

1 John 2:13-14

Sunday 3/13/2005

We are going to turn to the book of 1 John. We are not going to head right there first, but that is where we are going to finally wind up. I appreciate you being here today. As you know, we have been coming through what I think is probably one of the greatest studies for us as individual Christians in all the Bible that really helps facilitate our spiritual growth.

I told you when we started that once you start looking through the Bible and coming through the Word of God, a natural study develops. It is a natural study that is really built around seven areas in our life that really constitute our spiritual growth. I am not saying that you find these exactly as you can go to a book, chapter, and verse, but in essence, as you come through the Bible, you find that God makes mention of seven different categories of a person's spiritual growth.

He talks about babies. He talks about little children. He talks about children. He talks about young men. He talks about fathers. He talks about the elders. And then he talks about the aged. With each one, He gives us not only a physical description, but He also gives us a great spiritual parallel, showing you that when you put this all together, you see the seven stages that every man or woman that gets saved ought to go through in their spiritual walk with God.

I have said this before, but I like to keep all of the other material because we get so much material going here. You begin to see that we are studying a process that really shows you that you can measure your own spiritual growth, that you can find out where you are at in your relationship with God. I have said before, every man in the Bible, every woman in the Bible, every person in the Bible that wound up being exactly what God wanted him to be, every man in the Bible that you study that is a great character study, they go through this exact same spiritual growth process because it is the process we all go through. There is nothing different between them and us. We think many times because we live in 2005 and they lived in 1918 BC, that there is a difference. No, the only difference is the fact that we forget sometimes that human nature is always the same, and they go through the same struggles that we do.

I. Review of Spiritual Growth Concepts

In this process so far, a number of great Bible terms have popped up that we have talked about, and I hope you are making a list of them because they are great concepts that all identify a different aspect of your growth process.

- Milk to Meat
- Discipleship
- Will of God
- Measure of Faith
- Wise Investments and Discernment

We also examined the parallels between training up Christians and training up your children, showing you how that in both cases, it is an exact example that the one feeds off the other. One is a physical aspect, but the other one is a spiritual aspect. We talked about the four different concepts that whether you are training up your children or I am training up Christians, or in some of your cases in the next couple of years, you will be training up Christians working with me in the ministry, but we all follow the four different concepts.

1. Discipline: You build that into a little baby, and we talked about the age concept.
2. Relationship and Fellowship Factor
3. Responsibility Factor
4. Leadership Factor

We have covered all of those, and we went back and forth and looked at them because, as I told you, we have a double hit here. I can not only teach you what you need to know about your own self and your spiritual growth, but what you need to know about when you start working with others. At the same time, my goodness, we have more little children and more babies here in this church than you are ever going to find anywhere, and that is great, praise the Lord for it. We have two more almost ready to happen here any day now, right? Any day. As I said, Dave and I are ready. We have water boiling back here in case that happened this morning. Dave and I can handle it. I will be right behind you, buddy. I will be holding the hot water.

You know what? That is great, and I thought, you know what? I can kill two birds with one stone here because the parallels are so great. I want you as young couples growing up doing what is right with your kids because that is so crucial, and it is absolutely essential if you are ever going to have any kind of viable ministry in the Word of God.

II. Introducing the "Young Men" Stage: Responsibility and Joy

Today, we are going to move up to the next level, and we are going to talk about young men. When I use the phrase "young men," just take for granted I am talking about young ladies too. I am just using it in the Bible term. When I am talking about this, whether I am talking about it in a physical sense of your children, in a physical sense, this would be your children from the time they probably get to be maybe 17 or 18, I would say up to the time they get married. Everybody is a little different, but that is the way it figures.

Let me say this area or level, when we get to this point in a spiritual sense, this is where you begin to teach them responsibility. We have talked about discipline and how that when a baby is just a young baby, that is when you forge in them the discipline. We talked about when they become a little child or little children, how you then enter into the relationship and the fellowship factor. Now we have come to the point where the Bible calls them young men, and we now see that this is where they begin to learn responsibility if everything has been done the way that it needs to be done.

Let me say this, in a spiritual mode, from here on in, when I have somebody that enters into this area here, for me, this is where the fun begins. This is where the joy really of ministry really is right here. Do not get me wrong, I enjoy babies, and I enjoy, you know, it is all fun, it is exciting when a baby gets born, and everybody is happy and all of that stuff that we talked about. My little Maddie, she is at the place now where this last couple of weeks ago, we took her down to Big Bird and Sesame Street down there at the thing. It was fun, and I sat there with Jason, and we both worked hard at not being bored. When Cookie Monster came out, Jason's eyes lit up, and I enjoyed that. It was a thing where we sat there, and I really liked it. I like watching Maddie's little eyes light up. She knows all the, and I like watching all the kids, I really do.

But you know what? I cannot wait until Maddie gets old enough, and I kid her about this all the time. I cannot wait until Maddie gets old enough that grandpa can just say, "We do not have to put her in a car seat." Those car seats are demon-possessed from hell. I mean, they are the worst thing you ever saw in your life. They may save your baby, but I will tell you what, if you ever had to get your baby out in a hurry, they need to have injection canisters on them, or you just hit the button and it blows them up in the air and a parachute opens up or something. They are terrible. They may save a baby's life in a car wreck, but let me tell you something, if you are parked on a railroad track, not knowing why you would, but if you would park on a railroad track, you had to get out in the middle, forget the kid. I mean, better carry a knife in your boots so you can cut the straps because those things are entwined in there incredibly.

I do not want to mess with that. I want to say, "Come on, let us get in grandpa's truck and let us go down to Toys R Us. Let us go down to Dairy Queen." That is what I cannot wait for. I cannot wait for the fact that I can just take her with me, and we just have a great little time, and that is fun too. I really enjoyed it, and I enjoyed my kids growing up. I remember they played softball and all the little things. I remember when I taught Kelly how to drive her first stick shift, and I took her around, and I made sure we did it. I wanted to make sure because she never had a stick shift before, so I made sure I bought the car before rabbit season came in because somebody would have mistook us for a rabbit hopping down the road if I would not have done it any other time because it was, remember how that thing went?

