

2 Kings 4:18-37

Sunday 7/3/2005

SEC: The Book of Philippians: Mission vs. Ministry

We looked at, as far as I am concerned, one of the greatest books in the New Testament that really lays out the basic principles upon which your life and my life as a New Testament Christian is really built. I showed you how Paul's favorite church was the church at Philippi, and we know it as the Philippian church.

I got thinking about this week how I talked about the Philippian church being such a good church because it was such an easy church to work with. I got thinking, the easiest man in the Bible that got saved was the Philippian jailer. We talk about it all the time when you win somebody to Christ who just kind of is waiting to fall into your arms to get saved. We talk about that, you know, "Well, I had a Philippian jailer that I won to Christ." This is because the Philippian jailer was somebody that offered no resistance. He simply said, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" It goes as a characteristic with the church of the Philippians.

I told you that just as Paul enjoyed that church more than he did the others, because he didn't have to really work through a lot of problems in that church like he did the rest of them, he taught them on a greater level. There's a more intimate relationship between that church and Paul than the other churches that he writes to. I showed you how that great book really defines for us as a church and also as individuals what our mission is.

There's a lot of terminology that you hear in the Bible about different things, and sometimes it's hard to get it separated out. But there is a difference between the mission that you and I have, or the mission of the church, versus the ministry that you and I have and the ministry of the church. I want to define this a little bit closer today.

I'm enjoying coming through each book of the Bible, but the downside of it is that you have to pass over so much material because there is no way in the time that we can cover it all. We're busting the seams all the time on the time frame of getting it all on one CD because I want to kind of make it a record where we can have something to go back with in generations to come. I know that in time we will go back and we will work out all the material. That's not my purpose right now, but it is frustrating for me as a teacher of the Bible when I see something. My biggest dilemma all week long is cutting out what not to say and putting in what to say because I want to say it all. It's just impossible. But I know that we will go back in time as we lay it out, and we'll work it through, but it just takes time.

I wanted to take one more week and put in sync another concept, another angle on this mission of you and I as a church and you and I as individuals. Next week, as I already said earlier in the opening announcements, we're going to look at the book of Colossians. That is a perfect book for Anniversary Sunday. Again, I really encourage you not only for you to be here, which I know you will, but to bring somebody with you. What an opportunity to show somebody what this church is all about as Anniversary Sunday. Then at that time, just to see the love and the fellowship that we have, it'll be a good Sunday. So work on that. No matter what anybody else

does, we as a church need to be here next Sunday so we can focus on this and really see why and just thank the Lord for what He's given us.

Last week we talked about the book of Philippians, which was the mission of the church. This week we're going to focus on the mission again, and then next week we're going to talk about the book of Colossians, kind of like a three-game series. They all fit together, and we can learn some tremendous material from it.

SEC: The Shunammite Woman and Elisha

Our text today, we're going to go all the way back to the Old Testament. Come back to 2 Kings chapter 4. I want to talk to you about one of the greatest stories in all of the Bible, dealing with the ministry of Elisha. Elisha is one of those individuals in the Old Testament who is one of the Old Testament prophets. We know from our past studies that being an Old Testament prophet was not an easy job. There are a lot of parallels between us being New Testament Christians today and what they did in the Old Testament as the prophets. They were not popular. They were sent to a nation that pretty much had dumped God, and they are entrusted with the message of God and the mission of God to try to bring that nation, Israel, back to God. Therefore, they find themselves in a circumstance and a situation where nobody really wants them around. The message they have is totally negative, and yet Israel is trying to put a positive spin on it when Elisha, as the other prophets, are preaching the reality of it and they're putting the negative spin on it, much like it is today. The parallels are pretty incredible.

In this particular chapter, there are a couple of stories, and we're going to focus on the story of the Shunammite woman. It starts in chapter 4 and picks up around verse 8. I'm going to tell you the first part of the story just to save some time because the real text is just a little bit later on.

This Shunammite woman, first of all, the Bible doesn't give you her name. She has a name, but I mean, I'm sure she wasn't "the Shunammite woman." She had a name because "Shunammite" would be too long for a name tag. So she had to have a regular name. But the Bible calls her the Shunammite woman. The Bible says in verse 8 that she's a great woman. That would draw our attention. For me as a Bible student, the first thing I look at is she doesn't have a name, or no name is given. That is suspicious to me. I'm going to look at that. The second thing I see is the fact the Bible says she was a great woman. Now I'm going to draw my attention to that because there are only two women in the Bible who are called great women. So that's very important. We're going to make note of that. We'll come back.

She has no child, but she recognizes that Elisha has been traveling back and forth on the road out in front of her, doing the work of the prophet of God. So she builds a little prophet's chamber. In this prophet's chamber, she puts a bed, she puts a stool, she puts a table, she puts a candle. The Bible says that she provides food for him and she gives him bread.

Elisha in time understands that she has done some good things for him and she's provided him with what he needed to help him in his mission and his ministry. So he says to her, "What can I do for you? You've done everything for me and you have met my needs. Now what exactly can I do for you?" Elisha's servant had told him in verse 17 and other places that she is without child.

So what Elisha says is, "All right, you know what? According to the time of women, this time next year you're going to have a child." And she does. She has a little boy. That boy goes through the formative years and grows up into a young child. We don't know how old he is. The problem is in the Bible, a young child can be somebody up to 20 years old. So we get the idea that he's a little guy. That may not be true. He may have been 15, 16, 17, 18 years old. I don't know.

Anyway, this is where our story begins in verse 18. I want to invite you to read along with me. If you don't have a Bible, look on somebody that's next to you. Here's what it says:

2 Kings 4:18-37

And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

And when he had borne him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to day? it is neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well.

Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee.

So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed.

He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord.

And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. We thank you, Father, for all that you do for us, for what you've given us, for the power in the Word of God that Lord you've made available to us through your Holy Spirit. We pray, Father, that the young Philippian Christians in this church, the men and women, Lord, who just want to learn your Word, men and women who just want to change their lives, who want to do what's right, want to raise their families to love God. We pray, Father, that you would help them today see the message in this great text. Then for us, Lord, that's been around for a while, who have the tendency to forget all the things that God has done for us, those of us who have gotten so busy, and so life has become so complicated, help us, Father, to come back today and to look at this from a fresh view, to see it, Father, and to help us understand our mission in our ministry. And we'll thank and praise you today, in Jesus' name, for the sake we ask it. Amen.

SEC: Expository Preaching and Biblical Characters

As you grow in the Word of God and you learn how to teach the Word of God, you'll learn that there are different styles of preaching, and you'll learn that there are times when you do what they call expository preaching. Yesterday, when we had our discipleship, you remember I gave you a little heads up, and I told you that the lesson that we were going to focus on today was going to be an example of what expository teaching and preaching is. In time, you need to learn to be able to take the Word of God and exposit it. What do I mean by that? In this passage that I just read you, are incredible concepts that are hidden within this text. What I'm going to do for you today is I'm going to show you how you find those great concepts and make the application. You're going to see that once we are done this morning, you'll never read this text again and look at it the same way. That's exactly what we want to do, because there are many stories in the Bible that reflect and show us by example what we are to be. When you see it, in fact, it will change your life.

I know that to be true because years ago, I can't even remember how many years ago, God showed me in this passage what I'm about to show you, and it literally changed my life. First of all, I never looked at this passage again. I might add to that, I don't think I ever looked at any passage again the same way, because this was the first place where I really got my first taste of expository preaching: being able to take a text and lay out and flay out and display out all the great concepts in an Old Testament passage that if you read it on your own, which many years I did, I never saw these things. I want you to be cognizant of that because as you grow and you learn how to teach the Bible, you need to learn this aspect of it. I know, like I said, I read a long time ago and I've held it before you guys, 1 Corinthians chapter 10 that says all the stories in the Old Testament, all the things that happen to Israel are for our own samples and for our examples. So we're going to look at it today.

In this story, I want to draw your attention to our cast of characters. Every story in the Bible will have a cast of characters. Those cast of characters will always be the main event of the story. In this particular one, we have three main characters, three people:

1. The woman
2. Elisha
3. The boy

All three of these, you'll see as we unfold this study, will represent some great concepts that will help us understand better not only our mission as a church, that's very important, but our ministry within this church. That's very important. We're going to see this thing not only from a group standpoint, because that's who we are, but as individuals, because this church, and I've said this from day one, will only be as strong as the individual people that are in it.

SEC: The Boy: Representing Unsaved People

First of all, we have the boy. Let's talk about the boy. I don't claim to be the master of the obvious here, but this boy is dead. This boy has died. He's not comatose. He's not in a trance. He's not just unconscious. He has died and he is now dead. Dead people in the Bible will always represent for you and me unsaved people. There is a doctrine in the Bible called the depravity of man, and the depravity of man is simply that man is sinful. When we talk about the depravity of man, we're going to talk about the fact that a man is dead. A woman that is unsaved, a man that is unsaved, is dead. There can be no relationship with God. This is the great doctrine of Christ being our mediator. After we get saved, it's Christ that makes the bridge that goes between me and God by which I can have fellowship and all that we have together.

This boy will represent for us unsaved people. He's dead, and the Bible says, as in Romans chapter 5, verse 12, down through there:

Romans 5:12

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

That's unsaved people. The Bible says that an unsaved man, an unsaved woman, is dead in trespasses of sin. You find that in Romans 7, Ephesians 2, all kinds of places, where they're dead in trespasses of sin. This boy, now dead, will represent that great doctrine. Notice that he was alive once and then he died. That shows you that in Adam at one point, we were alive, but when Adam sinned, we're now dead. This boy will represent the great doctrine in the Bible called the depravity of man.

He's not like the liberals teach that an unsaved man has this divine spark of God down inside him someplace, and the more we do good works, the more the spark fans and pretty soon it bursts into a flame of fire for God. No, no, no, no, no. That doesn't work that way. There's no divine light of God down inside man waiting to be uncovered. Job asked a question one time in Job chapter 9, verse 2 and 3. Great question. His question was, "How can a man be just with God?" The answer is you cannot without somebody making a way to do that. The doctrine of the depravity of man is simply this, and this boy represents this: that you and I, before we were saved, were dead in our sins. There was nothing we could do to have any kind of relationship. No good works, no church membership, baptism did nothing more but get you wet. There had to come to a point in your life where you saw your need for a Savior. At that point, when you once were dead, now you became alive in Christ Jesus. That's the doctrine.

SEC: The Woman: Representing the Local Church

Now let's look at the woman. This woman represents for us the local church. You remember when we studied the book of Ephesians that I told you in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 12, the job of the church. The job of the church was in three parts:

- Perfecting of the saints
- For the work of the ministry
- For the edifying of the body of Christ

When I work with you, my Philippian Christians, when I work with you one-on-one in the Bible, no matter what we do, and we're doing various things. Some of us are just studying different books. Some of us are asking different questions. Some of us are taping whole theme lines of the Bible and working out. Whatever it is, whatever we're accomplishing, whatever we're doing, it doesn't make any difference to me what it is because I will take whatever we do and I will bring it back around to accomplish these three things in your life. You know why? Because that is the job of the church, and very frankly, as a pastor, that's my job. My job is to help you, not hurt you. When you grow up in this church as a leader, hopefully those same characteristics will bridge off on you, and you will realize that other young Christians that come up, you are to help them grow, not hurt them in their growth.

