference between the relationships. In fact, in those books, you will find more personal things that he says to these churches because of the relationship that they have. In one church, the church of Thessalonica, he makes a statement to them what I think is the greatest compliment that any man could make to any man and woman that God has given them to minister together. I look at that as the greatest compliment and the greatest gift Paul could ever give to them. I look at it today, I give it to you.

On our first anniversary, I know that God is going to raise you up to be what God wants you to be. But I know that God has got His hand on our work. God has got His hand on us in a very unique way. I want to give you this, our verse, because this says what I feel for you better than anything else that I could say today. It comes from the Word of God, 1 Thessalonians 2:8. He says this. 1 Thessalonians 2:7 says, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

1 Thessalonians 2:8

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

He says, "You know what? Because we love each other. Because you were the church, you so loved that book, and I loved that book. God has knit our hearts together." Let me just tell you this. My intention and God's calling was to impart the gospel to you, but you are going to get more than that, because I am going to give you my very soul. Why? Band of brothers. Band of brothers. That oneness. That is our verse.

Building a Philadelphian church in a Laodicean church age. Finding the direction of God in a world without purpose. Finding God's absolute book in a world without truth. When the Lord comes, finding us still on the old paths, where we have rest to our souls that are the good ways, that we might be found faithful. The only thing I want God to say about you and me and our church in the Judgment Seat of Christ is one statement: "Well done, thou good and faithful

servant." That is all that matters. That is what all this life is about. It is about finding out what God wants you to do with your life and doing it.

VIII. Conclusion and Invitation

So thank you. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your friendship. Thank you for being to me and my family. I promise you right now, we will give you more than the gospel. We will give you our very souls. Because you are dear to us. And we love you.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. I am going to be finished here in just a second, and we are done. Again, I thank you for being here. Looking forward to having a time together in the Word of God, eating, and music being ministered to. A little Ozark jamboree type thing, I am looking forward to. But let me just ask you this. Maybe you are here this morning, and God spoke to your heart today. You would say to me, "Bob, you know what, I heard what you said today, and it was a good challenge. And God spoke to my heart. Bob, I will tell you the truth. I do not know right now if I would die that I would go to heaven to be with Him. You know, I have been to church in and out of church, went to churches, have a Bible, read my Bible. But you know what? I have got to say to you, Bob, right now, as we sit here with the Holy Spirit of God looking inside my heart, I cannot honestly say if I die right now that I know for sure that I would go to heaven to be with Him.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. No one looking around. Is there anybody here that would just lift your hand and say, "Bob, would you pray for me? I am not sure if I would die right now, I would go to heaven. Here is my hand." Anybody? We are not going to wait long. God bless your sweetheart. Anybody else? You can put it back down, honey. Thank you. Anybody else? "I am not sure. I am not sure. I am not sure. Here is my hand. Pray for me this morning."

Father, we thank You and praise You so much for the Lord Jesus. Lord, I love You so much, and I thank You for the opportunity to speak to these people today and just really share my heart. We thank You, Father, for all that You have given us today. We look forward to what You have got the rest of the day. But most of all, Father, we look forward to just being with each other around Your book. Lord, I am finished today, and Lord, I am already excited about Thursday. I am already excited about tomorrow, about Tuesday night, Wednesday night. All the people that I get to spend time with in the Word of God just seems like I go from one excitement to the other, Lord, all built around Your Word and these dear, wonderful, godly people that You have given us to minister. Thank You, Father. Help us to build a work that is of God and not just a work for God. I pray for this dear, sweet gal that raised her hand. God, You know her heart more than I do. I pray, Father, Holy Spirit of God, You do now what needs to be done.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. No one looking around. Sweetheart, if you are not for sure you are saved, would you allow me to have one of my ladies take a Bible and open it up and show you how you can know for sure you would be saved? We will take you down in a little room down there and open up the scriptures and show you how you can know for sure. If you would like me to do that right now with nobody looking around, if you just stand up, I will have one of my ladies come and take you and show you how you can know for sure. I am not saying

that to embarrass you. I am saying it because I love you. You raised your hand. I am just giving you the opportunity. Would you like to do that? God bless you, honey. Would you just stand up, and I will have somebody come and get you. God bless you. God bless you. Take her down there in that room where they count the offering.

Well, guys, I am done, but I love you. Thank you for being my friends. Thanking you for allowing me to be yours. I am promising you this: I may not be a perfect pastor to you, but I will be a real one to you. I will never be a day in my life where I am ever too busy to sit down with you with the Word of God. My goal throughout the rest of this summer is to take you new people one on one with the help of my older people and teach you how to teach somebody else the Word of God. We have had a whole year now where we have got the basics down, and we are coming through the Bible book by book. Now we are going to stage this thing in. Everything we do is designed for one thing: that is to make us a Philadelphia church in a Laodicean church age. Father, thank you. We love you. We will thank You and praise You in all You do for us. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask You. Amen. We are going to get set up here. The food is going to be here in a minute.