

Ephesians 4:11-13

Sunday 1/8/2006

SEC: Examining Ourselves and Our Church

Today is one of those days where we only do this once a year, always in January. It is a good thing to do. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 13:5 that the children of God should always do three things.

In the church at Corinth, Paul had been dealing with many spiritual issues. The church at Corinth had everything they needed, but they were not doing what they needed to do with it. In 1 Corinthians, he deals with them on the issues. Then, in 2 Corinthians, he begins to focus on them wanting to do what is right, and he praises the Lord for that. He begins in 2 Corinthians to almost chapter by chapter give them an understanding of every aspect of the ministry. As far as I am concerned, we are going to have to do this at some point. This is on our schedule. I am not sure where it is going to fit, but at some point, either as a group on Sunday morning or as individuals in a smaller group, we are going to have to go through detail by detail the book of 2 Corinthians. It is going to be vital to where you are at.

At the end of that book, in 2 Corinthians 13:5, he basically says that the children of God should do three things:

1. Examine yourself.
2. Prove yourself.
3. Know yourself.

We talk about balance in our Christian lives and how hard that balance is to achieve. It really is. But honestly, if you want a place in your life that shows you the basic concept of that balance, it is those three things. As a child of God, we always have to keep examining ourselves. There is not a day that goes by that we do not need to look at ourselves and who we are in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, as far as our walk and our ministry and all of those aspects. So, you are constantly examining yourself.

You have heard me say it many, many times that I look at the Christian life as you grow, like looking at the moon through a telescope. You put a real low eyepiece in it and you see the moon, and it is beautiful, bright, shiny, and has a lot of contrasty stuff on it. But then you put an eyepiece in it that really bumps up the magnification, and suddenly the moon loses its beauty, so to speak. It is full of cracks and crevices and craters and destruction. It looks like my bedroom after I get home and throw my clothes all over the place; it is terrible. The more magnification you put to it, the more you see the imperfections. That is a lot like what our lives should be. The Word of God should be our telescope, and you have to be constantly upping the magnification of your own life. So many of God's people are too busy looking at everybody else's problems that they do not look at their own. Of course, that becomes part of the problem of God's people's lives not growing. We always need to examine ourselves.

Then the Bible says that we need to prove ourselves.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

There should be nothing in your life—no relationship, no anything, no church, no person in your life teaching you the Bible—that you just believe everything they say. You have to prove it out. There is never a time that I have asked you to believe anything that I have said. I have told you time and time again that you need to check it out, prove it out, that just because I say it does not mean that you just believe it. You have to prove it out, and you have to learn for yourself as you grow in the Word of God.

Then you have to know yourself. That is just being honest with yourself. We all like to puff ourselves up that we are better than we are, that we gloss over some of the problems we have. We all rationalize circumstances and situations, and we are all guilty of that. What the Word of God does, and what the person does that you really have to focus on in your life, is that you really understand who you are. You really know what your strengths are, what your weaknesses are.

I tell people all the time that I work with who may have problems in their life, "You are never going to overcome your problem in your life until you first identify the problem and then you attack that problem." As long as we keep sidestepping the problem and making it somebody else's situation or blaming it on whatever, until we take responsibility for our own failures and our own problems, you are never going to solve them. I have dealt with a lot of alcoholics and people on drugs over the years, and I have always told them, "You can go to AA all you want. You can go to the drug place all you want. But here is the bottom line: you can take every class on alcoholism and drugs, but until you hate alcohol and drugs as much as God does, you are never going to get over it." Because the Christian life is, as the magnification grows, you come to the place where you begin to love the things that God loves and you begin to hate the things that God hates. As you grow and love those things and hate the things, you separate yourself from those things because you know that God does not love them, and that is just as simple as that.

You see, the world and churches and preachers, they want to make Christianity such a hard deal. It is not hard. It is so simple. It is so basic. It is so easy. What I just gave you in 2 Corinthians 13:5 is great advice for every Christian. That is about as good advice as you can get. But I also believe that it is good advice for every church because the church is made up of people, and I think this church has to go through the same process.

I think this church on a regular basis needs to stop and examine itself. Things get moving around here really quick. Things are happening. People are getting saved, and everything is moving, and you can find yourself coming and going in this thing. It is easy to get caught up in all of that. Movement is a lucrative thing because you think that because it is moving, something is happening, and that is not necessarily true when it comes to churches. A lot of churches have a lot of movement, but God is not doing a thing in it. The reason why is that just as an individual, you can never stop examining yourself. As a church, we cannot ever stop examining ourselves. Just as an individual, you have to constantly prove yourself. As a church, we need to constantly prove ourselves. Just as an individual, you need to constantly know yourself. We as a church

need to understand what we are all about. So, it is good to take a time and examine where we are at as a church and talk about the development, where we go from here.