If there's anything that will put you and me at odds in the ministry, it is when I'm trying to raise them up and edify them and you're trying to tear them down and hurt them. If there's anything in this world that'll put a block between me and you, it is that because at the very worst you've now turned over and you're a satanic implant. At the very best, you're just stupid with a big "A." The job of this church and my job is to perfect you, is to edify you. My job is to take you and to work you for the ministry and to perfect you in the ministry, and my job is always to edify you. As a

young Christian, you older Christians, that's our job. That's what we are to do. That is what we do, and I can't say that strongly enough. I will put up with a lot of things. I would rather have you go out and get blind, staggering drunk than to mess up a young Christian when they're trying to grow up and do what's right because of your ego, pride, slash stupidity.

Now I'm not saying that anybody's doing that. I'm telling you so you know for future reference because you going out and getting drunk, even though I know that's stupid, that's between you and God. When you get into my world and start undoing what I'm trying to do, now you're in my world. Next time you feel like doing something, call me, I'll buy you a bottle of Jack Daniels and go out onto a tree someplace and just get into a stupor. I don't recommend it, but if you're bent on it, that's what you need to do. Stay out of hurting God's people because the job of this church, and you know what? You find churches that all, and the reason I'm saying that is because every church that I've ever been associated with, you find the older Christians growing up and coming to the place where they become stagnant, not everybody. Then suddenly when they see the younger Christians growing up, it suddenly becomes a threat to them. So it's sandbag time. I'll give a young Christian something to do. He'll go to an older Christian, the older Christian will say, "I ain't doing it." Or they'll secretly try to slow them up from what they're doing. That cannot happen here. If it ever does, you and me are going to have a problem because the job of this church and my job, and I'm telling you up front, I'm not saying this has happened. I'm giving you information because we've got a mission to do. I know the larger we get and the bigger we get and the more God blesses us, the more problems are potentially there because of just the way that it is. I understand that, and I told you last week my job is not to be a pastor of the sheep. My job is to be a sheep dog, and if I have to, I will bite you on the "ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies."

Now we got the woman. This woman is a perfect picture of the church. We see by what she does your job and my job as the church.

- First of all, she builds a little prophet's chamber. I like that. I like that because that's the church's job. You know what we got here? Especially on Thursday night. When I look at Thursday night because it's kind of out of a hustle and bustle and we can come in and we can really get some things done. When I look at Thursday night, I look at Thursday night as our little prophet's chamber.
- This woman, she, first of all in verse 9, has spiritual insight. That spiritual insight is that she has perception, which is exactly what the church does or should have.
- Notice in verse 8, the job of this woman is she gives bread to strangers. That's our job.
- Notice in verse 10, in this little prophet's chamber, she provides a bed, a table, a stool, and a candle.

You see, this church is to have spiritual insight. This church is to give bread to strangers. This church is to build its people in this little prophet's chamber called Old Path Baptist Church. It is to put rest in your life. It is to teach you how to sit down and have fellowship around the table of God. It is to teach you how to study the Word of God and then never let you forget that everything we do and everything we're involved in is based around the Holy Spirit of God in our lives.

I'll tell you something else. Look at verse 26:

2 Kings 4:26

Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

Her child just died. A very traumatic event, ladies. The son that she has waited for for so long and then got from God has now been snapped from her. A very traumatic time. And yet when the prophet of God asked her if it's well with her son, she says, "It is well." You know why? The church is to maintain the right attitude in the midst of terrible crisis. The church is to understand that when the world around us falls apart, it is well. See that thing? Now that's called expository preaching. Some guys I've heard preach it's more like suppository preaching. But when you get it all together, it's the book that works.

In our story, the Bible says she's a great woman. Now we might know why she's great. She's a type of the church. Now we understand a little better why her name's not given because the body of Christ, the church, is a mystery in the book of Ephesians.

I'll tell you something else. When you come down here and read verses 25, 26, and 27, you know what this woman, who's a type of the church, does? She does everything she can do to get the man of God to the dead boy. We've already talked about the dead boy is a picture of unsaved people. We now have unleashed a great concept that the woman is a picture of the church. The job of this church, my job, is to perfect you for the work of the ministry, to edify you, and do everything I can to get you to dead people. Why? Because you have the ability to give them life. The church's job is to get you to dead people. Of course, that's our mission. Our church is a little chamber. We have a little prophet's chamber where we give you bread, teach you spiritual insight, try to hold the balance in the Word of God, give you a place of rest, fellowship, study, and the Holy Spirit of God in the whole thing, and it is all for one purpose, and that is we may get you as individuals to the dead people out there that you may give them life because the mission of the church, my friend, is giving life.

SEC: Mission vs. Ministry Defined

Now let's talk about mission versus ministry. The mission of the church is giving life. Your mission as an individual Christian is nothing more than taking life to dead people. I don't care where you're at in your spiritual growth process. God's mission for you is that you give life to dead people. How do I know that? That concept is taught all the way back in the book of Genesis.

We live in a world today where women want equal rights. Let me just say this, give you my public statement on this. I've done it before. I believe that a woman ought to be paid as much as a man. I'm not so stupid to think that she is less than a man in her ability to work. Obviously there are some things that a man does better than a woman. A woman shouldn't take that as a slam because there's things that a woman does better than a man. When you understand that, you realize that a woman ought to get paid. She does the same job. She ought to get paid exactly

what a man does. Let's face it, there are some things that women do better than we do. There are some things that women do that we can't do. I'll tell you one of them: have children.