Then I gave it a real test. I said, "Okay," I said, "take it out for yourself." Fifteen minutes later, she came back, tried to go up a hill, stalled it, could not get it started because you know how a stick shift is, you let the clutch out, you have got to be a little bit, you know, you have got to know how to catch that thing just right. That is what real men want. We want sticks. We do not want no automatic. We want something that, you know, you can ride that clutch, boy, back and forth. Well, she did not know how to do that. She started rolling back, so she just parked the thing right up the road, walked home.

Man, I enjoy that. I enjoy that. The first time I took Jamie deer hunting, she shot the game warden. I have fun growing up a little kid. I love your kids. I like to watch them in there and play with them. I like the little secret things we give them, a little sign we give them, and all the little, I just love them. But let me tell you something, and I should have died in truth, there is nothing great. I mean, I love my kids growing up. We have fun, but the greatest joy, the greatest joy in my life, the greatest joy in my life, more than any other joy and anything I can think of and

anything I have ever done in my life, is to have my girls and my boys ministering with me in the Word of God in this church. I do not know of a greater thing for me to experience than my girls and my boys side by side with me in the ministry.

They know I am harder on them than I am on anybody else, and sometimes, I mean, I know I am, kids, but you know what the bottom line is this: there is no greater joy. I mean, I enjoyed you growing up, and I enjoyed you coming to the point when you were little kids, and I enjoyed, but I am telling you, there is no greater joy than standing preaching, knowing that somebody is running this, any dirty job I have that I do not want to give to somebody else, I knew who I can give it to. You know what? There is no greater joy in the world than that.

My point is this: when you as a young man or young lady growing up in the Lord get to that stage where I can begin to put responsibility on you for the ministry, that is when it becomes fun. I do not worry about you as much then as I do now. I worry about young Christians because I have been in this business for a long time, and I know what the devil can do to break your back spiritually. I know how he can bring the wrong things in at the right time to mess you up, and I worry about you, and I fret over you just like I did my own kids growing up. But when you get to this stage that you begin to take responsibility for ministry, when you enter into this stage as a young man or a young lady where you get to this level, and it begins to be fun, and it begins to be where you begin to take responsibility in things, and now it is going to be a point where we just build on that responsibility.

Let me tell you something, just like in my physical family, in my spiritual family, and I love you all, and you know that is true, and this message is probably more personal for me, this one and the next one, than anything else that I have ever preached to you because this is where we live as a spiritual family. I am telling you, if you have been around here long enough, you know that there is a very unique thing going on in this work here, that God has given us something that is unbelievably precious. Boy, I will tell you what, there is an opportunity here in these last days when everything is upside down in this world for some of you young men and young ladies to make a difference in these last days, no matter how old you are.

III. The Glory of Young Men: Strength

Now, the key verse for young men is Proverbs 20:29. You do not have to turn to it, just write it down if you want to look it up later. It is a simple verse, but it gives us the number one thing that we have got to work with when I get a young man or a young lady that grows to that point spiritually. They have come through the baby stage; we have taught them the basics of the Bible. They came through the little children stage, and they are learning, and now they are beginning to take responsibility for things, and their productivity now for the ministry is beginning to show, and they are beginning to look at things differently, and man, we can have the time of our life.

Proverbs 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head.

That is the greatest thing young men and young ladies bring to the party: strength. I want to talk about that this morning. I want you to understand that the mark of a spiritual Christian at this

time is the strength that he has or she has. In a physical sense, it is true of somebody that is 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and maybe even up to 30.

Let me illustrate what I am talking about. Picture in your mind, I have used this illustration, but not to this degree, picture in your mind our Memorial Day picnic. Every Memorial Day, I give you a party. Me and my family love all the cookin's. It is not one of those rammy-mammy Baptist things where you go and just get a little bit of food. I feed you till you puke, and then feed you some more. I want you to go away 10 pounds heavier than when you came. I want you to have it because you work all the time. It is my one time that I can just, I know some of you get a three-day weekend, some of you get a four-day weekend, and I know some of you do not get any day weekend, but you are working all the time.

Anyway, it is my time, and you can come. We go up there to Greenwood. We have the same place, well, we have different places, maybe with a little kid stuff right there by the pavilion, so we have a great setup this time. You know how it is, it is Monday morning, there is no work. You have had a long weekend. I have done all the cooking. We just ate. You are tired. You have had a, you know, you just kind of want to kick back and rest and relax, and everything is, and I can see it in my mind. I have been there too many times. I can close my eyes, and I can just see it all right now.

You have old Jeff here, he is over here in the corner strumming on his guitar. You have John Christenson, and you have, where is he at? Oh, back here, what is his name again? Oh, Jimmy. They are over there on the other corner so they do not conflict with Jeff strumming, and they are playing, trying to get together under their monikers. What was that? Oh, that is Jan Hill running around taking pictures of everybody. What was that? Oh, that is Pammy showing the wedding pictures, the same ones she showed last year, but they are good pictures. Where Jan and Cheryl, they are cleaning weapons over on the other side of the corner. John Hill is in a lawn chair, head back, mouth open, walk by looking at a hole, make a caveman homesick. Where is John Bissett? He is in the other corner. He is figuring out the genealogy between First and Second Chronicles. There are all the moms lined up on baby row in their little circles talking mother things. Babies sleeping. Everybody is fat and sassy, having a great time. We are just kicking back now and talking and enjoying life and having a great time. We have had food, and man, I mean, it is just a nice beautiful day with big old puffy white clouds sailing through, and the sun streaming down, and just kind of wants you to go and, and I look around, and I see all of this, and then it hits me.

Where are all the young guys? Where are all the young people? There is a notable absence here. Where are they all at? Where is Justin? Where is Danny? Where are all the young people? Where is the Stymest boy? Where are all the girls? Where is Jason? Where are they all at? And then I hear them. They are over on the ball field. Now, they worked as hard as we have, maybe even more, and they eat more than we have eaten. Why is it that I am ready for a nap, you are ready for a nap, and they are over there on the ball field choosing up sides?

