

Romans 12

Sunday 2/13/2005

I am going to talk about a number of things, but a good place to start would be Romans 12. As you know, we have set aside this Sunday to really talk about and plan some things so you understand better where we are going to go and what we are going to do next year, and to help you understand the mindset of ministry. Ministry obviously has a philosophy behind it. Our philosophy is the Bible. We try to make that the thing that we do in every aspect. Those of you that have known me for a long time know that that is the way that I have always operated, and that is the way we certainly operate.

On a personal note, and I know I am speaking for my family when I say this, we have been in existence now for about a year and a half since we started our church. I can safely say that as far as ministry is concerned and what the Lord has done in our lives, this last year and a half has probably been the greatest time in our lives collectively. As you get older, you experience things and you see the hand of God back in your life. I really believe that, in a strange way, all of my life, all of ministry, all that I have done in my life with the Word of God has been for this point right now. I believe that if the Lord gives us another 20 or 30 years, we will see some great things.

I have never been more excited. I am 55 years old this year, and at that point in your life, most men are looking forward to retiring and getting to the point where in another 10 years or so, they can spend the rest of their life at the lake and head to the dinosaur graveyard in Florida someplace. But I will tell you what, never in the time of my life do I want to just keep doing what God wants me to do as long as God gives me the ability to do it. I do not care if I am 95 years old, 100, I am not going to retire, I am going to re-fire. That is what our lives should be.

I want to start out today just thanking the Lord for what He has given us, and then talk about a couple of things and try to give you some information on where I am coming from. I like to keep you informed of every aspect of our ministry because the ministry is you.

Let us go to the Lord in prayer and then we will look at it from there.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You so much. Thank You for all that You do for us. Thank You for all that You have given us. Lord, we just ask You today to let a spirit of satisfaction, a spirit of excitement, a spirit of thankfulness for what You have done for us here, just envelop this place today. Let us be glad in our hearts and excited in our hearts for not only what You have done but what You are going to do. Lord, we will thank You and be careful as always to give You the honor and the praise and give the glory to a Book, Lord, that changes men's lives by a transforming of their will, their intellect, and everything about them that brings them into the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

I. The Church's Foundational Vision

A couple of weeks ago when we were talking about the book of Habakkuk, I talked about the fact that in Proverbs it talks about that where there is no vision, the people perish. We talked about the aspect of having a vision. We talked about it in the aspect of raising your children, but we also talked about it in the aspect of a church, understanding where you are going and what God wants to accomplish in your life.

And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

The book of Habakkuk 2 really gave us insight information on that vision. It talked about to write the vision, to make it plain that when somebody reads it, they would be able to understand it and run with it. A lot today is what I want to try to accomplish by that.

For the first year and a half we have been together, I had a goal, and that goal was simply to ask the Lord to bring in what I call baseline people. I know that whatever you grow up has to also grow out. Building something a thousand feet high on a base that is only four feet square is going to make it very top-heavy. For everything you go up, you have to go out. In my mind of building churches and people, I recognize that you have to build a base before you can build up.

So simply this last year, in our teaching and our preaching and our one-on-one time, that is basically what I have done. I have looked for people; I have asked God to bring us people who have a desire to want to learn about God and to be what God wants them to be. Then, taking that first year and a half and laying the foundation in your life of the Word of God, just laying down the concepts that we can build on the rest of our lives. That is why we have spent so much time one-on-one. We have focused on the Sunday mornings. We have focused on the baseline stuff that we need.

Remember we talked about how to build a church out of the Old Testament, and then we started coming through the Old Testament book by book so I would give you a cohesive understanding of how the Word of God goes together. Last week we finished up the Old Testament, and now we are ready to move into the New Testament. I am so excited about the New Testament because that is where it really begins to come together. Those of you that are paying attention and following along with it are really going to be able to put some things together at that point.

This first year and a half, I have talked about basically building that foundational base in your life. Asking God to bring in the people, and God will always bring in people, but this last year and a half we have got a very good base here. You are all in various stages of spiritual growth. Some of you know a lot about the Bible. Some of you do not know a whole lot about the Bible. Some of you do not know anything about the Bible. I do not care. That is not my concern. My concern is your attitude and your willingness to learn.

You give me somebody that knows absolutely nothing but has the right attitude of heart to learn, I will take and show you somebody that can have a great relationship with God because that is what it takes. God does not care what you know or what you do not know. God cares about your ability to want to learn about Him and to be what God wants you to be. That is the only thing that I look for.

We talked about the fact that a vision, and the vision for this church for the first year and a half, was simply to look within and without and ask God to bring us people. We have not made a great outreach for evangelism. We have not done all those kind of things simply because I was looking for the people that God wanted us to have.

I believe something about God in history. I do not know if you are where I am at with this or not. It would depend on your spiritual growth and relationship. But I do believe this: I do not believe there are any accidents with God. The more I am in the Bible, the more I study the Bible, the more I realize that God is the author of time. My goodness, I can go back in the Bible and find that God wants us to understand exactly where we are at in relationship to what He is doing. I think the Christian who does not understand where God is at and what He is doing in relationship with what they should be doing is going to miss a lot of things.

To understand that, you need to realize that God obviously knew who you were before you were born; foreknowledge. God allowed you to be born in this life. God, at the time you were born, God allowed the events in your life to bring you to the geographical location of where you are at. God allowed you to find God when He did. It is no accident that God brings things in your life that are going to enhance your Christian life. You have to choose whether it will or whether it will not.

II. The Will of God: Being a Living Sacrifice

When you come to Romans 12, I do not know of a passage that really says it better than what we need to talk about today. Remember last week we talked about polluted sacrifices in Malachi 1. I told you how that whole passage is dealing with the fact that it is a great picture of Christians today who really do not understand what they need to be giving God. I am not talking about money. I am talking about their own personal relationship and their personal walk with the Lord.

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.

Romans 12:1 was a verse that we just touched on last week, but it simply says this. Here is where we are going to base from today. There are a couple of things in here that we need to really look at today in light of what we are going to try to accomplish in our lives in the next couple of years if Jesus does not come.

The first thing we talked about, and we talked about this last week, is that God asks us to be a living sacrifice. God does not ask us to die for Him, though obviously in the course of history and the church, people are going to die for their faith. But it is not like God says to everybody, "Okay, I died for you, so you die for me." No, just the opposite. God died for you and for me, but the request is, or the command is, that you and I live for Him.

This is what Jesus meant in the New Testament right before He went to be crucified when He said to His apostles, "Greater things will you do than I did." The Lord knew that He was going to die on Calvary. He was going to be buried, rose again the third day, and then be taken up to heaven. Then He was going to turn over the ministry that He had started to you and me. All down

through history from that point, the church has been nothing more than about men and women making their lives a living sacrifice to God.