You know why back in Genesis when the Bible says that God made man out of the dust of the ground and breathed in his nostrils the breath of life. God made man, but the woman was not a direct creation. She was an indirect creation. She came out of the man. When God looked around at all the animals and named them all, He could not find a help meet for himself. So God caused a great sleep to fall upon Adam, opened up his side, brought about woman, and ever since she's been opening up his wallet. That's not true. What is kind of true, but you know, it is my point. That's okay. But the bottom line is this: the woman was not a direct creation. She's an indirect creation because she's a type of the church, and the church was not a direct creation. It's an indirect creation, and just as Eve came out of a deep sleep falling upon Adam, a type of death, the church came from the side of Christ when He died. That's the picture. When He called Eve and gave her her name, Eve, what does the name mean? The mother of all living. You know why? She's a type of the church, and the church is the mother of spiritual life to dead people on planet earth because that's our job. That is our job. The mission of the church is giving life, typified by Eve. That's why in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 1 through 3, we saw it when we came through the church at Corinth. We talked about Paul making the reference about the church and Eve, and he says, "not as Eve who was beguiled." Just as the devil beguiled Eve, he's beguiled the church. The one that has the ability to produce spiritual life, the church. That's why it's a woman. That's why it's a great woman. That's why it's a woman with no name. Because God wants you to understand that the mission of this church and the mission for you and for me is giving life to dead people.

Now the ministry. You see, the mission of the church is giving life. Your ministry is the process of how God uses you with the tools God gave you to get that job, the mission, done. Most companies, when you go into most companies, most companies have a mission statement now. I will say, you know, our mission statement is that we want to provide the best service at a competitive price for our customers, that when our customers come here, they know they get treated professionally. All companies today have a mission statement. In fact, when I was looking for a job at one time in my life, I walked in there and I knew, all I knew already, there were about 20 guys in there, and I knew I was going to have a tough time getting the job because he only had so many openings. So I needed an edge. So I'm looking around for an edge. God gave me an edge. There on the wall was the mission statement. Because they interviewed us collectively also as individually. The guy came up there, the boss came up, and we're all sitting down, about 20 guys down there, and he only got about eight or nine openings. So I know I got to get in here. He says, "Well," he says, "let me ask each one of you a question. What made you want to come to this company?" He asked the first guy, what a bozo. "Well, I heard you paid good money and I want a good job." Next guy. "Well, because I heard you gave laptop computers and I want a laptop computer because I want to do computer work." Next guy. "Because I see them fancy trucks go around town all the time and I want to have a fancy truck like that too." On and on it went. Typical.

At this point, me not being the smartest man in the world, but the fastest one in this slow class anyhow that I'm in, I know I got it. I could have got up and belched and got the job at this point. I'm in a no competition world here. But being the old ball player that I am, knowing that I'm coming up to bat and Bozo Billy's going to throw me one. They come to me and he said, "Why do you want to come work in this company?" I stood up just like this and I said, "Sir," I said, "as I was coming and put the application, I was taken by the fact of your mission statement. That mission statement to me really is the values that I try to live my life by. And I thought to myself, I'm in the right place for this job because this company believes what I believe about life." We want to take a vote if I got the job or not. Mission statements. They're important. Every company's got one. It was a time when no companies had mission statements and the church had them. We now live in a day and age where no church has one, when all the companies have them. This church has a mission statement. That mission statement is that we'll take every man and woman that God gives us that wants to do what's right. Sometimes we have to wade through the ones that don't want to do what's right to get to the ones. It's okay. It's part of the process. But when you find those Philadelphia people, then you give them everything you've got. The job of this church is to get on board behind me to help me make every young Christian up to speed and up to par as fast as we can. That is the job. That is the job. And that has to be our mission. Our ministry is by the way we choose to do that. So this is a great concept here.

SEC: Elisha: The Man of God and Our Responsibility

Now let's look at Elisha, the man of God. The boy represents unsaved, dead people. The woman, we now understand, represents the body of Christ in the church. But Elisha, he represents you and me. I love this because I love the sarcasm of God. Elisha was truly a great prophet. But he's obviously having a bad day here. I look at this thing and I think to myself, Elisha is just like so many of God's children. He's the professional. He's the man of God. Elisha, when faced with taking life to dead people, does exactly what 99.999% of God's people do. He tries to send somebody else instead of going himself. What an incredible concept. He tries to send somebody else to do what God has called him. He's adamant about it. He says in verse 29, he says, "Don't stop for anybody. Don't stop for anything." Some of God's people are so sincere and so on fire about getting somebody else to the dead person instead of getting there themselves. It's incredible. But in every case, it didn't work. Down in verse 31, Gehazi got down there. He did what the man of God told him to do. And it was a total flop. You know why? Because you can't send somebody else to do what God's called you to do.

The church deals with it like this: You come to the church. You tithe to the church. You be here all the time to the church. But when you have some kind of spiritual problem, we will send you to a professional Christian counselor. Why? Because we're going to have somebody else do what God's called us to do. The only people stupider than the guy sending them out is the people that are listening to him and going to the counselors. The church's job is to solve all your problems. If that Bible doesn't have the potential and the power to solve every problem that man's got, then let's just get on it. Dethrone God, burn the Bible, and I'll go do something else. Because if it isn't, if He's not Lord of all, then He is not Lord at all. You can't have it halfway with God.

Either the book is what God claimed it to be. It is the author of your faith, your salvation. And in that book has everything you need or...