So what do we do? We think we are going to get in this thing. Oh, do we get disappointed? John is the first one they come after. John is thinking, "Oh, they want me to play." No, they want you to umpire. They do not want you to play. You think that is tough? I am the preacher. You see, you

kids have not learned yet. If you want to make points with the preacher, you get him on your team. Now, your mom and dad know that. You are not smart enough yet. You want to get in good with me, pick me because there is nothing more degenerate to me. I hate these pickup lines. All right, you two be captains, and then everybody is standing. You know what it is for a 55-year-old man who knows more about the Word of God than anybody in the world to be the last one picked for a softball team? That is rough. Where do you hide? If you say, "I have got to go to the bathroom," you do not get picked at all. So you stand there with all the abuse that has to go along with it, and then your own daughter pitches. I mean, when you are the last one, and you are the guy who is supposed to be in charge, that hurts. Then when your daughters do it because they are captain because they play co-ed, and you know they only do it because they love you, it is tough, but I deal with those things.

But you see, that is what I am talking about. The glory of young men is their strength, their stamina, the ability that they can work all week like we do. They can just never stop. Five softball games, 28 volleyball games, and then somebody finds a basketball court, and it is one-on-one, and it is going this, and then on top of it, and I know the Bible says that no man despise thy youth, but I despise anybody who can eat as much as you guys eat and never gain any weight. I watch you guys. I think your legs are hollow. I watch you come in there, and you eat, and you eat, and you eat, and you are never gaining any weight. God's judgment will fall on you when you are 30. That is how you know most preachers are on the level. The bubble is in the middle. Think about it. It will come to you after a while.

You play all night and play all day. You are never too tired. I have never heard a young man say, "No, come on, let us go. We have four. We need one more for basketball. No, I am beat." No, no, you will go playing and stay home from church on Sunday morning because you are beat, but you will come, you will play. I have seen him leave the most gorgeous girl in the whole wide world and say, "I will see you, honey. The boys are calling to go play ball." You are a fool. You are a fool. Never too tired.

I will give you an example. Remember the Christmas party we did over here? It was a wonderful time for all the kids as moms with a patch program. Well, that was a long day. Some of you were, I mean, you, I was a long month, but that day was an incredibly long day, a hard day. We had to get in there, get it all done, and we worked and worked. Somebody went out there picking the people up, brought them in, and then we had to decorate. We had to tear it all down. We had to do the food. We had the program to do. We had to set up the, we did. I mean, it was at the end of the night, man, we, here it is, we are finishing cleaning up, and we are, and I am beat. I mean, I am, it is 10:30, and I am tired. Now I look for everybody. Where are all the young guys at? They are in the gym playing hoops. Why? You throw me the basketball and knock me over. I was so tired.

But that is young men. It is their strength. It is their stamina. It is their endurance. It is their ability. That is the mark not only physically, but that is the mark spiritually, and boy, that is what I look for. At this point in your life, you are almost out of school, or maybe you are out. Life is opening up for you. You are going to get maybe your first job, or you just started your job. You are out of school, or you are going to go to college, or you are looking for a career, or some of

you are going to go into the military, and your life is opening up for you. Let me just say this to you, this can either be the best time in your life, or it can be the worst time in your life. It is like everything else. It will either be the greatest time in your life, or it can be the worst time in your life.

For parents, you know what? This is where Proverbs 10:1 comes into effect, and I told you, and also for, you know, for in a spiritual sense, but I told you that your job when that little guy and that little gal is a baby, that you teach them the discipline, and you basically work up through the relationship, you work up to all that of how to build that. Now at this point in their life, Proverbs 10:1 is into effect one way or the other.

Proverbs 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

That is where they are at. It is as simple as that. It can be the greatest time in your life, or it can be the worst time in your life.

IV. Dangers and Pivotal Nature of this Stage

Now there is a danger. I mean, I love it, and in a spiritual sense, when you get to this point, boy, we are downhill, we are on our way. But in a physical sense, this can be a very dangerous time. You know why? Because a young man has power, he has strength, but he lacks the wisdom to control it. You know, when I worked down in Paola, down there in Miami County, for a lot of years, every year about May, right at the end of school, prom time in those counties down there, and that would be Paola, it would be down south a little bit beyond that down there, and in those places, every year they would lose one or two high school kids around that in a terrible car accident.

I talked to, I got to know the cops down there, and all the highway patrol guys are all local guys, and I would mark their yards and mark for the city, and I was shoulders with them all the time, and I would get to talk to them, and I got to know some of them, and they told me, they said, "You know," and I asked him, I said, "That is a terrible thing." He said, "Yeah, you know what?" And what they would do down there, and they do it up here too, but they would do what they call hill jumping, where they would, they would go down, down there in Miami County, there were hills like this, and they would get speed in about 60, 70 miles an hour, come over one of the top of those hills, and then they go airborne, and then they hit a tree someplace, and every year, every year they lost kids. You could not drive out of town down there without seeing little memorials along the road where some kid died.

The state highway patrolman told me this, and I know this, but he confirmed it for me. He said, "You know what?" He says, "Kids at this age think they are indestructible. They think that because they are young, because they have strength, and because their life is opening up, they are willing to take the chances. They say to themselves, 'It cannot happen to me,' and they think, 'I am indestructible.'" When in actuality, all that is is power and strength, but the lack of wisdom to control it.

Hey, the first kid, the first person killed in the Bible was a young person, Genesis 4. This is why Timothy was told by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:22, he is told to flee youthful lusts because this is the time where this is the time where it can be a great time, or it can be a very dangerous time. It is a time where it can be the greatest time in somebody's life where life is opening up, or life can close on you very quickly, and we are going to talk about the reasons why spiritually, but it also fits physically.

V. Overcoming the Wicked One: Point of No Return

Now, the reason why this stage is so pivotal in your spiritual growth is found, now we are going to go to 1 John 2. This is what I told you, and we are going to look at a couple concepts here that I think are absolutely essential for you and your spiritual growth. Now, some of you are at this point in your life where I look at you as young men, women and men, in your spiritual growth. Some of you are not too far from this, and you are going to move into this realm here probably within the next year. As I have said before, there is no hard fast, "Well, today you are this, and so are you that." It is a gradual process, but you understand where I am going with it. But this is a pivotal point, and the reason why it is a pivotal point is found in 1 John 2:13.