From day one, we have had a plan, and not all of you were here then. In fact, most of you were not. But we have not changed that plan, nor will we change that plan. As far as I am concerned, we are right on course with that plan, probably a little bit ahead of where I wanted to be, which is good. Wherever you got into this crowd this morning, and wherever you got into this church, the plan has been restated many, many times. Our church is unique in this one fact: wherever you get in, you can get on board and you can pick up and learn and grow. We will always wait for the ones that are growing. In everything that we do, it will never be geared to move on and leave the ones behind that have just come in. That does not work. You have to define a game plan that encompasses everybody.

Every time I get up and preach, every time I teach Bible study, I am constantly aware of who my crowd is: the young ones, the middle people, the older ones. I try to break down and teach my messages or my studies so that everybody gets something out of it. You have seen me do it on Thursday night Bible study, and maybe it is not as apparent on Sunday morning, but on Thursday night, when somebody asks a deep question, I will answer the question, and I will many, many times break it down or tell you, and I will always come back and break it down for anybody who does not understand the depth of that question. Because it does not do me any good just to get up and rattle off a lot of things if you do not get something from it, and that has to be a sensitivity on my part.

From day one, the plan has not changed, and that plan is simply this: we are building a Philadelphian church in the Laodicean church period. It is as simple as that. We know the Bible teaches there are seven periods of church history. We can study it from the book of Acts right up to the Rapture of the Church. We know that the greatest period in church history was what was called the Church of the Open Door, or the Philadelphian Church period. Philadelphia means brotherly love. It was the greatest time in the history of the world. It was a time when three-quarters of the world was won to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It was a time of great preachers, great churches, great missionaries, great missionary movements, a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. Then, when the next church period came into being, the Laodicean church period, it all went away.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, however you want to look at it, you and I are living in 2006 in the Laodicean church period. We are on the back end, at the very end of the church age. When God allowed you and I to be born, when God allowed you and I to grow up, and God, through His infinite wisdom and the Holy Spirit of God, put us together in this church, God put us and had you born and saved in all the events of your life because God had a job for you and I to do in the last hours of the last minutes of the last day before Christ comes back. That is what He has put us together for. Losing sight of that fact will never help any church.

Most churches today, let us be honest, and I am not picking on anybody; I could care less. I have enough to take care of right here. But I know what is going on out there. Most churches are acting and operating like they are going to be around for another hundred thousand years. They

are not building people; they are building little dynasties. They are building little kingdoms. They are not pastors anymore; they are third-world dictators, and their churches become a third-world country, and they orchestrate and they demand, and all of this is built around what they want to do themselves, not what God wants them to do. We can never get to that place.

Do you know why they have gotten to that place? Because they have stopped examining themselves. They have stopped proving themselves, and they have stopped knowing themselves. They are like Dorothy and the Tin Man headed for the Wizard of Oz; they have no idea. Because of that, they have slid back into that Laodicean mindset that stops the preaching of the Word of God and begins to build programs. You go to the average church website, and they will have 16,000 programs listed. They do that because they think that people want it. If we ever have a website, I do not know that we ever will because I would be so embarrassed that I could never find it. But if we ever had a website, and after you clicked on Old Paths Baptist Church, do you know what would be there? A big picture of the King James 1611 Bible. That is all that would be there. That is all that needs to be there. That is the only program we have. Everybody else builds programs and tries to jam a little Bible in it. We put the Bible into your life and let the programs develop naturally. That is the way it needs to be. So, that is our goal, our goal from day one.

That is why I have taken the position that my job is to help you, and I am willing to spend time with anybody, anytime, one-on-one, in little groups. My home is always open. Anybody that wants to come over and study the Bible, if you have a specific thing you want to learn or things you want to go through, my house is open. There are others of you that know that. Everybody knows where the Twinkies are, where the black cherry pop is, everybody knows where the potato chips are. Even though my wife hates me to say this, everything else is in the refrigerator. She said, "Robert, you tell them people to get in our refrigerator. Do you ever look at our refrigerator?" I said, "Well, honey, you cooked it." No, she is a good cook, I am just kidding you. My home is open. I am not your average pastor, thank God. I am just one of you.

SEC: The Church's Purpose and Plan

The book of Ephesians chapter 4, to me, breaks the church concept down to a very simple form. It lays out the job of the church. It lays out my job as pastor. In Ephesians chapter 4, it is just a simple threefold concept. Last week, we talked about the third mystery, and the third mystery was the mystery of the body of Christ, how that you and Christ were one body. I know all the women, I got 55 thank you cards this week from all the ladies. Thank you. But that was not my intention. I got 40 from the husbands saying, "Are my wife going to get it next week?" That was not my intention either. There was no motive behind that. That is just mystery number three. It is just in the course of things, that is the way it is. But now that we have been through that, you basically understand the mystery of becoming one flesh, the mystery of the church. Everything we do as a church is built around that concept because the book of Ephesians is the book that really lays out what the church really should be.