In studying this, I find a great concept on the will of God in your life and in my life. Let me define the will of God. I know that all around Christianity today there are a lot of bad definitions. I know that constantly we are taught that the will of God is something that you do. "I believe the will of God is for me to be a missionary. I believe the will of God is for me to do this. I believe the will of God..." Of course, that is not the will of God as defined in the Bible. The will of God is not for you to do anything. The will of God, rather, is for you to be something. The will of God in your life and my life is that you and I become more like the Lord Jesus Christ on a regular basis, day by day, as we present our bodies a living sacrifice. I am going to show you that process here in just a moment.

Concerning the will of God, I find down here that He says in verse 2 that you are not to be conformed to this world, but that you be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

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.

I know how we always teach that verse, and I know how I teach that verse. But I also want to tell you there is another great concept in here. We know that from the Bible studies, and you can go through the Word of God, that there are different kinds of Christians. Remember when we came through 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, and 2 Chronicles a number of months ago in our book-by-book study of the Bible, I showed you how that when you got under those Kings, that was some of the greatest material for your life and my life to really understand the differences in people's relationship with God.

You found Kings back there that the Bible says that they did what was right, but they did not do what was right with a perfect heart. You found people that the Bible says, "This guy did this, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart." You look at that and you think to yourself, "How can you do what is right but not have a perfect heart with a thing?" We talked about how all of these men, all of these Kings, were compared to the greatest King that Israel ever had, a man whose heart was after God, a man whose whole life was surrounded by the Word of God, even when he did not do everything right because nobody is perfect. He was a sinner like you and I, but he is a great example, and that is David. Every one of those Kings was compared to David because David is the standard of gold in the Old Testament for the Kings. David's life is a standard of gold for you and for me and what we try to accomplish.

When you look at these Kings, I understand historically there are a bunch of men who through the course of three or four hundred years led Israel. But in their relationship with God, and remember the King now was responsible for the spiritual relationship temperature, so to speak, of the nation. God flowed through him as it flowed through the priests because he is the one that led the nation. He was like the rudder of a great ship, and wherever that King put his heart, wherever that King put his desire, is where the nation wound up being. When he turned his heart toward God, the nation went toward God. When he turned his heart toward Baal, then the nation

went toward Baal. The study of Kings and Chronicles in a very basic way is a study of the nations up and down with God based on the King's attitude of heart.

When I come through Romans 12, I see this in verse 2. He said, "What is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God?" You know that in your life and my life after we are saved, there are three aspects of the will of God of being more like the Lord Jesus Christ in our life.

There are people, they are saved. The verse says here that you may prove what is that good. There are people who have a concept that the will of God is good in their life. They do good, but it is not acceptable. Then you have God's people for whom the will of God in their life is acceptable, but it is not perfect. And then you have people for whom the concept of God in their will of God in their life is perfect.

Now, that does not mean that they are perfect. This is what the Bible is talking about in the Word of God. We are talking about the man of God when he gets into the Word of God is perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. In other words, his mindset, his concept, his attitude of heart, in spite of the fact that he still deals with the flesh or she deals with the flesh. In spite of the fact we have ups and downs in our life, their mindset is fixed on the fact that they are a living sacrifice, that they are going to live day by day. Day by day is perfected in the Word of God. Therefore, it is not just good. It is not just acceptable, but rather it is perfect in God's sight.

In other words, you find in Christianity exactly what you find in those kings. Some of those kings were good, but they were not acceptable. Some were good and acceptable, but their heart was not perfect like David, their father. Then you find the gold standard, David, who the Bible says all the days of his life did what was right, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite, who the Bible says was a king after God's own heart.

We find in your life and my life in Christianity that you find God's people who are saved and they do good. But at the judgment seat of Christ, it is not going to be acceptable. You find people in God's family who are not only good, but it is acceptable. You go the next level, but it is not perfect. At the judgment seat of Christ, what is going to shine through is perfection. Not sinless perfection in your life. Perfection from the aspect that you understand the price that Christ paid on Calvary's cross, and then the rest of your life, you become a living sacrifice based on that knowledge. Your living sacrifice is as holy and as acceptable and as perfect and as good as God's sacrifice was on Calvary's cross. In other words, you get self out of the way and you focus on what God wants you to do with your life the rest of your life.

Are we all there? Certainly not. Do I expect you to be all there? No. The last thing I want to do today is send you out of here saying, "Well, gee, that is not where I am at." No, I know that. That is why I said starting that I do not care where you are at. I care where you want to get. That is all I care about. I am here to help you.

III. Measure of Faith and Investment

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Verse 3 says this: "For I say through the grace given unto me to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith."

We have talked about this before, but I want to explain it even in more depth. This great passage of these three verses talks about somebody who has good, acceptable, and perfect. It talks about that your body and my body should be a living sacrifice focused in on the things that God did and His death sacrifice, just as perfect. Completely understand. It has to do with your desire. It has nothing to do with the fact that I do not sin anymore. We all sin. It has nothing to do with that. It has to do with your attitude about, "I am going to be what I am going to be. I am going to get everything else out of my life." I am going to focus and realize that God had me born here. God saved me. God put me in this church. God brought me to this church. God put these people in my life. God gave me the Bible. Why? So that you could be a living sacrifice that was not just good or was not just acceptable, but it could be perfect in the sight of God, as to you understanding why God saved you and what God wants you to do for you.

How do you get there? Certainly we are not all there. Certainly this church will never be all there that way. I am not sure this church will be all there anyway, but there is a process. It starts with a measure of faith. A couple of weeks ago on Thursday night Bible study, somebody asked the question in one of the Gospels about the talents. I took you to another Gospel that showed you the same parable about pounds. We talked about how the story was that a man was given a talent, or three men were given a talent. One of them buried a talent and did not do anything. Somebody else invested a talent and got five or three, I forget what it was, and somebody else invested and got more. The question is, what was he talking about here? I showed you that and I gave you this verse.

This is an example of when God saved you, God gave you a measure of faith. That measure of faith allows you to get saved. That is why when a person gets saved, they do not have the ability to understand Revelation 20, Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14. When somebody gets saved, they look at Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. They do not see a gap. They just see verse 1 and verse 2. It is a fact that when you got saved, God gave you enough faith to trust Him to save you. But you got a measure that faith at that point.

Once you get saved, you make an investment of that faith. That is what we have been doing for the last year and a half. We have been taking you guys and gals that have come in, along with the ones who have been around for a long time, and we have been showing you how to make good investments. That is why I have said it over and over again: I am willing to sit down with anybody, anytime, anywhere, to help you learn anything I can about the Bible. Why? It is an investment.

I may not know a lot of things in life, and I may be stupid in a lot of different ways, but I will tell you one mistake that I have not made, and that is the fact that I know where quality investments

are, as it comes to God. The investment of my life should only be into two things. You have heard me say this many, many times: only in two things that are eternal, because there are only two things that are going to last forever. One of them is the Word of God, and the other one is the souls of man.