Let us pray. Father, thank You for today. We pray, Father, You will bless us now as we look at these great principles. Thank You, Father, for all that You do for us, and we love You. Thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

Now, here is what it says in 1 John 2:13:

1 John 2:13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

Let me explain this phrase "overcome." You find it two ways in the Bible. You will find the term "overcome" dealing with somebody that gets saved, and when you get saved, you overcome. Then you will find that in another way, the way that is used here, because these people are already saved. When you get to this point in your spiritual life, when your child reaches this point, if you have done your job, if I have done my job as a pastor, if you have done your job as a parent, when they get to this point, you put less restrictions on them. Because if you have done the discipline stage, and you have worked through the fellowship relationship stage, now when it comes to the leadership stage, now instead of putting more collars on them, putting curfews on them, restrictions on them, you want to be lifting those things off as you transfer or begin the transformation of responsibility to them.

Now is where it really pays off what you have done, and now is where it shows off if you did not do what you needed to do. You cannot hide it anymore now. You cannot make any excuses now. Now is where it all comes out. You either have got to stick your head in the sand and ignore it, or you have got to say, "I am going to do whatever I have got to do to fix it and stop it in its tracks." But you cannot hide it anymore now. You know it, everybody else knows it. Your kids now have become the full-length mirror. Before, they were a little pocket mirror. Then they were a little hand mirror. Now they are a full-length mirror, and everybody knows now that your kids are

nothing but a mere reflection of what your relationship is with God, and you cannot hide it. The only thing you can do is deal with it, and there is always a way and always a time, always a way to deal with it.

But this is the point now where in a physical sense, you ought to let them prove all things as the Bible says. You see, his exercise program, his exercise program has strengthened himself. If he has made good investments because you have shown him how to, if I as a pastor have brought him through the milk concept to the meat concept, if I as the pastor or you and the parents have helped him grow in faith, even though now he is a young man, he has got strength, he has got stamina, he has got ability, he begins to understand that his true strength is in the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His might. You begin to transfer responsibility to him, and for a child of God, the concept "overcome" simply means this: it means that you have passed the point of no return.

You see, up to this point, there is always a question of maybe you will go back to the world or not. No, I am not saying that people when they get past this point, there are not some that do go back to the world, but not very many, not if it is done right. If you are taught right and you are brought through the Word of God right, when you get to this point, you are at the point of commitment. You are at the point where Jacob was when God changed his name to Israel. You are at the point where Abram was when God changed his name to Abraham. You are at the point where Sarai was when God changed her name to Sarah. You are at the point where Saul was when God changed his name to Paul. The point of no return.

The point in your life as a young man or a young lady where I am not sure to say you are not going to screw up. I am not going to say you are not going to make mistakes. We all do. I am certainly not going to say you are not going to sin. We sin every day. I am saying is for you going back to the world and departing from that book and from God and the ministry that God has given you, you are not going back. You have got enough of it that you know that there is nothing out there, that this old world is a bag of holes, and because you are making the right investments, you see stupid investments. You realize that the investments that you have got to make are in the spiritual things that God wants you to do, and all these little foolish things that you are putting so much time into when it comes to the great white throne or the Judgment Seat of Christ are not going to cut it. You get that kind of smarts. You see, that is called discernment. You begin to see.

I am not saying you are going to say, "Well, I am never going to sin again." That would be foolish. I am not going to say you are going to say, "Well, Bob, I am never going to let the Lord down." That would be stupid. We all let the Lord down. We all do dumb things because we are sinners. We talked about that. If any man sinned, we have an advocate with the Father. What I am saying is you look at the world, and you understand what God has got for you, and you say to God, "God, I may not do everything right, and I know I am going to fail You. God, I do not want to, but I will tell you one thing, I am never going back to that old cesspool called the world." You will become. Now I can use you. Now I can begin to trust you. It is not about loving you, it is about when I give you a part of the ministry, it takes responsibility, and you have got to grow to that point. Yet I am saying all that, and I am going to tell you this, everybody in this room has the ability to do that. Every one of your children has the ability to do that. I do not care where they

are at, and I am telling you, for a child of God, this simply means you have passed the point of no return, and you are not going back to the world.

VI. Being an Example and the Devil's Target

Now, this is what 1 Timothy 4:12, it is a great principle, says. Now I want you to look over there.

1 Timothy 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in purity.

Shall I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. And then he goes down in the next verse and he tells Timothy not to neglect the gift that is in him. Wow, what a great verse.

Now let me explain about 1st and 2nd Timothy. Timothy was Paul's convert. We are going to get into this when we start to come through these books as we start the New Testament here not too far down the road. Paul at some point in his life had won Timothy to Christ. Details are not given, but he calls him his own son in the faith. At some point, either he won him to Christ, or he just had a tremendous influence in his life that Timothy looked at him as his spiritual mentor, and they had a really close relationship. For me as a pastor working with young men and young ladies, moms and dads, whoever, that is the model you have got to follow. You have got to understand that the model, the pattern, is 1st and 2nd Timothy, and you begin to see all the advice that Paul gives young Timothy is the advice that, one, a parent needs to give to their children through this process. Two, is what a pastor needs to give to his people through the process of spiritual growth. That is an incredible verse, and it is something that when you break it down and look at it, it is absolutely just kind of comes alive.

First of all, he says, "Let no man despise thy youth." Now there is a reason for that because at this time in your life, whether it is physical or spiritually, your mind is the sharpest it is ever going to be. Your mind right now as a young man or a young lady, either physically or spiritually, if you just got saved and you were working through the Word of God, the excitement level about the Bible if you are on track is incredible, and you want to learn everything you can. There is nothing now that is too hard for you to delve into. Your mind is sharp. See, when you get older, you get more complacent, you get lazy. Your body is as strong as it is ever going to be. You have great study habits, or you should have great study habits, and this is where you develop the great study habits that are going to carry you through the rest of your life in studying the Bible. This is the time when you can get the Word of God down and learn it. This is the greatest time not only spiritually but in a physical aspect.

Then he says, "Be thou an example of the believer." Now I am going to talk about the physical for a moment. People like young people. Good, clean-cut young people. People are drawn to men. Older men and older women like to vicariously experience in a young people's strength and stamina and his abilities what they no longer can do in their own physical bodies, and the way that you do it is to coach, or you get involved with sport because you like young people. You like to have a part in young people's lives. You like to take, if you have some values in your coaching ability, that through the coaching you can instill in their lives, and it is all you do it.