This guy, Elisha, who's a good man, one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. But you know what? I learned a great lesson from this years ago. I'll never forget the first time I came to Kansas City. I was 25 years old. They flew me in and wanted to hire me as a youth pastor. I stayed at the Ramada Inn by Benjamin Stables. I had never been out of Ohio before. I'll never forget. It was a frosty November day. I got up that sunny morning and I remember opened up the thing there and I saw two guys riding horses down the back of the trail. Now, I didn't know Benjamin Stables. I thought I was out West. I mean, I'm from Ohio, you know? I thought, man, I'm out West. I said, I know why they got them chain things on the door because there are Indians out here, man. I did this. Two guys riding. I was inside. I thought they're gonna pick me up for church in a horse and buggy. I'm out West. Give me a call. Hello West, man. I'm in it. I'm gonna get me some big old boot spur and a big old 15-gallon hat. I didn't know Benjamin Stables was right off the thing there. He just rides the horses. I thought I was out West. Two guys picked me up at the airport. Those two guys picked me up at the airport. They were guys who were workers in the youth department where I was going to be. They picked me up and all the way back. I heard how they were so glad I was here. They're telling me all about where they were at spiritually, all about what they were going to be behind me and do this and do that and all that. You know what? I learned a great lesson that day. That lesson has been uncannily true. In fact, I've learned it so well that I just automatically think it. You know what? Once I finally got here through the process of getting here, those two guys, I never saw. I don't think ever again. They certainly didn't help me at all in the ministry. I probably didn't see them five times in the next 10 years. I learned a great lesson. I learned a lesson that the ones you think will really come through and do it never do. And the ones that you think will never make it are the ones that make it and come through and do it.

I cannot tell you how many times that thing has come true over my life in the last 30, 35 years of my life. It is incredible. I'll tell you, Elisha, who's a good man, he's just like the apostles. He got too professional. He was used to being and only going to the places where the TV cameras were rolling. There was no real benefit of going over where this little woman was because the press wasn't going to be there. It wasn't some great, spectacular thing that everybody was going to be watching. So he didn't think it was important. So he sent somebody else. Let me tell you something. Anytime you are dealing with an unsaved person who's lost and God gives you the hand off up the middle to carry the ball, you better run the play. God has called you and me to a mission and a ministry of giving life to dead people. You and I must do what God has called us to do.

You know why I don't make a big deal about money? First of all, I believe that God pays for what He orders. I believe that if this thing becomes real to you, and you realize the gravity of it and all that's along with it and what our mission is, then that'll take care of itself. But I've seen too many churches where people would give so they wouldn't have to live. I'm not interested in that. I've seen too many people who gave money so that they wouldn't have to go and do what God wants them to do, that by giving their money they soothed their wretched conscience of the

mission of God. When the truth of the matter is, when you're doing what God wants you to do, it's like I said last week, my job is to let God take care of the problems in my life. That's God's job. God's job is to take care of the problems in my life. My job is to take care of the God of my life. When you give God what's His and you grow up in that aspect and you just put your own personal self aside and you say, "God, we've got a mission. It's my responsibility." Then everything goes the way it goes. I'm not interested in somebody just flipping God a check because of the fact that you want to impress everybody.

I'll tell you something else. I've found over the years a lot of people who were great prayer warriors and they thought praying was their excuse for staying and not going to dead people. I'll tell you something else. I'm never impressed by what anybody knows about the Bible. I'm really not. I know what people get impressed with what so and so knows or what this person knows or this gal knows. People bill themselves of all kinds of things today. When you look at that, I'm never impressed with that because I've understood a long time ago that you can know the word. People who learn the word of God and know the word of God, in the bottom line is the higher they get, the more puffed up they get, the more worthless they become. Knowing cannot replace going. You've got to be in tune with the mission. Elisha, like so many of God's people, wants to send somebody else to do the job that God has called him to do. I see it all the time in all of my life in ministry.

Finally, Elisha goes. His response of going obviously should be our response. In verse 32, he goes to the dead boy. He's the man of God with the mission of God, tried to send somebody else. It didn't work. Finally, he goes himself. What follows in verse 32 through 35 is an Old Testament picture of Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, which says:

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

This was one of the nine concepts we looked at last week. What follows in these verses is an Old Testament picture of the great New Testament principle of the mission and the ministry of giving life to dead people.

SEC: Four Principles of Giving Life

Now there are four principles here on giving life to dead people that I want to look at and then we're going to be through. But this is the mission.

4. Prayer

First of all, in verse 33, the Bible says that he prayed unto the Lord. I can't stress this enough that you and I have to have an intimate prayer time with the Lord. Romans chapter 8 says the greatest thing we don't know is we don't know how to pray. It takes some time to get the selfishness out of our prayer. Praying for God to help you out when you just give Him the stick in the eye of what belongs to Him is the stupidest thing I can tell you that you could ever do. It is ludicrous to think that we can find ourselves in a position where we say, "Oh God, take care of me!" But I'm

not taking care of you. How stupid God's people can be. How much in denial must they be? The thing that God saved them for a mission, a plan, and whatever screw-ups in life we go through is beside the point. There's never a time in your life or my life. That's the great thing. I don't care where you've been or what you've done in life. I don't care what mistakes you've made. Everybody makes them. The bottom line is at some point in your life you have to clear off a spot and say, "You know what? I'm going to do it by the book from this point on." When you do that and you focus on that, that's when you start to get some things done. You realize that God's job is to take care of those problems in your life. Your job is to take care of God. Asking God to take care of yours while you're unwilling to take care of Him. Oh yeah, that'll work. So the first thing, verse 33, he prays unto the Lord. You see, the concept of our relationship with the Holy Spirit of God. My mind goes back to Acts chapter 8, that great New Testament study about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. How that when the Holy Spirit of God told him to go join himself to that man's chariot, Philip never questioned what God was doing. In fact, when you study the whole story, there's a great revival going on. And Philip is the key evangelist. What a rationalization it couldn't have been for Philip in his mind to say, "Well, God, now you sure you know what you're doing? Because look, look what I did last night. We had 5,000 people saved. There were 20,000 people came to hear me preach last night. Are you sure you want to pull me out to go there for one man?" Yeah, you know why? Because when God calls you to go, you're the man to go. That's why. And sending somebody else in your place just won't work. It's stewardship. It's God's mission. But you and I are stewards of that ministry of it to do it His way. Part of that is building a New Testament Bible-based prayer life, knowing what you as a child of God should pray for, what you shouldn't pray for, and putting that thing into some kind of working format instead of the Sears and Roebuck illusion of prayer life today. That prayer today, like an Alden's catalog or a Sears and Roebuck catalog, we just use it to order things from God.