I am not saying you cannot have other things in your life. I am saying, and this is the point that I have got to get across to you today, that it is okay to be part of the world. I am not saying you sell all you have and turn into a hermit someplace and live on a mountainside. I am talking about your focus in the midst of living on planet Earth, and what you have can never be diverted from you understanding what your mission is. That is all. The process of growth for any church, the process of growth for any Christian, is the investment with that faith that you get when you get saved, and then you make either good investments or bad investments.

IV. Spiritual Growth: Milk to Meat and Balance

In the Bible, there are seven stages of spiritual growth. Those seven stages are absolutely vital. Every healthy church will have those seven stages going on all the time. I am so excited to get into the New Testament because what we have done, the New Testament is just going to come alive for you. But we are going to put it off for a while because what I want to do now for a couple of weeks, a couple of months, is I want to bring you through those seven stages of spiritual growth. I want to show how they relate to everybody in this church. I want to show you how it is okay. I want to end it at the same time. It is the same pattern. If you have little kids, it is an absolute incredible concept because the same way you raise up your little children is the same way you build a church. You are going to see this thing in every aspect. You are going to see it in your own life. You are going to see it in the life of raising your kids. You are going to find yourself within the Word of God so you better know what you need to do.

So we are going to take, maybe it will take two months, three months. I do not know. It will not take much longer than that. But we are going to take that time and we are going to focus on those things with everything else we are going. Then we will go back to the New Testament.

Here is the problem we are going to run into. We are not there yet, but in time we will run into this. Good things are good, but everything has to have its balance. You realize, I know this sounds contrary, you realize you can study the Bible too much. You can read the Bible too much. You can take people who just, all they ever do is they read and study the Bible, and after a while they wind up being the most unspiritual people you ever meet in your life. Because it has to be a balance.

We are like sponges. If you have ever done any work, and I mop the floors at my house all the time so I understand about sponges. A sponge, you take a sponge, you put it in a bucket. After a while it lays in that bucket, it is worthless. Now a sponge by itself is a great invention. I think oysters invented it. That is where they come from, down the bottom of the ocean. You would not think that; you think somebody makes, but God made sponges. Sponges are a great thing. They will swipe up anything. But a sponge has its limit. You and I are like sponges. We absorb stuff

from God. But after a while we are like a sponge. We get so filled that we do not take any more in. Then you have to wring out the sponge.

Ministry in your life and my life is taking so much of the Bible in and then wringing it out so you can take some more. Because if you do not get to that point in your life, Christians stagnate, churches stagnate, and you have problems. Everything in this Christian life is a balance.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

What we have to do and get to the point in our lives in our church is we have spent a year and a half soaking everything up. Now we have to begin to wring some things out. I understand that there are some that just came into our church in the last two or three months that are still in the soaking up stage. I understand that. It will never be a time where everybody is wringing out at the same ability level. Everybody will always be, and this is why it is so important to understand the seven stages of spiritual growth, because this church, a healthy church, will always have people in all seven stages.

Where it becomes a problem is when some of you who have been saved 5, 10, 15, 20 years ought to be teachers, and yet somebody has to stop and teach you the basic principles over and over and over again because you cannot get it. That is where the problem comes in, and that is where you have to come to the point where you have to realize that you have to exercise your senses. The Bible says people who are unskillful in the Word approach the Word of God and just get the milk. People who are full of age get the meat. That is doctrine. They can handle the Bible, and along with that, they get discernment to discern both good and evil.

Some of you maybe are not there yet. I do not care where you are at. Everybody can get there. The deciding factor is not me, the deciding factor is you and what you are allowing the will to change in your life to get to that point. But it is like exercise. You have to exercise your senses. Even in the time of the Bible here, there were men, there were people who should have been teachers. And yet they have to be taught all over again, continually, the first basic principle.

We do not have anybody like that in here. Everybody, I believe, is trying to do what is right. I believe that everybody associated with our church, I may be wrong, but I think many of you, I believe that the bottom line is that everybody in this building wants to do what is right. Otherwise, you would not be here. Because there are too many other places you can go, you can hear whatever you want to hear. I take the approach, and I am not hard on you, but I am not hard on you. Hard on you is whacking you all the time and never trying to help you. Not hard on you, but not hard on you saying, "This is what you have got to do," but "Let me get down in the hole with you and help you dig out of your hole." That is where you are at.

We have to begin an exercise program. We have to begin to take men and women who want to exercise their senses, who want to go from milk to meat. There will never be a time in this church where there are not people who are feasting on meat while there are not people who are still taking the milk. I do not want it any other way because that is what makes a healthy church.

V. Old School Principles and Cultural Relevance

When it comes to life and the things in life, I am pretty old school. I really am. I look around in a society that is so undisciplined, and nothing drives me crazy than undisciplined. I do not mean to say that I have arrived by undisciplined. There are some things in my life I am very disciplined in. There are other things in my life I am not very disciplined in. That is true of all of us. But I am saying, I am pretty much, my philosophy of life is, I do not buy things until I can pay for them. I do not have any credit card debt. Why? Because all my life I was taught there is no value in that because it will deceive you. We have got a whole society that the whole thing is fast money at 21 percent. By the time you spend up two, three, four thousand dollars, five thousand dollars or whatever, you find out that is not easy money. It never goes away. But because of undisciplined in our society, and the guys that want to make money off of your pain, that is the way it goes.

I was brought up that if you save for it to buy it, you are going to appreciate it more. I learned that lesson when I was nine years old. My mom and dad bought me a bike, a Schwinn Racer. In my day and age, when you were nine or ten years old, every kid in the world wanted a Schwinn Racer. What was cool about a Schwinn Racer? It had handbrakes up here. You could drive down the street pedaling, and what was cool? You could backpedal and you get that clicking noise. Everybody else backpedaled, went over the handlebars. Not if you had a Schwinn Racer. I never forget, the night before it was white, it was real. Another thing, those thin little tires, man. Everybody else had their big mama honkers. Oh, you fat tires, man. No, a Schwinn Racer had little tires. Oh, and it had four gears, man. You are running around on your Huffy. Most of you do not even know what a Huffy is. Well, you are running around on big fat, tired Huffys, man, with one gear. They are panting up a hill, and they are dying. You just look over, kick it up one gear. And honest to goodness, the pedals become easier up that hill.

I had a Schwinn Racer. I wanted a Schwinn Racer. My mom and dad bought me a Schwinn Racer. I will never forget the first time I drove down the street, I thought I was, but I forgot about the handbrakes. I went to stop, put the back thing in, the click, and no, it did not make any difference. I ran into the neighbor's car. It took me a while to figure out, brakes are on, no handles up here. A year after I got that Schwinn Racer, it was trashed. I sold it for 75 cents, about a year and a half later. It was a mess. My mom and dad told me, "That is the last bike we are buying you." Man, I am still nine years old. I am not even out of puberty yet, and I am not going to get another bicycle. Well, that is tough for a kid at life at that age. My dad said, "You want another bike? Get a job. We bought you a bike. We sacrificed to give you a bike. Look what you did with it." A year later, and my mother could point out things like that better than anybody in the whole wide world. She could point out things that you did not do right. She had a gift of God, all I can say.