You know what? When a Bible college wants to get people to donate money, you know what they do? They find the cleanest, sharpest young people they can find, put them into a singing musical group, throw them on a bus, send them around to all the churches, and let them get up there, and people see good, godly, clean-cut young men, young ladies who honor God, who sing for God, who give the appearance of giving great testimonies, and people give to those organizations. You know why? People are impressed by good, clean-cut young people. That is why the Bible says, "Be thou an example of the believer."

And then he says, "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in purity." You see, you can have an impact, and I will tell you the other act, this is why the devil is after young people. Right down the road from me, there is a place called John Knox Village. We got lost there one night trying to sing Christmas carols. I would walk around the hall looking for somebody to help me find where they get you guys in, and they were ushering me to a room, and one nurse wanted to get my slippers. I do not wear slippers. "Give me my jungle boots and bring them over to me."

You know what? I have lived in Raytown for years. Every time you open up the paper, you realize that Independence is the meth capital of the world. I do not know if that is a good thing or a bad thing, but we are right across the street from me, right next. I have five or six Raytown police officers live by me, and right up around the corner, right next to his house, they busted a big drug lab, meth lab. It blew up, killed the guy. That is how they found it. Where is he at? He is out in the road.

Anyway, but all the years I have been in retail, I do not think there has ever been one drug bust in John Knox Village. I have never seen the SWAT team going in in I formation kicking the door down saying, "Hit the floor!" Never. We have some neighbors behind us. They put on some wild parties in the summertime. I mean, their music is blaring, dogs barking, and I mean, it is just crazy. If you would walk down John Knox Village Saturday night about 11:30 at night, you would not hear a thing. You got your ear right up to the door. The worst thing you are going to hear is a little Grand Ole Opry slipping under the door, little Hank Williams, Justin Tubbs. You know why? Because those people are in the senior years of their life, and the sunset of their life, and the devil is not after them because, God bless them as they are, they are not going to impact the world. Now their life is over, so the devil is not going to go after their minds. He is not going to go after their music. He is not going to go after them with drugs. He is going to come after you because he knows exactly what I just told you over here in 1 Timothy 4, why no man should despise thy youth and why you should be an example.

So what he is going to do, first thing he is going to do, it says, "in word," so they take the Word of God out of your life. Then "in conversation," he destroys that. "Charity," he takes that. "Spirit," he takes that. "Purity," he takes that. When it is all said and done, that is how he destroys it.

VII. Developing Ministry Skills: Reading, Exhortation, Doctrine

That is why the next verse says, 1 Timothy 4:13:

1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

He says reading, exhortation, and doctrine. Three things. When a young man gets to this stage in his life, he needs to give attendance to reading the book, preaching the book, and knowing the book. That is where you focus. When you get to this stage, you begin to delve into the Word of God. You do not just read it, you put it out like some of you guys are going to do next week. You put it out like you do at work right now with people. You read it, you read the book, you exhort the book, that is preach, and doctrine, you know the book.

You know what it says? 1 John 2:14:

1 John 2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

There it is. You see, you have got through your boot camp. You got through your AIT, advanced infantry training. Now you are in special warfare school. Now you learn the tricks of the trade. Now you just learn how to handle yourself with the Word of God, and this is all a process.

Probably the greatest man in the Bible in the Old Testament is probably, and there are several that run the same thing, but Moses is one of the greatest men. There is probably more written about Moses than any other man in the Old Testament. He certainly impacts our lives by the studies of what he goes through. But you know what? Moses is an incredible man. He is one of only two men in the Bible that the Bible says was God's friend. Now I know there were thousands of people in the Bible that you could say was a friend of God, but when God only tells you about two of them, you better look at it because there is something in their lives that got Moses to the point where the Bible says that Moses spoke of the God face to face like nobody else did in the Bible, like a man speaking to his friend. Incredible.

But you know what? Moses did not start out that way, and either will you. Moses got to the place where he understood the Word of God, the things of God, and the plan of God, and he was a warrior for God. The Bible says he was 120 years old when he died, and his natural strength had not abated. He was as strong the day he died as he was because he is a picture of your life and my life spiritually, even though it is in a physical sense for him. Oh, you know where it started out? It starts out just like you and me. It started back there in Mount Sinai so many years before that point, and Moses had come through his life, and you know what? Moses spent 40 years, 40 years wandering on the backside of the desert before God ever talked to him, and boy, he made some stupid mistakes.

But there was a day on Mount Sinai that God through that burning bush spoke to him and said, "Hey, Moses, I have got a job for you." And Moses said, "Who is that?" He says, "I am the Lord God. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have got something I want you to do." Well, Moses, who wound up being the friend of God and one of the greatest men in the Bible, did not start that way. If you know anything about the story, you know that he hums and haws around with God. He is afraid, I guess you could say he beat around the bush, the burning bush, and they are talking back and forth, and he says, "Well, Pharaoh is not going to listen to me. What am I

going to do? What am I going to say? I am just," and he was timid, and he was afraid. You know what? He is just like every one of you young men and young ladies in this room today that want to serve God but maybe you are afraid to serve God. Maybe you are afraid to step out. Maybe you do not think you can do it. Maybe you are just like Moses, you alibied. He says, "God, I cannot do it. How am I going to do it?" And he was afraid of the thing.

You know what God said to him? He said, "Moses, how are we going to do it?" He says, "What do you have in your hand?" And he said, "Well, I have got a rod." And God said, "Well, that is exactly what will you throw it down?" And he threw the rod down, and it turned to a snake, and he used what he had in his hand. You know where God starts with you? He starts with what you have in your hand. You see, that is where it always starts. You know what Moses's problem was? Moses's problem was that he did not think he was able to do what God wanted to do, and that story teaches us a great concept: God is not worried about if you are able. God is worried about if you are willing. If you are willing, my friend, God is able. He will just take what you have in your hand, and He will use that.

This is where you learn how to fight. This is where you learn how to use the Word of God. This is where God takes what He has given you, and He begins to develop it, and to this point now, He begins to take you and use you and mold you. This is where a young man's strength and ability, he builds on top of that, and he gains the experience. He learns the ministry, and he understands that the ministry is more than just getting a little certificate someplace that says you are a pastor or you have a license to preach. It is more than that. It is what is on the inside, that you have the character and the stamina and the ability, and you learn how to minister the Word of God.