5. Distasteful Process

Second thing, verse 34 and verse 35. I got to tell you here that this is a strange thing. Here's a boy that died and then Elisha lies as a man. It doesn't do much for my sensitivities to think about him putting his mouth on another man's mouth, eyes on another man's eyes, hand in hand. That just doesn't do anything for me. He lays on top of it. He puts his mouth to his mouth, his eyes to his eyes, and his hands to his hands. When I first read that years and years ago, I thought that was a strange thing. In fact, I thought it was kind of a repulsive thing. 30 years later, after being in a ministry dealing with every circumstance and situation in life, I can honestly say I begin to understand this great concept because there are some hard things you have to do in the ministry. Dealing with dead people at times can be repulsive. It really can. That's the ministry. Loving the unlovely. When you look at this and he says mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hand, laying his body on his body and the boy comes alive, that's obviously part of the process, but it's a distasteful process. But I'm telling you, dealing with people, the deeper you get into it, the more you delve into problems and the more you have to work with, sometimes the more distasteful the ministry becomes. But you balance that all out by recognizing, you know what? First time God looked at you and me, we didn't look too hot. Ecclesiastes chapter 1, verse 18, a great concept. It says with much wisdom and much knowledge comes much grief. Bible says a man that increases knowledge increases sorrow. You see, we all want to get in the Bible and learn the Bible. We

don't see the downside of it, or that's really not a downside. I guess you call it the reality side. The more you open that book and you get into people's lives and problems, the more you see some of the most unbelievable things that you have to deal with.

As far as I'm concerned, I've had my fill of them in life. I like what I got right now. I just got nice old dry mundane problems that everybody comes in with, but I'm telling you something. Dealing with people can be the most unbelievable distasteful thing in some cases that you ever had to deal with in your life. There are times the more you deal with people, the more you see the sin side, and brother, there's some nasty stuff. Let me tell you, this world of dead people today is a cesspool, and many times when you start to deal with people, you have got to unravel some of the most ungodly stuff you can think of. I'd like people to be the way they should be, but you know what? The reality is that isn't the way it is, and when you start to understand that taking life to dead people, it isn't always a pleasant thing, but it's what God has called us to do. You know what you got to do? You got to do the bad with the good, and you got to focus your life to the point that no matter how black somebody's problems are, you look for what good is there and then you take the good and you build on that. You never judge anybody from where they've been or what they've done. You take them from where they're at right now, and when they say, "I want to do what's right," then that's what you work with. Now, maybe they do, maybe they don't. That's another scenario, but you give them the benefit of the doubt. Why? My job is not to reason why. My job is to give life to dead people. That's our job.

6. Risk Factor

Then the next thing, there was a risk factor. I don't know what this kid had, but he died from it, and crawling on top of him body to body, mouth to mouth doesn't seem like the smartest way to do this. But then I look at this thing and I think, you know what? When you do the mission, giving life to dead people, there's a risk factor. You know what the question is today? How much are you willing to risk in your life for the mission and the ministry of God? Are you willing to put your life on the line? Are you willing to put your testimony on the line? When you study Paul's life, the two great adversities in his life for the mission and the ministry was one, the assassination of life. There were people that were out to kill him. The second thing was the assassination of his character. There were people out to destroy him. It's a great lesson in all of this because there's a risk factor. I understand going into this, that this is why a lot of people today won't really get in to serve God and accomplish the mission the way they should. If this isn't the major, it is one of the major. But I think personally, it's probably the major. You know why? Because churches today have become big businesses. They have become like corporations. They become like KOA campgrounds. Everybody just kind of got their tent down and having a good time and nobody wants to rock the boat. Everybody wants to get along. I mean, my God, the Pope dies in Baptist churches. They're running a flag at half mast. They're the greatest type of the anti-Christ in the 21st century. I mean, give me a break. What does that tell you? I'm asking you, how much are you willing, how much are you willing to risk to accomplish this mission? Are you willing to risk your job or are you willing to risk whatever it takes, your friends? I mean, that's really what it comes down to. You ought to learn to enjoy being called a heretic. You're in good company. Because the bottom line is you're living in a world today