So I had to get a job. I got a job. 50 cents an hour. A little grocery store, a little mom-and-pop store. That is where we had mom-and-pop stores in all corners. I wanted another bike, and I bought another bike. I stayed for a year and a half and finally got another bike. When I got that bike, I did not wreck that one. I still had that bike when I was 19, 20 years old, even though I did not ride it anymore. What was the difference? When I had to save the money and work to get it, I appreciated it more.

We live in a society that does not have any concept of that. I am not saying everything is bad. I am not saying you should not have nice things. I am not saying that. But I learned that you have to, there are some principles that go along with having things. My mom and dad, they were married probably 10, 12, 13 years before they bought their first house. Now we get married and we have the ability, and I am not saying it is bad, but we think because we have the ability, instead of just balancing things out, no, we have got to have a \$500,000 house. We have got to sock ourselves with a \$3,000 a month house payment. We just lose the value of things sometimes. I am not saying it is bad to have things. I have got a nice house. But my house payment is \$700 a month. You just have to understand that there are focuses in life that you have got to have.

I know I am old school. I learned a great principle in my journey in life. I learned a great salient verse in Luke 16:15.

And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

That says simply this: "That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." That is a great verse. What that says is, if the whole world thinks whatever is going on is great, it probably stinks. What the whole world looks at as stinks probably looks really good to God. Now that is not true in every case, but you understand what I am talking about. The whole world is put together to keep you from doing what is becoming that perfect living sacrifice.

I am not saying it is wrong to have things. I am not going to say, "Well, you should not have this or you should not have that." No! I will be the last guy to tell you that. What I am saying is, do not let all of those things take you from the purpose of where you are at in life. Do not get yourself so enthralled into this world system that you cannot do what God wants you to do when God calls you to do it. That is all. I am not against things.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

He says, "All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient." He says, "I can do anything I want to do. I will not be brought under the rule of any." That is the follow. You have got to follow. You are here to serve God, not everything that you put yourself under that keeps you from serving God.

VI. The Model Church and Penetrating Culture

I say all that to say this when it comes to building a church and building people in the same way. I still believe that the Bible by itself has all the answers to man's problems. I believe there needs to be nothing else in this world other than a person who has a Bible who wants to learn it and somebody that has a Bible that wants to teach it. I believe that is the basic concept. That is what Paul said. He says that what you have, he says, "Commit to faithful men." That is the process of the church, raising up men and women who go from milk to meat and then who transfer other people from milk to meat, and the process never ends. They make the right investments in people's lives.

I do not believe there is any easy way to do that. I know churches like to do an easy way. I know they like to bring the church down with all of its standards to the world so worldly people will want to go to church. I am not going to do that. I understand the concept of becoming all things to all men, but come on. I am not going to have a happy hour before church so we can get you to come to church. I am having a happy hour right now. This is my happy hour.

I believe when the Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:15 to study to show yourself approved, it takes study. When it says a workman, I believe it takes work. I believe there are no shortcuts to learning the Bible. I get so sick of these shortcuts to science. I saw an ad the other day. The whole world is worried about everybody going to the verge of obesity. I saw a thing the other day where you can buy for \$29.95 a jar of pills and you will lose weight. You do not have to do anything but take the pills. I bet they made ten million dollars after the first ad. That does not work. There has to be discipline. In the same way with Christianity, there has to be exercise. There has to be discipline. There have to be things that you do. Nothing in life comes easy. When somebody tells you it does, they are lying to you. Nothing in life is easy. When somebody says, "Oh yeah, man, the Bible, yeah, hey, the Bible may be easy to learn," but there is a process of work and study to get it there. You have got to start with that measure of faith and then you exercise that measure of faith by investing your faith, investing what you do, and you grow as you invest it in the right thing.

We talk a lot about the Laodicean Church and the Philadelphian Church. We talk about to make the comparisons all the time. I could go through and list all the things and talk about them all. We could spend four hours. But it comes down to this: The Church of Laodicea is a church of bad investments, and the Philadelphian Church is a church with right investments. One has a good will of God. One has a perfect will of God. I am telling you, I know I am old school. I know I come out of that age where there was still some old Philadelphian preacher. I know what it used to be like to what it is now. I feel sorry for God's people that do not understand that.

We see that same thing in our country. We have people today who cannot understand the sacrifice that your grandfathers and fathers made in World War II because of the fact that they paid the ultimate price. We live in a society because we have lost touch with that generation, and most of those old boys are dead. We do not even understand. We think everything we have is because that is the way we live in America. We do not understand the price tag in the blood on Omaha Beach, Chateau Thierry, all the way back to Guadalcanal, all the way back to Pearl Harbor, all the way back to Normandy, all the way into France, all the way into River Valley, all the way into Berlin,

all the way into the Bataan Death March. We have no understanding the reason the price was paid.

I heard a story a couple of weeks ago. I just love this story. I wish I could have been there. I heard it on the radio. This guy went back to France, and he was like 70, 80 years old, and he is going through customs. A French official said, "I must see your passport. You Americans," he says, "you think you could come into this country? I am France of all people. You think you people can come into this country? You Americans can come into this country without a passport. I must see your passport. You think you are something special because you are an American? You come to my country? You must have your passport ready. Can you not read the signs?" The old man said, "I am sorry. I said, last, I said, that is the second time I have been to France. Last time," he says, "I came to France, nobody had to see my passport." He says, "Oh, yes, right, American. Come to this country when he has to see your passport." He says, "I came ashore in the first wave at Omaha Beach and I did not see any Frenchmen running around have to see a passport." That is what I am talking about. Sacrifice of what it costs.

Our problem is, we have lost the concept of the sacrifice that He made on Calvary's cross. Therefore, we do not understand the price that we need to pay. Should we get caught up in everything else? I am going to say it again. Nothing is wrong with having things. I hope you have a nice house. I hope you have two, three cars. I hope you have all kinds of nice things. But do not lose sight and do not get yourself a servant to those things that you make the wrong investments.

For me, my Bible is my model for everything. In my Bible, I have the book of Acts. I understand the book of Acts is really the foundation for church history. In the book of Acts, you find the model church, that is Antioch. You find the model pastor, that is Timothy. You find a model Christian, that is Paul. The book of Acts is the book of models. It has the right signs. It has the defining symbols.