Now I want you to look at Ephesians chapter 4 and pick it up in verse 11. Here is what he says; we are going to read verses 11, 12, and 13.

Ephesians 4:11-13

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Now, Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You, Lord, and we ask You today to meet with us in a special way. I know, Lord, I know, and I know this is true, Father. I know this is true, and this is why I love these people. I know a lot of people here today that are sick. I know the ones that did not make it here would give anything to be here today. I know that is true because they knew what we were going to talk about today, and this church is their church, and it is important to them, and they hate to be left out of something that is this magnitude of importance. I know a lot of them came today, Lord, that probably did not come and maybe did not need to come because they are sick. But that is the kind of quality and caliber of people that You have given us here. So I pray, Father, that You will bless them today for their efforts. I pray You will help me to delineate all of this, to lay it out, and not in my fashion, but Your fashion, by Your Spirit. I love You. I thank You for what You have given us, and thank You for this church, and may I convey to them, Father, in my heart today, to their heart, what is on Your heart. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

That verse right there, verse 12, is basically what the church is all about. If you ever become a pastor, your job as the pastor is going to simply be those three things. If you rise to a place of leadership in this church, your job as an elder or a leader is going to be simply those three things: perfecting the saints, the work of the ministry, and edifying the body of Christ.

David Zeiser and I run a couple of days a week together. David is not here today; he is in the National Guard, and Rebecca is sick, so David could not be here today. But we run a couple of days a week together. The last day we ran this week, we always talk about things, and David is a great kid, and I just love spending time with him. We were running together, and he always asks me Bible questions when we are running. He said, "Bobby," he says, "Let me ask you a question. I was reading over there in the Bible where it says that a person that becomes a leader in the church, or someone who becomes that, the Bible says that they are held to a higher accountability." He says, "What is that higher accountability? I never really saw that before. I read that this week, and I got wondering, what is that higher accountability?" I thought to myself, those are the kind of questions that show me a young man is growing, that not only would he see it, but he would want to know about it.

I told him, "David, that higher accountability is simply..." and I was preparing the sermon for today, and I told him, "David, in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 12, it says the job of every pastor of every church and every leader in that church is three things: perfecting the saints, the work of the ministry, and edifying the body of Christ." Watch out for that dog! We were running. Well, you want the whole story or not? Just kidding.

A higher accountability simply means that somebody, either a pastor or leaders, never loses sight of that. We have a lot of things going on in our church, and it is easy with all the movement, all the athletic ministry, and all of the social things that go on. Let me tell you something, it is so easy for anybody to lose sight of those three things. That is where the law of human collapse begins to work in our individual lives, that we begin to think that whatever we are doing is a social event instead of seeing that the bottom line in everything I do, every event we have, everything that we do, it has a threefold goal. It is part of perfecting the saints. Now, that does not mean that it makes you perfect, but it means that it perfects you on a daily basis for the next aspect: the work of the ministry.

The Bible talks about that the reason why God gave the Word of God is that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Not perfect as far as sin is perfection, but perfect as to the work of God. God wants to take you, and my job in everything that we do, from volleyball to coming over my house to eating my wife's incredible lasagna, to whatever we do, is nothing more than helping to perfect you, showing you that in a world where nobody cares, there is somebody that does care. Wanting you to understand that part of my job is to help you not to look at the bad things in your life that everybody else points out, but to help you focus on the good things in your life, to help you get the bad things out of your life, and grow to the place that you perfect yourself because the next step God has for us is the work of the ministry. God saved you and God saved me for a job; that job is the ministry. Some of you are just young Christians, but I want to help get you to that place that you stand by my side.

I think the thing that frustrates me with people more than anything else, and I am a very patient God, and when I say frustrates me, not frustrates me to the point that it makes me angry, but it bothers me, and if anything puts a downside onto my day, it is seeing a young man or a young lady who has the potential of really doing something for God but just simply will never probably get there. I think that that is more problematic for me, and I try to divorce myself from that because I do not need downers in my life, and I always try to look at the positive. But there is just something about a young man or a young lady or a husband and wife who have the ability to really, you see within them everything that they have, the good qualities, and yet 85 percent is good, and that 15 percent will keep them from ever getting where God wants them to go. Because God has a job for you and for me, and it is the work of the ministry.