I tell you, this is, this is what it is, a fun time for me. This is where I get to watch you preach your first passage. It is where I get to watch your fumble, bumble, stumble all around, and think you did a terrible job, and come over and say, "Well, that was not very good." And God is standing up there beaming from ear to ear with a smile, and so am I, because you know what? It is the first thing many of you have ever opened your mouth and done for God in front of somebody, and you think you did bad, and God said, "That is the greatest thing I ever heard in my life. You are on the way."

You are looking down there, you are down there preaching down at the mission someplace, and you know you are nervous, and you are down there, and you are saying, "Okay, guys, now, excuse me, huh? Okay, guys, now, okay, guys, now, you know, I had a lot of notes here, and I just want to tell you here, you know, that Jesus is the Savior of the world, and you know what? And, and I need to get Satan on me. You need to get saved." You are talking up there, and you are like the one old boy, and you are, "Okay, we will keep that one for later. That must be something special. God, we may have." He took that page right out and said, "Put it over here."

Anyway, you are like the old preacher one time preaching down in Genesis, down there, and he was nervous the first time he was preaching, and he said, "Okay," he says, "and, and, and God brought the woman down to Adam, and she was going to be his wife." Turned the page, and he was so nervous, he got six pages together. Now he got over in Genesis 6 and said, "And she was

144 cubits wide and doing in cubits long." No, no, I know you get nervous. God thinks it is great. The greatest thing in the world is the first time you get up there and open up your mouth and start preaching the Word of God. The greatest thing in the world. The greatest thing in the world when you take that Bible and open up and teach somebody the first discipleship lesson, or you lay somebody out questions at work, and you show them in the Word of God. Or when you win your first convert to Christ, when God puts somebody into your life, and you win them to Christ. Or when you deal with your first crazy. Oh, yeah.

You know, the ministry is like dogfighting. I read, I read it probably once every other year because you are one of my heroes, the autobiography of Chuck Yeager, and he wrote an autobiography a lot of years ago just called *Yeager*, and it tells him, tells the story of him, and there was no greater fighter pilot in the history of the world. This guy would get any, he would wax anybody's tail anytime, any place. He lived for it. But he did not start out that way, and that whole book tells you how that his whole life he focused himself on one thing: to be the best of what he did. Boy, he was. There was not any place he did not go. There was not anything he was afraid of. It was not any challenge he would not take. Unfortunately, he was trusting in himself.

But for the young man or the young lady to come to that point in your life where you just trust God to the point where you realize that there is not anything you cannot do for Him, and when you get into the ministry, it is a dogfight. The first time you get into aerial combat as a pilot, brother, it is scary. Somebody bounces you at about 20,000 feet, boy, and you have got to zip up, zip down, and you make the wrong move, and he gets on your tail, he is going to wax you. You learn how to survive through your technique, and in the ministry, you are going to preach, and some crazy is going to come up at the end or during the service, but you are going to talk to somebody, and boy, you are going to get somebody that is a hairy Christian. You are going to witness some off-the-wall thing like this, and maybe the first time he gets on your tail, he is going to wax you. If that does not do something for you, I remember when I learned these things the hard way. Boy, I got my tail feather shot off so many times it was not even funny, but I made up my mind, I said, "You know what? He got me that time, but he will not ever get me again." That is what you have got to do.

That is why the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:6, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." This is where you begin to have a zeal, but the Bible says in Romans 10, "not necessarily according to knowledge." This is where in your spiritual life the difference comes in between, as I have already said, knowing the Bible and knowing how to use the Bible. It is the difference between saying, "That is an airplane, I can get in and fly it around," or "Get in a dogfight and blowing him out of the sky." This is where you gain to what you have already known. This is where your strength comes in. This is where you get developed. This is where you get fine-tuned.

Four or five years ago, Congress held hearings on a, maybe it was not even four or five years ago, it was since 9/11. Congress held, you know how they hold these hearings, and I happen to be watching at this day when they were doing these public hearings, and they brought this colonel over from Iraq or Baghdad or whatever the case may be, and they, and I honestly, in my house, because I get so mad at Congress anyhow and all of this stupid stuff they do, honest to

goodness, ask my three dogs, when this guy was done, I stood up in my house and I clapped and cheered. I have never seen, I do not, I do not remember the guy's name, but I have never met a more across-the-plate, waist-high, courageous man in my life that stuck it right in them bureaucrats' ears. They brought him over here wanting him to justify his techniques, and this guy had an impeccable military record. He was an incredible guy, and he was one of the best insurgency men over there in Iraq or wherever he was, Iran, and he was something else, and he was just whacking those guys left and right. But Congress, they wanted to make sure that he was playing by the rules. They want to make sure that the Al-Qaeda's rights were not being violated. Oh, you know where I am going with this. I wrote some cuss words in here, but I am not going to use them, but I just put them in here so I would feel better. No, I really did not.

This woman, Congressman Ted Kennedy, he was there. Ted Kennedy, Ted Kennedy was beating this guy up, and this guy never, I mean, he just, he just sat, you could tell his jaw was just like rock. You could tell that this, he was irritated, but he is, guys, but this was like mosquitoes off a steel wall. And Ted Kennedy, and then this lady from wherever she was, all these liberals were just beating to death, and he told them, and he, and he said, he said to them, he says, "Look, if you do not do it this way, we are going to lose this war in Iraq and Iran, and this is the way I do it, and this is the way that is why I get the results I get." And when the lady said, "Our experts do not agree with you, Colonel," he says, "Experts? You mean the people that sit around in think tanks and come up with all these things that have never been in combat?" And she said, and Ted Kennedy down there, and he is all upset, "You know, give me a drink, give me a drink, give me a drink." No. And, and he said, and she said, and he said, "What do you, well, we would like to know what you, what is your, you think you are the only expert? There are other experts too, Colonel. What makes, what makes you think that these people are not experts?" You know what he said? Oh, I never forgot it. He says, "Lady, you know what an expert is in the Iraqi and Iranian war? When you get close enough to smell the guy's breath to know what he had to eat in the last hour, when you are running a knife between his third and second vertebrae, then you are an expert because you get close enough to do that, you have learned something about your enemy."