I told you a while back, remember, I told you the story how years ago I was working at the rifle range down here at the gun club on the Range Road down here at the end of the Raytown Pioneer Gun Club. They had a sight-in day. I never forget this. I was helping them work it out down there. Guys would come up and be able to shoot their rifles in before you went deer hunting. I never forget. I was down there, and they gave me this guy. I brought him down. He had a gun. He knew in the box. I knew he did not. I knew. In fact, I cleaned the grease out of the barrel for him. Had a scope on it, that thing. I had him down there. We are shooting at 25 yards. I said, "Okay, get me a tight group and then we will move it in from there." So he, I stand up here. I have two other guys over here. I hear him banging away over here. Three shots. I look down here, my binoculars. Here is the bull's eye. He has got three shots. Pretty tight group. But they are over here and they are down here to the left. So I am looking at it and I am thinking to myself, "Okay, we have got to come over to down." I am over here talking to this guy. I turn around. This guy is packing up. I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "Well, that is good enough." He said, "That will get me a deer." I said, "You know what? It will get you a deer at 25 yards. But if you are two inches out and two inches down at 25 yards, at 100 yards, you are going to be way down here. And at 300 yards, you are going to be way out here. And at 400

yards, you are both going to come around and kill you." In other words, when you start out off target, you do not get better the farther you go. When you do not start off in the book of Acts with the defining things, you get two thousand years down the line. No wonder you are screwed up. No wonder you are going to shoot yourself in the back of the head.

But that is the book of Acts. It has the model church, the model pastor, and the model of everything. The book of Acts is simply the tale of two churches. It has the church of Jerusalem and the church of Antioch. I am just going to take a minute to explain this because the church at Antioch is the model church. The church in Jerusalem is not the model church, but in every Bible college and every theological seminary in the world, they teach that Jerusalem is the model church. Jerusalem is the church that would not change. They stayed in Jerusalem. They had a tough time with the gospel going to the Gentiles. Paul has to go down and straighten them out in the little meeting they have down there in Jerusalem. They never really get the concept of what is going on in the New Testament.

Now the church at Antioch, they are a model church. Missionaries. They send them out all over the world. Three missionary trips that the Bible records, and it really impacts the world. The first Bible teachers, the first Bible preachers are in Antioch. They are first called Christians in Antioch, Acts 11. It is the model church and everything in there between those two churches. You find a church that will not change when God is changing. You find a church that is changing because cultures change. Societies change. The success of any church, the success of any Christian, is the ability to reach your own culture, understanding that cultures change, mindsets change, and you have to be adaptable to that or you are not going to reach people.

The Philadelphia church is called the church of the open door in Revelation 3:7.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

What are doors in the Bible? I know there are doors open and one represents the rapture of the church. I understand that. But doors in the Bible also represent opportunities of ministry for you and for me.

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

Paul says, "A great door and effectual is open unto me." In other words, an opportunity.

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

He says in 2 Corinthians 2:12, "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, a door was open unto me of the Lord."

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

He says in Colossians 4:3, "Withal praying also for us that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mysteries of Christ." The Bible says that there are doors into our culture. Every church, if it is going to be successful, every Christian, if you are going to be successful in penetrating your culture, making the right investment, and going from milk to meat and growing through the process of exercising your senses, comes a time when the church has to stop doing what it is doing, or not stop doing it, but move to the next level and you start wringing out what you have learned. You do that by penetrating your culture while you get the keys from God to open the doors.

In the Philadelphia church, they have got the key. They have got the key of David. The Bible says, God says, "I have opened for you an open door that no man can shut." Why? Why did they penetrate the world? Because they had the key to the cultures of the world. They understood what the need was and moved on that need. God has the key to penetrate any culture. God has the ability to penetrate any group of people. The Book is the key because the Book teaches you about human nature and the Book teaches you exactly what we need to understand and all the things that we need to do to reach people.

Last week we saw a great concept in Malachi, and I gave you a verse in Hebrews 13 to talk about the fact that God never changes. God never changes. The message today, the Bible today, the principles today are the same as they were in the book of Acts. I said when we started, I believe that the Bible is the answer to man's problems, any culture, any society today, just like it was in the book of Acts. Somebody said, "Well, how can you say that?" I will tell you how I can say it because we live in a day and age now where back in the book of Acts all they had was the Bible. Today we have laser printing, we have telecommunications, we have satellite communication. The gospel can be blasted around the world in 10 seconds. We can send people all around the world. We can print millions of tracts, and we are getting less done today than they did in the book of Acts. Why? Because in all we are doing today, the Bible is not part of the equation. For me, the Bible is the only equation because that Bible is the key.

VII. Future Ministry Initiatives: Discipleship and Counseling

I want to talk to you about the first thing that we are going to put into our next year. There are going to be no sign-up sheets when we are done. There is not going to be a marching band out there. "Sign up today for Jesus." We are not going to do that. This is not going to be a thing where, "Okay, we are at a side show. If you do not sign up today, you are all going to lose what you got in the judgment seat of Christ. Just today or never." No, this is going to be an ongoing process. This is not something we are going to do one time. But let me just say this to you. There are people here right now that are ready for this. This is where we have to start.

The first thing we are going to talk about is found in John 15:16.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

That is the ordination of everybody in this room. If you are saved, God chose you and saved you that you might bring forth fruit, influence other people for Christ. Then it goes on and says, "And that your fruit should remain."

Have you ever noticed why people do not stay in churches? Most churches need to have a revolving door in the front because people come, you see them for a couple of weeks, they come down, they make some kind of profession. Then three weeks later, you never see them again. I know that the craziness of our society is a part of that. But I also know this: I know that if somebody is looking for the truth and somebody really wants to do what is right, the church needs to be the one that takes care of that.

There was a time when the mother's womb was the safest place for a baby to be. But Roe versus Wade canceled that out. Now even the womb of a mother that ought to be the safest place is no longer safe because of abortion. There was a time when the church was the safest place for a baby Christian to be. No more. Baby Christians are discarded and left to raise themselves in most churches. Nobody wants to spend the time changing dirty diapers. Nobody wants to spend the time wiping throw up off your nice \$400 suit. Nobody wants to go through the things in babies' lives that you have to go through to get them to a point in their life where they can stand on their own. It is the same way in churches.

We need to put the program together that is going to teach basic Bible-building blocks of life. We have a program. I want to take men and women that feel that that is where you want to start. We have some in here that are great teachers. I want to begin a program that is going to take young Christians because I have got another program that is going to bring people in. When they get in, we need to take care. I believe this. We see a lot of churches, a lot of people, but just because you see a lot of people does not mean it is a church. Here is the principle: God will never give you more than you take care of because the church has a responsibility not only to bear fruit, but that the fruit should remain. God will never give any church any more than that church is willing to take care of. That is why you have got so many churches. You have got hundreds of people. It is like a revolving door. They are in and they are out. When they have problems, nobody cares. All they want is your money. All they want is you there. All they want is what they can get from you. But when you have got a problem, "I am the pastor. I do not do those things." That is the mindset that we have got today.