where 150 years ago, this message would have been irrelevant. But today, you see, if you believe the Bible is the word of God, you're a cult. When you take a stand for the Bible, some of the people that you thought were your friends are going to call you part of a cult. Now, that bothers some of you. You see, personally, I enjoy it because my scenario in life is this is the Long Branch Saloon. We're back in the middle 1850s. We're all sitting around. Now, I'm the cowpoke over here by myself. I'm sitting at a table. I'm just sitting there looking out the window. A big bully starts coming in and bullying all the other cowpokes around. He's the guy that owns the town. He's pushing everybody around. "That's my seat. Get out of there," making fun of everybody. All the little cow people are just scared of this guy because he's got a bunch of thugs that run with him, professional gunfighters. This guy can get away with what he wants to say, scaring you because you've got a lot of people to back him up. You're a little timid. Most of you are good people. You're shop owners, farmers. You're not real. You can shoot rabbits with a shotgun or rifle, but you're not a fast draw. So you're all just kind of tremble every time he comes in. That's the way Christianity is today. The big guys come in and beat the little guys up. See? Now, I'm over here in the corner. I'm minding my own beeswax. I just come over there and I, you know, I'm watching it all go on and all happen over there. I'm just, you know, got me three saloon girls here. One, two, and three. Barb, Jamie, and Kelly. We're sitting over here just talking, talking about the hot, dusty trail. All of a sudden I hear somebody say, "Hey, stranger man." I'm ignoring him. I'm not looking for trouble. I'm just a poor cowboy. I see by my outfit that, oh, no, that's what we want to do. I'm just a poor cowpoke. Sit over here. Pretty soon they, it's obvious that they want trouble. I don't want any trouble. I just want to come in, see my three saloon girls, have a little sarsaparilla, hit the trail again. But oh, no, no, no. See? I'm over there by myself doing my thing, but you're going to make fun of me. Okay. About that time, you've had enough. Saloon clears. There they are. Big man, little big men, all lined up. Now, what they don't know is the old cowpoke over there, he poked a few cows. He'd been around and he dealt with goofy people all his life, but he just wants to be left alone. He ain't looking for a fight. He just wants to do what cowpokes do with three saloon girls. But you push the cowpoke in the corner, he's going to shoot you. When it all comes out, this boy pulls out both guns. And then when they're all dead, it's... My point is this. They'll call you a heretic right now. The reason why they'll call you a heretic, because they won't dare face me and call me one. Because if they do, we'll find out who the heretic is. But see, in time, when you learn a couple things, all the way to that first day. It's like, must be like being in a dog fight in World War I with a Fokker D.I and just blowing him out of the sky and flying back with your first kill. You think going out and hunting turkeys and getting your first turkey is fun? You think shooting your first deer is fun? Wait till you come back and you're taking your first Bible scholar and just waxed his tail for about 45 minutes and sent him scalding into the woods. You see, you're in great company. You ought to enjoy being a heretic, because you're in notable company.

Back in the early century, there was a group called the Donatists. They lived back about 300 AD. You know what they believed? They believed basically what you and I believe. The hierarchy was moving up on the other side and a guy by the name of Donatus, who was a pastor of that church, wouldn't buy into it. So they made him a cult and they called all of his followers Donatists. A little bit later on, there was a guy by the name of Novatian, about 300 AD. The hierarchy began to grow up. He was a little pastor teaching his people the words of God,

believed basically what you and I believe, but when the scholars, he wouldn't turn and wouldn't become one of them. They branded him a heretic and they called his followers Novatians. There was a guy by the name of Montanus. A pastor of a church. All the great hierarchy of the time, he wouldn't buy into what they were saying. You know what he did? They made him a heretic and they called his group Montanists. John Hus, great defender of the faith, as all these people were, who believed the exact same Bible that you and I got, who believed the exact same things about it that you and I believe, and they called his followers a cult and called them Hussites. The Manichaeans followed a man by the name of Mani. A little bit later on, they were called Anabaptists because they were against the damnable heresy of baptizing babies for salvation and sending them to hell. They were called Anabaptists and they were against the Bible that the potpourri was using and stayed with the Bible you got in your lap. A little bit later, they were called Baptists. Now here we are in 2005 that the very same Baptists who were called Anabaptists in the 1600s are now part of the cult. If you believe what they believed down through history, you're the problem. I don't think so.

But you know what? It goes back before that. Acts chapter 21, verse 4, Paul, it says:

Acts 21:4

And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

No, that's not the verse. Acts chapter 24, verse 5:

Acts 24:5

For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

That's a cult. They're calling Paul a cult. They said in Acts 28:

Acts 28:22

But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

"Ooh, the whole world doesn't believe what I believe. I'm going to tremble." Luke chapter 16, verse 15, where God comes to the rescue again:

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.

The whole Christian world thinks it's great. It must stink. You know why? Because there's a risk factor. The question is this, how much are you willing to risk? I knew guys who wouldn't stand up for that book because they were people in business and they did a lot of business with people that of another persuasion. If they took a stand for that book, they'd lose business. I'm telling you. That is the single most thing that keeps people, God's people from ever fulfilling this

mission. It's the risk factor of "I'm not going to risk what I've got for God." That'll work. Play that over again at the judgment seat of Christ.

7. Relationship Factor

Then lastly, and I'm done. The relationship factor. I told you, this mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand, it's a strange thing. But to win people to Christ, to give them life, you know what this thing represents? It represents the fact that you've got to get close enough to them to understand them. We've come to the place in Bible Christianity that we have such a self-righteous attitude. Preachers who are supposed to be with their people in the Word of God, losing touch with their own people in their church. Christians losing touch with the people that God gives them in their own church. It's a mess. I'm telling you, the self-righteous attitude of the body of Christ today is incomprehensible. That a place where they just think that they just exist for themselves, that doing something for somebody else at their expense is just unheard of.