I stood up, the dogs clapped. I thought to myself, "That is a man." Now that guy could get saved and take that same kind of tenacity and put it in the ministry, he would get some things done. Bless his heart, too bad he is going to die and go to hell someday, but he understands what it takes to win in a combat environment. He understands that the think tanks and all of the liberals and all the experts without ever being there and doing it and smelling it and tasting it are not experts.

Now that is what it is for the ministry, and that is what you do at this age of your spiritual life. You smell it, you taste it, you get your tail shot off, you get chased around the room, and you learn how to defend yourself. You learn that that Bible is a sharp two-edged sword. It cuts both ways. One side cuts like a cavalry saber, the other side cuts like a fine scalpel of a surgeon's knife, and you realize there are times that you go in and you shoot everybody to the ground, and then there is time that you go in and you take that fine scalpel and you dissect so cleanly and so perfectly that it does not even leave a scar. It does not even bleed. The ability to use the Word of God.

I follow three basic rules in teaching the Bible. I have followed them all my life. I am not saying they will work for you. They work for me, and they are just basic simple principles that help me understand how this thing goes.

5. I am very careful when I teach the Bible because I have learned that you cannot teach somebody the Word of God above their spiritual maturity level, and that forces you to be sensitive to your crowd. That forces you not to say things that you do not take the time to break down so everybody can go home with a piece of it because you get somebody who just talks with his intellect, and he will never communicate anything, and you have to realize that you cannot teach people above their spiritual maturity level.
6. The second thing I follow to the end is you have got to have the wisdom and understanding to know when to apply the truth that you have. You cannot just go in and, and you have got to have some design to what you do. You have got to have enough wisdom and understanding through the exercising of your senses to know when and not only when but where to apply the truth you have, and sometimes not to apply it or how much to apply.
7. Then the last thing that I just follow this all the time, you never teach all the Bible. You know, flaunting your knowledge is a dangerous thing, but some people do it. Some people get to a place where they teach people the Bible, all they want to do is impress that person with how much they know and wind up confusing them.

There is a place for that in the ministry. At this point of your spiritual life as you grow, two great biblical principles now come into play in your life, and we begin to develop them, and they get developed through responsibility. This is the beginning. Oh, wait till we get to the fathers next week. But right now, we should begin to get the aspect of responsibility, and you begin to throttle that energy, use it in the right direction. You begin to get two great concepts from the Bible. One of them is called sensitivity, the other one is called discernment, and this is where you begin to use them. This is where you begin to look at people when you see them not as people sitting in front of you, but people that are in various stages of spiritual growth, and you try to be sensitive to where they are at. This is where sensitivity and discernment develop. This is where the brashness falls off. This is where you fine-tune your preaching skills. This is where you fine-tune your witnessing skills. This is where you fine-tune your teaching skills.

This is where you learn, and I will tell you what, boy, before I ever preached a message to any crowd, and the first time I ever preached publicly, I preached to 600 people, but I had preached that message a hundred times before to me in front of a mirror. I used to sit up there, and you know why some of you guys will not preach long enough, or some of you guys will preach too long? Because you have not disciplined yourself in time. You know how you discipline yourself in time? Take your message and stand there and preach at full bore just like you would do it, and time yourself, and know where you are at so when you get to this point, you know how much time you have got because one of the stupidest mistakes you can make is to go way over or go too less. You have got to hit the thing on the mark. You do not do that by just God saying, "Okay, Bobby, today we are going to stop on time because I am going to give it to you." You have got to discipline yourself to do that.

Some people stand up there, and they are like this, "Well, if you have your Bible today, let us turn over here to, okay, now I want to talk to you about something here in the Bible," and they never look at you, or they are, "Okay, if you got your Bible this morning, I want to tell you about a great concept, and that great concept is, uh, you are going to really need this in life. Now look at me, I am talking to you. I am." You know how you communicate to people? You look at them. You know how do you know when you are doing it? Watch yourself in a mirror when you are preaching. Set yourself up, get your little pulpit, sit down through there, put you in front of a mirror, and preach, and watch how stupid you look the first time. Watch your body language. Watch how you move. Watch the words you use.

One time I preached a message that I went up to a friend of mine afterward and said, "How did I do?" And he said, "It was great. You used 'and' 647 times." Of course, we get in a habit of doing that, and I want to tell you there, and you know this, you know that, you know the concept, "my friend." "Well, my friend, I want to tell you, my friend, I want to tell you, my friend, I want to tell you, my friend, I want to tell you." Oh, you have got to listen to yourself. You know what else I used to do? I used to take myself, I used to listen to it. I used to, I used to critique myself. You know what? You want to know how bad you really are? Listen to yourself because then it will not be, "How did I do, honey? Well, not very good. Well, what is the matter with you?" No, when you hear yourself and you say, "Who was that stupid idiot that just said that?" It does not hold a spirit, guys, that is over you. You listen to what you could take yourself. This is where you discipline yourself. This is where you pull yourself together. This is where you learn the process. This is where it is more than just raw energy getting up and just, that is what a young man does. He has got all the exuberance, the screaming, yelling, and making all the points, but he does not have the control to use voice inflection, to use his hands or his body or his language or whatever. He does not articulate the way that he should. Why? Because it is raw brute force, and there is no refinement of it.

You have got to look at preaching as an art. You have got to look at teaching the Word of God as an art. You have got to look at it as something you are creating, a painting. When I start to teach somebody the Bible, and they ask me the question, the first thing I see is a picture of the question, and then the very next thing that comes in my mind, the colors to make that thing look vivid for them. You think I got that in a book? Those are things when you get along with God and you say, "God, use me, God," and you begin to get to this stage, and there is no more fooling around going back. You are not going back to the world. It is forward and upward and onward at this point.

This is where a young man studies to answer, Proverbs 15. This is where he studies to be quiet, 1 Thessalonians 4. This is where he studies to show himself approved, 2 Timothy 2. You see the strength and the power to hit a golf ball 600 yards, but the control over that power to drop it right in the green on the target, get a hole in one. The older you get, the more sensitive you will become. The more you will be able to get into any preaching situation, and the circumstances will change during the sermon, change before you get there, change right after you got there, and without getting into a flutter, you will adjust to it and adapt to it because the key hallmarks of your ministry are sensitivity and discernment. You will be able to go into a group of people

before you preach and talk and view a few of them, and you will be able to discern where they are at spiritually. You will be able to pick up on things that you need to look at and remember and understand. You will need to look, see things that you need to be sensitive of. This is what it takes, and this is what you learn in this stage. This is the beginning of responsibility that brings you into the next one. Oh, wait till we get to the fathers next week.