The ministry is people and the ministry is teaching them the Bible. The ministry is teaching. We talk about the concept of discipleship. The word discipleship comes from the word discipline. When you teach somebody the basic building blocks of the Bible, you are teaching them the basic concepts of discipline. This is why I want to go through the seven stages of spiritual growth. I want to show you how you take a young Christian and I want to show you how you begin to work in their life. There are some of you right now who are ready to learn how to do that. I have a program put together that is going to take you in small increments. I will work with you. I will show you how it works. I will give you every in and out. Then I will use the older people that already know how to do it to help you get to that point. No matter where you are at in your spiritual life, if you want to learn how to do it and be taught while you are going through it, I have got the most foolproof plan put together that will work for everybody.

I want to stress to you, it is not something you have got to say, "Well, if you do not sign up today, it is \$29.95. Next week it will be \$49.95." No, it is at your speed and your pace when you are ready. Some of you, there are other things that you want to go through. There are other things you need to go through. Some of you are working on personal things in your life. But I know this.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3, when you get saved, you lay the foundation in your life. That foundation is Jesus Christ. The day you get saved, the rest of your life you are building on that foundation. Let me tell you something. This program of basic Bible building blocks helps put the first blocks on that foundation that will build stable doctrine in their life to get them from milk to meat. It will be the foundational blocks that are the most important. It will be the cornerstone block that ties everything together, that gives them understanding in the basic. It will be the first investment of their lives in developing the investments of their faith. It will be an investment in your life on a higher level of investing your life in somebody else and helping them bring it to the point where they get that training process for them and for you. Wringing out the sponge, bringing you from the place where now you become teachers.

From that point, as you in our process over the next couple of weeks, learn about the seven stages of spiritual growth. You see how this church will always have that where you fit in and then the process by which to monitor your own spiritual growth. It is something that every person that wants to be part of it, that wants to start out, you are not going to be thrown into a situation where you are above your head. I promise you, it will take, I will take whatever time it needs to take when you are at that point in your life and I will help you get everywhere you want to go because that is my job is making an investment in you. It is your job to make an investment in somebody else and it is our job to get there together, but we will get there in the time that you want to go.

VIII. Reaching the Culture: Counseling Ministry

The next thing is something that we have not really focused on so far because we have not been ready to do that. People have come in, people have gotten saved, and that is all great. But going up before you go out is not the way to build a church. I do not know a lot of things in life, but I know how to build people and I know how to build a church. You cannot go up until you go out. We are at the place now where we have got a base built. We have got people that are ready to take that next step right in this room this morning. They are ready to step out. We have got people here that are ready to help the people that take the next step. We have got everything we need at this point. We only miss one thing: people. How are we going to do it? Key to our culture.

America by definition is an insane asylum run by the inmates. That is true. It does not take much time on TV to see that. It does not take time talking to people to see that. If we were living in Ecuador or Africa, we would be in a culture that has specific needs. They need food, they need clothes, they need medicine. If we were living in Central America, they would have specific

needs. If we were living in Central Russia, they have specific needs. Every culture has its needs. America does not need any food. America does not need any clothes. America is foolish enough to spend \$100 on jeans that are already worn out. What is wrong with America? I look down there and they are on a mannequin in there with jeans with both knees out, a rip here, frayed everywhere. I was thinking, "Grandma, that is the jeans you are looking for." These jeans were \$80. \$80 to put the rips in the right places. That is our culture. We live in a culture that cannot even wait for your jeans to wear out. We have to buy them that way.

How in the world is somebody in a church going to say, "Well, it will take me five years to learn the Bible?" No, you want it right now. When I was growing up, next to a Schwinn bike, washed out jeans was the way to go. Oh, I hated those jeans when you first got them. They are dark blue. They are stiff. They look new. New shoes was another thing. Oh, scuff them. You are going in to teach yourself. "Oh, Bobby has new shoes on today." "Do not call me Bobby or I will kill you." It is all saying, "See my new shoes. See my new shoes." Yes. Shoot your teacher right in the head. So what you do, you get out there and buy a new shoe, scuff them up, get mud on them. Jeans, get dirty after about 100 washings. They look great. They fit great. They shrunk to your body and they look great. You walk around in there. But our society, you cannot wait for that. Now you have got to have it right now. We want everything right now. We want houses right now. We want cars right now. We want worn out jeans right now. We want a relationship right now. We want everything right now. That is what puts this world in a mess. That is why marriages are failing. That is why kids are going to the world. That is why everything is going. That is why basically America is an insane asylum, as I said, run by the inmates. We have a society in America that is 98 percent dysfunctional.

How do we reach that? I know how to reach it. Very shortly, you will be able to go online on a website and you will find a website. That website will be called Biblical Solutions, a Bible-based counseling service. It will not be connected with Old Path Baptist Church in any way. It will not have my smiling face on it. No, it will just be Biblical Solutions, a Bible-based counseling service. It will talk about all the other counseling services. All they want is your money, where this one will be built on the fact that it is all about God, the Word of God. Everybody will know up front what they are getting.

I did this once before, not in this great fashion, in another fashion. I was pulling in two people a week coming in and talking with them, and they were getting saved, and you worked with them. But when you get them to that point, you have got to have somebody to take them on whatever level they are. Some of you right now are ready to take them on the first level. A lot of people out there that think they have got problems really do not have problems. They are just lonely. They want people around them. They do not have any friends. They think they have got problems. Well, you come in and talk to them and you say, "Hey, let me show you. This is what happens." You get them into a program where you work with them, teach them the Word of God, give them there, show them, love them unconditionally, and that is what they are looking for.

I know you have got people that have problems. In fact, when I look at this concept of, we will call it counseling ministry. But the world looks at counseling ministry different than I do. When they think of counseling ministry, they think of Dr. Freud, Dr. Fine, Dr. Howard, Dr. Fine. Where

you sit around in there and you go, "What is your problem?" "I do not know." That is their concept. That is their mindset. That is not my set. I mean, there are some people who like to go and take a hammer and go, "I know." But that is, the Bible's concept of counseling is real simple. What is it? If you are not, no matter what you say, no matter what you do, no matter how you approach it, that is the keys to your culture. When you get in there, the message is the same. What is the counsel? God says, "If you are not saved, I counsel you to get saved. And if you are saved, then I counsel you to start doing what is right."

You explain to them the bad end of the world. You explain to them the bad air of investment. How many times I have had a hundred people say, by using one little example, when they come into my office with marital problems, and I would say, "You know what? Let me talk to you what marriage is. You see, I come home this afternoon, my wife calls me on the phone, she says, 'Bob, the refrigerator is broke.' Okay. I go down there and I am going to fix the refrigerator because I am not paying some Maytag repairman to come over and fix my refrigerator. So I look through the drawers. There is an owner's manual that has got a troubleshooting thing in here. I cannot find that one. Oh, here is one for the microwave." Now, what are my chances of fixing your refrigerator with a handbook from the microwave? They say to me, "Well, not very good." I am saying, "Marriage is designed by God. Life is designed by God. You are trying to fix your marriage by other than the handbook that God gave for it to run by, it will not work either." "Oh, yeah, that is good. I need to get saved." Bang.