You know one of the great things that took place back in Genesis after the fall took place? Genesis chapter 3, verse 19, you find, I guess you call it the fallout of the fall. God told Adam that by the sweat of your face you're going to work. Your job and my job from that point when God said that man is to work, set up a valuable principle. The principle is you don't work, you don't eat. I know a lot of God's people, a lot of people around the world don't want to work. I've heard every excuse in the world, and I just look at those excuses of people not wanting to work and I look at guys like Lance Armstrong. There's a guy that had cancer, thought he was going to die and he's won five European bike things. I mean there's no excuse. Part of the problem is that when you don't work, you get lazy, you get fat, you come to the place where you don't ever accomplish anything because you don't have an outlet. Now I understand that you come to the point in your life when it's time to retire, you retire. I'm talking about people in the world today who have every means of working but don't. The lackadaisical attitude that exists in this world, and that's why I'm telling you, this idea of taking social security, and I don't care what they do, I don't have an answer, but I'll tell you what won't work. Taking social security and turning it over to the young men and women today in our country and saying manage your own money, this thing will be broke faster than you ever saw in your life. It's a very hard thing to find a young man or woman today that knows the value of anything, and I'll tell you how it'll work. You'll suddenly have to get an extra what, two, three hundred dollars or whatever it is that you get a month and it's supposed to go into a savings and now you manage it. I'll tell you how it works. You'll say, "You know what, I'm young right now and I don't need to save any money and there's some things I want to do. I'll do it later," and later never comes. You know why? Because that's a rationalization of a lack of discipline to know that you better save something now for something's coming. It'll be the most disastrous thing you have ever seen in your life. It's an incredible concept, but that's our, that's this generation, that's the last four or five generations, and we take that same thing in Christianity.

The guys and the gals that I'm working with right now, my little Philadelphia people, the greatest thing, and maybe you haven't seen this, but the thing that I've watched in you over the last two years, the thing that has accelerated your spiritual growth more than anything else is what you're doing on the job with what you're getting from me every week. You sit there and tell me the

stories of how you go to work and God put you in this circumstance or you witness to this person or you use it here, use it there. That is the thing that, you know why? Because your job right now, whatever you're doing is the output of your focal point of your ministry. It is the place of the outpouring of where you, what you do with what you get that God gives you an outlet to take what you get and to give it to somebody else. Life to dead people, life to dead people.

So with that in mind, we see Elisha, and this is how it works. So understanding that we are to get down on the same level, most pastors stand up at the top of the stairs and yell at everybody else, "Get up here where I'm at." You know what you got to do? You got to go down those stairs, you got to put your arm around them as unlovely as they are and walk them one at a time up those steps. Sometimes they stagger up, sometimes they crawl up, sometimes they come up three, go back two, but you walk them up. That's what Elisha is saying here. The principle is so simple. So Elisha goes up to this dead boy who represents unsaved people, who the woman, the church, did everything to get the man of God there, and the man of God didn't want to go at first, he wanted to send somebody else, but finally when he went, this is what he did and he sets up the great principle for us.

The Bible says that he put his hands on his hands. You know what that shows me? That shows me in giving life to dead people. I have to take the time to understand why unsaved people do the things that they do. I have a set of standards. I believe that set of standards and that standard is in my life as much as I can keep it there, but I also understand that not every unsaved man or woman has a clue of what that standard is, and I have to be willing to allow them to be who they are till I get the word of God into their life, and I have to look at unsaved people and I have to understand why they do the things that they do.

Then Elisha put his eyes to his eyes. When I deal with unsaved people, dead people, I understand what Elisha is doing here and what he's saying here because he puts his eyes to his eyes because just like I have to understand why unsaved people do the things they do, I have to understand how they see the world the way they do. There's a reason why they view things the way they do. I view things differently. I look at guys like Ted Kennedy, Hillary Clinton and some of the other ones out there and I look at them and I just shake my head and laugh. They're so stupid and so goofy, but you know what? I understand why they see things the way they do. I understand why they do things the way they do, and if I ever found myself in a circumstance where I had a chance to work with them and show them and help them, I would know exactly how to approach it other than just this hard Baptist attitude or "it's my way or the highway."

Then Elisha, he put his mouth to his mouth, and by doing that he showed me also not only do we need to understand why people do the things they do, hands to hands, not only do I need to understand why unsaved people see the world the way they do, eyes to their eyes, but I have to understand why unsaved people say the things that they say, mouth to mouth. You know what? Unsaved people are dead. They're dead without God, without Christ. There's no way they can do what I want them to do. There's no way they can look at the world from God's standpoint, and there's no way they even know how to talk the way that God wants them or I would like them to talk. But as I said earlier, you know what? We didn't look too hot first time God saw us. Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15, that great verse that talks about the fact that we have a high priest, Jesus

Christ, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that at all points was tempted like we are yet without sin. That's where you got to get them. But you see, God who is so perfect and so without sin was willing to come down to me in the body of a man. God's Holy Spirit was so willing to listen to me, put up with me, walk me through my circumstances, understand why I did what I did, understand how I looked at the world, understand the things that came out of my mouth. Because God knew that I didn't understand His way. There came a time in my life, as there was in your life this morning, when you come face to face with that reality and that's when you found the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. Just simply go back and remember how God dealt with you and I before we were saved, that God has saved and then take that same gratitude and take it to unsaved people. The investment of our lives, the investments of our lives.

God hath begun a good work in you and He'll perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. The aspect of ministry versus mission, the job of the church, the job of each Christian is giving life to dead people. The ministry is how God leads us to do that in the avenues and the ventures by which we bring that out and make that happen. That's why we do the things we do. That's what next week's about. Sure, it's about our, it's about our, you see, this is how I look at it. I look at it as an aspect of us thanking God for the two years that He's given us. But I don't do anything, nothing. I don't think about doing something that I don't look at it in a bigger context, and that is simply this: How can I use this to get life to dead people? You have to start looking at it. Everything we do, how do I use this to get life to dead people? Because that is the only reason we exist. Softball on Friday night, fun, love it. I only do it for one reason. That is how to use this to get life to dead people. Everything we do, the Halloween party, great fun. Little kids have a ball. In the back of my mind, how do we use this to get life to dead people? The mission is getting that life to dead people. The ministry is how we do it. We either do it together or we do it in opposition of each other. But that's the job that God has called us to do. Father,