VIII. Never Giving Up on People: The John Mark Example

Now let me give you one last thing, and then I am done here. This is what the ministry demands: responsibility. But when you get into dealing with people, and I am going to explain this fuller at some other point in time, but I want to say it today, you never give up on people. You never give up on people. Now there are people that in my ministry over the years that I would not give the time of day to, but it is not because I gave up on them, because they gave up on God.

Here is another great lesson in ministry, and that is this, and this is something that I will drill into your head once we start getting into the Word of God to people together, and that is this: you cannot ever want somebody to do what is right more than they do because the moment you do, you become vulnerable. Along with all these other words that we are giving you, here comes another word called accountability, but we will get into that a little bit later. But let me tell you, you never give up on people. One of the greatest stories of that is found in the book of Acts.

You hold people accountable. Somebody burns you a hundred times, you do not give them a free pass. Giving them a free pass is just you setting yourself up to get burnt again, maybe bigger this time, because the key word is accountability for me and for you. But you never give up on people because people can change, because God is obviously the one that is dealing with them. Though I say that knowing that there are many people who will never give it over to God. I mean, you know what? You get your mind so blown on drugs or so into whatever the world has to offer out there, and after a while, God cannot do it. It is not that God does not want to do anything with you, it is just you will not allow God because of how far you put yourself down. I understand that in those kind of situations, it takes a much greater effort to pull that person out than just saying, "Yeah, come on back and try it again." I do not think it is going to happen that way. You will learn these things in time, but you never give up.

There is never a person in my life, in my ministry, that I ever, I ever gave up on, that I said to myself, "You know what? Whenever they want to do what is right, I am ready, but they are going to do it by the book. They are not going to dictate to me how they are going to do it. They are going to be accountable, and we are going to follow the procedure, and we will make it work." I tell you that because one of the greatest stories of that is in the book of Acts, and it has to do with Paul, probably the greatest Christian ever lived, and a little guy by the name of John Mark. I think that this is such an incredible story.

In Acts 13, the Bible talks about the fact that the Church of Antioch is really the hotbed of Bible Christianity. It is where they are first called Christians, and you find that the first missionary trip takes place in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas, two of the greatest Christian missionaries, who are great, great, great, great models for us, but they take along a young man by the name of John

Mark. John Mark is obviously a very young Christian. He is not at the same stage and level spiritually where Paul and Barnabas are. Now these missionary trips were tough. They were hard. What happens here is, I do not know all the details, but the Bible says very clearly that when things got tough, John Mark bails and goes home.

Now that did not sit well with Paul, and you might imagine why. Paul was the most fearless Christian ever lived, and Paul demanded, I am sure, that when you took part of his ministry, you did it like him, or you hit the road. There was no "wah-wah" with Paul. You either stood up to the plate, took it on the chin, did what you needed to do, or hit the road, and John Mark hit the road. I do not know what happened because the Bible does not say what happened, but it had to be such a thing that on the next missionary trip, in Acts 15 and 16, Paul and Barnabas are getting ready to go again, and Barnabas says, "I want to take John Mark again. I think he has learned his lesson." And Paul says, "No, he is not going." The Bible says that the contention between John Mark, between Paul and Barnabas, got so strong that they split over it. Paul simply said, "Hey, if you want him, you take him. He is not going with me." And that is where Paul picks up Silas.

Now, besides the fact that God got two missionary trips instead of one, which is another whole story here, Paul said John Mark is not going, and the contention between him and Barnabas got so strong that, and I, you know, and I was not there, details are not given. I do not know who was right and who was wrong. I know that Paul probably had some very high standards, good standards. I know whatever his standards were, they worked for Timothy, they worked for Titus, but John Mark was one of those guys that at that time, he just did not fit in, and Paul says, "Hit the road."

But you know what? Paul understood that same principle. He never, he never, never, never gave up on him. Years later, in 2 Timothy 4:11, when Paul is coming down to the end of his life, and he is in a Roman prison, and he is talking to his son Timothy, he makes one of the greatest statements in all the Bible concerning dealing with people in ministry. You know what he says?

2 Timothy 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

John Mark had grown up, and Paul had sought, and sometimes it looks like Paul was really hard on him, but Paul never gave up on him. You know what Paul did? Paul held him accountable because accountability is the factor. You have to hold me accountable, that is your job, and I have to hold you accountable, that is my job. I will not get mad at you for doing it to me. Do not get mad at me for you doing it to you. That is what it takes. Even though it looks like that Paul was the hard guy here, Paul never gave up on him, and years later he says to Timothy, "Hey, tell John Mark to come on with you. This time he will help me in the ministry."

You see, Paul realized that there is a process of spiritual growth we all go through, but you have got to learn it the right way because it never does any good to put people in the ministry that are not going to have the qualities and character that you need to have to fulfill that because it is a tough job. It is not the easiest thing in the world to do, and Paul understood that along with the ministry comes responsibility, and that is why when you get to this stage of your life, you begin to put into your life those basic qualities and take ministry. This is where you begin to put back

into the ministry what you have gotten so far. This is where you really become valuable. Not that you are not valuable before this, but now this is where you can pick up some of the load. This is where we can disseminate, and this is how we, it is that continuing process. When you get to a point, you begin to learn by different things. At this point, you now add a new dimension into your learning experience, and that is taking the Word of God and sitting down and ministering to others, and through that process, you become stronger, and you work right up the ladder of spiritual growth to the aged. Now we will look at those when we get to that point. Spiritual growth is a necessity in our lives that we have to do, and that is why this year we are focusing on that. There will be a lot of different things to help focus to get you to the place if you want to be where God wants you to be, to help you not only with your own families that you are raising up, but your spiritual walk with God, to get you to that point where you really understand not just the Bible but how to use the Bible. You become like that old colonel who you are not interested in the people and air conditioning officers that look on laptop computers and decide how to fight a war. You are down on the trenches smelling it, tasting it, and living it. That is how you know how to fight this battle, which the Bible says there is no discharge from this war. Let us pray.