You have got to reach to your culture and you have got to show them what their need is. You have got to strip away all of the stuff with the world. You have to see that. That is what he said. The model is the Laodicean church. God says, "I counsel you to buy gold tried in a fire." We think of counsel as Dr. So-and-so. Dr. Psychologist, Dr. Trauma man, Dr. This, Dr. That. No, counsel is simply the Bible has the answer to man's problems. When you sit down and open up the Bible, you will see yourself and find a solution to your problem. Instead of treating the symptoms, we will solve the problem.

But I have got to have help with that. Here is where I am going with it. Once I meet with them, once I start to work with them, once I start to deal with them. Right now, as I am standing here, you are sitting here and I am talking to you. You have got people in your mind at work, who have come to you with problems in your life. You talk to them all day long. Now you have a place instead of saying, "Come to church," you will have a place to say, "Hey, here is a counseling service that will really help you." You get them into my office and let me have time with them. Let me get them in a little Word of God. If there is any inkling of them wanting to do what is right at all, somebody in this room is going to get to work with them. I may go through the initial steps and solve their problem, but a lot of them just need what you right now just need a little training in giving them. I know some of them are, but what happens once you get into discipleship, once you get into this basic Bible foundational teaching stuff and you start to work with people, you are going to really like it. Some of you are going to say, "Hey, I really enjoy this and I have got a knack for it." You are going to move right into that counseling side with me. I have some of you already earmarked for that. I have been around you long enough to know for a year and a half now. What just about everybody has to offer, and there are some of you that, and I

am not saying you all will not get there, but there are some of you right now that you are headed that way.

This is why you have got to have the concept of the seven stages of spiritual growth. The lifeblood of any church is all stages of that spiritual growth. Look at it this way. Bible talks about seven stages of spiritual growth. They start with babies and wind up with old age and everything in between. In that is the secret of the success of any church because in there is the excitement of everything. It is like a family reunion, a good family. Most families turn into a brawl. It is a hockey game without the puck. But I am talking about in a good sense. You come to a family reunion, what goes on? Everybody stops what they are doing for a while and comes together at somebody's park. What do you do? You look at new babies that were just born that you have not seen yet. You look at the young men running around and playing ball and throwing the football. You look at the couple that just got married last year that you have not seen. You look at the grandfather and the grandmother over here that all the kids are hanging around and wanting to know, "Grandpa, why this? Grandma, why that?" There you have the complete church with the young babies being born, people being saved, with the young men running up and down, exercising their strength. The men and women who have become fathers and become responsibility wise, and then the old men, the moms and the dads, the grandpa and the grandma, they have been around for a while, they stand back and look at the generations in front of them.

The babies, they are just glad to be there. Everybody is showing off the baby and holding the baby. The young men, they are out there playing ball. It is a good time. They are playing touch football and they are playing the baseball and all that out there. Everybody else and the new babies are being shown around, and the young newlyweds are being introduced, and everybody is saying, "Oh man, everybody," and the old men are standing back. What they see is what nobody else sees. They see the generation of a family. The way it is supposed to be. That is where every church should be. They have new babies being born again all the time. Some of you young boys going down to the senior mission next week, exercising and starting out. Saying stupid things and even the drunk saying, "Amen." Preaching about the, they have the harlot and one more drunk stand up and say, "That sounds like my third wife." You have got the people that are starting to take responsibility. You have got the guys and the girls and the men, women who have been around for a while. Seen life, experienced life, looking back and being able to see what is really here.

Everybody sees this place differently. If you have got any kind of spiritual wisdom at all, you see the plan of God unfolding in a time where God brought everybody here exactly the way He wanted. Now your response to that and what you do with that is between you and Him, but there is no accident that you are here today. This next year we need to begin to exercise, some of you. We need to take some of you and begin to teach the foundational things. We need to help you work through whatever you are working through to get you where you need to be. That is the quality investment. There is nothing worth investing more in this world than that.

Last night another aspect that we are getting to the point too, I met with all the young people. It was not just the singles, it was anybody. It was the kids 14, 15 years old up to, the oldest was Mindy at 42. We have come to the point now, and I talked to them last night. I said, "Hey, I am

not interested in just having a singles ministry. I am interested in teaching singles how to minister." We are going to have a lot of fun. I have Woody and Stephanie and Kelly and Jason who are going to head it up, and they have got a lot of fun things planned. I talked with them about some things that I wanted them to help me do that I cannot do with you older folks. I talked to them, "Hey, we have got to take now where our ministry becomes multifaceted, multi-dimensional." We have had a year and a half of banging away at the Bible and laying some things down. God is giving us the greatest people. We have got about 80 people of everybody who shows up at the same time. You cannot ask for better than that. People are all down through those seven families. We have got it. We have got everything at our fingertips that we need. All we have to do is decide, "Hey, that is what we are going to do." Wherever you are at, let God have you. I am not saying that everybody has got to put. I do not put pressure on anybody to do anything. Never have. I am just telling you, I am here for you. We have got the seven stages of spiritual growth here, and we are ready to go.

I talked to them last night about the aspect of how to really focus in on, "All right, this is how you are going to help me." I know everybody could not be there for that. That is fine. I will put you up, put you in and bring you up to speed on the way. I know people had things they had to do last night that could not make it. That is okay. It is not because, "Well, you were not there last night." No, it is not even about that. It is about, "Do you want to do what God wants you to do in your life?" That is all. We will make it happen. So I have got that dimension going to start. That dimension going to form. It is all the pieces, and now we are coming together. If we just work at penetrating our culture and using that in a mode of fact, I am a guy, I told you I am old school. I think of getting every drop of everything out of my can. When I put up something together that we are going to do, I want everybody to benefit. I do not do it for this group or that group. Everybody benefit. Everybody benefit, and it is going to be that way. Here is a thing that everybody can develop your skill level with the Word of God on wherever level you are at, wherever you are at. All it takes is the desire and the attitude of heart. "Bob, I do not know what to do, and I probably do not know anything, but I just want to do what God wants me to do. Start me out slow. Help me get there. Be patient with me. I will get." That is all you want. Milk to meat. Exercising your senses. Do you want to wind up with the judgment seat of Christ was just a good concept of the will of God, acceptable? I do not know about you. I want it to be, I want it. I know I have made mistakes in my life, and I will all make mistakes in life. But the bottom line is this, when you wind up at the judgment seat of Christ, get one thing straight, and that is the perfect concept of that will of God, of what God wants you to do.

You can define success any way you want to do it. In an individual's life, you can make it money, houses, job, career, whatever you want to do. You can make the success of a church, a big building, "We have got this, we have got that, we have got a Starbucks, coffee place," and you can make whatever you want. But come down to it, the success of any Christian, the success of any church is simply this: finding out what God wants you to do with your life based on what He did on Calvary's cross, and then giving the rest of your strength to do it. It is as simple as that.

IX. Ongoing Development and Leadership Training

The last thing I want to talk to you about is we cannot take time off from developing our skills further in the Word of God. A lot of people ask me, especially when I meet pastors, they will ask me this question and say, "Well, when are you going to start a Sunday night service, brother? You do not have a Wednesday night service?" My answer will be, "Well, in the Bible, I find Sunday morning, the rest is up to you." I made up my mind that when we started this church, I was not, he has not figured out yet, I am not your average buck-dust preacher. I do not want to do it because it has always been done. I want to do it because it works. Right now, I am not saying at some point we will not. I am saying right now, I could just see, "Okay, we are a church. We have got to have Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night," and I have got to beat you over the head to get you here. "And if you are not here, you are not spiritual." "And you come here on Wednesday night and Thursday night, and then Thursday night, we have got to have a visitation program when I say, 'Okay, out there, you do not give you all these cards. Go out here and meet them, knock on these doors over here.'" That is the mindset of the way that it used to be, and it is not that way anymore.

I am not interested in Baptist tradition. I am interested in taking what will work and spending quality time with you in the Word of God. When we start this discipleship thing, it is going to be something extra that is going to take some time. So could you see now, because we have got to run everything the way a Baptist runs, and we have got to have Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, Thursday night, and all this, and then we will work everything else and then force you to get in with, no, start with what works. What works is your family, your family. I told them we started. Sunday night right now needs to be for your family. Do something with your family. Spend time with your family. If you do not want to do that, or together in the church with family, I do not care. It is not all about open up your Bible. It is all about the concept of building this thing right. My job is to give you the best opportunities to learn and to grow. Your job is to take advantage of it.

This next year, we are going to focus on some things. One of the questions I am asked over and over again is, "Bob, we have got a lot of information this year. We have got all kinds of notes. What do I do with them?" Oh, I have got just what you are looking for. We are going to take some Thursday nights. The only two times of the week we focus right now is a little special thing we do is Sunday morning and Thursday night, because they are the premier time of this week. One of them, I get to lay out the vision of the church and preach the main concepts, and the other one we get to come back to the group and we get to dissect it or whatever. In the one-on-one personal times, I would not trade anything in the world. But I am telling you this, this next year we are going to take some Thursday nights coming up, and I am going to show you with all the material you have got, I am going to show you the most infallible, absolute concept of how to make what you have got in your notebooks alive in your Bibles. I am going to show you how to take it from point A to point B to make it work. If you do not have any notes in your Bible yet, you are the greatest advantage because you will be able to start from scratch and see those things. I am going to help. I have got such an incredible concept put together that it will make it so easy. The rest of your life, you will not have a problem understanding how to put notes in your Bible. I am going to eliminate the fear of doing it wrong. It has taken me 35 years to perfect it. But I have got it. Brother, I am going to give it to you.

I am going to show you how to take some of this stuff, how it becomes, how the Bible becomes, how you begin to define your exercise of getting the Word of God and how you begin to learn how to take the Bible and do something with it. Do you become skillful, skillful in the word that you become a working knowledge of the Bible? Because all of this, I am building leaders. I am meeting men and women down the line as God, we grow up, we go out. The men and women say, "Okay, you take care of this, you take care of that, you take care of this. This is your responsibility." There will be a time when God gives us whatever He gives us that will have most of the people right here. I know maybe you do not believe that now, maybe you do not see it. But 90% of you right now will be out somewhere else doing something in ministry aspect here with as we grow, as God uses you or throughout the week, you will be touching people's lives. You always will not be sitting just taking it in, you will be using what you have got. You will be taking that measure of faith and you will be investing it. You will be exercising your senses, you will be coming skillful with the Word of God. It all starts with understanding what we are talking about today, what level we are at, where we have got to go next. Yet at the same time, not putting you under the pressure when you are saying, "Well, Bob is going to think I am not really spiritual if I do not jump on board right now." No, no, no, no. Why? Because this is not a one-time deal. This is something that is going to go on and on and on and on and on. This is going to be, this is my job right here, right now. This is what I do. This is what I will always do. Giving you whatever you need, helping you wherever you are at, never expecting you to be somewhere that you are not ready to be. Never forcing you into a situation you are uncomfortable with. But always being there wherever you are at to say, "Okay, are you ready? Let me show you how to do this." Then down the line, I am going to say, "Okay, remember how I showed you? Okay, now go show this person." Exercise.

When we get to the judgment seat, I do not want you just to have good. I do not want you just to be acceptable. I want you to be perfect. I will spend every hour with you I can. I will spend whatever quality time it takes, not just going through the Baptist tradition so we can say we put in our time. Quality time in that Book that we exercise your senses so when the special things come along, you work quick and ready to do it, no matter where you are at today. But I am going to tell you. I can put the best program together. I can talk about Sunday morning on Thursday night. I can talk about everything. I can put all the things and talk about all the great things. But the bottom line is, I can do it. I can lay it out. But you are the one that has to take it. You are the one that has to say, "That is where I," and that is where the responsibility falls on you and falls on me.

X. Accountability and Two-Way Street

I do everything that way. I told you, I try to get everything out of everybody. When I teach somebody the Word of God, I can simply just say, "Well, come on over and we will sit down and we will go through the Bible together and I will just teach you something." That does not do you any good. I mean, it does you good, but it does not do you all real good. Why? Because you just sit there and take it. You do not have any accountability responsibility. You can slough off all week long. So what I do, I say, "You do not want to study the Bible. Here is what we do. You take a book. You take whatever you want to do. You study it. You lay it out. You read it. You

come up with the questions to come." Now you see, we are both accountable. I am accountable to teach you, but you are accountable to study. Because I know how it goes. I have been in it for 35 years. I know how it goes. "Well, I will just go tonight and let him teach me and I will not do anything with it." Now, if you have got the accountability responsibility to study it and ask the questions, then we have got a two-way street and you would be surprised.

Marion comes over to see me every week on Tuesday night. I will tell you what, I learned more from him. He probably learned from me. Same way on Monday. I learned more from you guys. You learn from me. There is not a time that I do not sit down with somebody in the Word of God. You leave either during or after. I am not running downstairs, running down what I learned from you. Maybe you do not even know it because I just sit there with that dead dumb look on my face. But my mind is always going. I learned something from everybody. I am not such a fool to think that I am the only one to have something to teach you when it is a two-way street. It will always be a two-way street. It has to be a two-way street. I will teach you. You teach me. Show me. Help me. Some of you do it. You do not even know you do it. I would sit down with you and somebody will say something and I will think it might say, "Well, I am answering your question." I said, "We never saw that before. I need to make a note."