Then the third thing he talks about is the fact that the edifying of the body of Christ. Everything that I do as a pastor, every Bible study I teach, every one-on-one session, everything that we do, is geared to help you, to edify you. Whether it is either to deal with you in a good area of your life or deal with you in a bad area of your life, my bottom line purpose is to help you grow, to actually understand that you have a job to do. We have a responsibility if we are saved, and those three areas are what my job is, and as you grow up in your life, what your area is. Higher accountability in leadership is simply you and I never losing sight of that in all that we do. We do not get so into what we are doing that we lose the concept of why we are doing it. No matter what it is, it can be the funnest thing we ever do in our life. We could have absolutely great times doing it, and it may look like it is as far as removed from the Bible as it is, but it always comes

back to that basic concept. We are always there for those three areas, and everything we do, it is built into that to help you or somebody else get their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our church is a unique church, and I understand that our church is not for everybody, and I know I never intended it to be when we started because I know the circumstances of life and the way it is in the world and the way they are seeing church period. But I know that we have a great time with the Word of God, and many of you are growing. But I just want to tell you this: in the midst of all that God is doing, and in the midst of all the time we have in the Bible, there is a danger in every church. There is a danger in a bad church, and there is a danger in a good church, because there is never a time that the devil is not going to attack in some form or fashion. It does not make any difference because this is a great concept, and it is something that you have to just understand. The easiest place in the world to become complacent and to lose your perspective and to stop growing personally is in a church that is teaching the Bible and everything is happening. Because we all have this problem in our lives, and that is every one of us, if we do not follow those three basic things of examining yourself, proving yourself, and knowing yourself on a daily basis—scrap that, an hourly basis—you will come to the place that you will become complacent. Because as we all do, we take things for granted. You can buy your kids the most expensive Christmas present that they could ever want, and 15 minutes after they rip the paper off and they have played with it, they want something else, and they are bored with it already. That is human nature. Being really good and being everything you want does not necessarily mean that you are not going to want something else. We have to constantly look at our lives in those three things: to examine ourselves, to prove ourselves, and to know ourselves.

I know I am rotten, so I do not get up in the morning under any other illusion. I know how I am. I know what my problems are. I know what I have to work on. I am not under any illusion. When you deal with it that way and you deal with those problems, that is the way that you get something done and you grow. I have had men in my life and women in my life that were part of my ministry that at one time were very valuable people to me, but they ceased to be valuable. Do you know why they ceased to be valuable? Because somewhere in their great spiritual knowledge and all they knew about the Bible, it became so simple, they just quit growing. They got on the skateboard, found a nice hill, and coasted, and that will not work in a child of God's life. It just will not.

The good thing about our church is, at this point anyhow, I guess it is bad depending on how you look at it, but the good or bad thing about this church is it is really hard to hide. That is why some people like big churches. You listen to a 200-voice choir, you could have somebody in that choir being off-tune, you would never hear it. I will tell you what, you get a 200-voice choir, somebody could be singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" where everybody else is singing "Ave Maria," and you still could not tell it. But you get four people in a quartet, if you are just a tad off, everybody knows it. I like that because I like things sliced right down the middle. I like things black and white. I am a Baptist; I do not dance. If you ever saw me dance, you would know why. But I like things just the way they are. I like things clean, concise, black and white. To me, there are no gray areas in the middle; it is either right or wrong. To me, that is the way it

has to work because that is the way I am with myself, and that is the way as God's people we need to be as we examine ourselves, and it is as simple as that.

When I look for a person that is growing, and many of you are growing, I begin to see these three things. I have told you before, if you have a part of this ministry, the thing that I look for is, "Do you do it the way I would do it?" Not exactly the way I would do it, because you are you and I am me, but you know the concepts by which we operate. Everything you do, whether you are a captain at volleyball, softball, or you are discipling somebody, everything that you do, that higher accountability comes to the place that you never lose sight. I have said it before, you can help me in this ministry all you want, but I am not going to let you hurt me with it. It just is not going to happen that way. What I look for is that higher accountability is simply never losing sight that your job and my job is the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ. That is simply it.

SEC: The Solomon Principle: Accountability and Growth

With that in mind, I want to just go through some things that we are already doing. I want to talk about some things that we are going to do in the future, and it will give you a lot of information about some things. As I said, you will have a better understanding of where we are at, where you can fit in, and as you always know, I am here to help you. All you have to do is come up to me and say, "I want to do something," and we will go to work on it. It is as simple as that. The doors are open to everybody.

The first thing I want to talk about is our volleyball. When I say volleyball, somebody is thinking, "Oh, volleyball, yeah, you bet." No, no, no. I told you from the very beginning that everything we do has that three-base element. When we started our volleyball ministry, I told you it was this: "We are going to start a ministry to people, and then we are going to figure out how to get volleyball into it." That is exactly what we did, and I have to say, for the most part, I am very pleased. I know it was the first time out of the shoot for many of you, and I watched you, and everybody drops the ball at some point or the other. But it takes time. You have to understand, and people have to grow, and you grow by making mistakes, and I understand all of that. But it is a thing where it is just really, I am pleased with the way that it went. I think that we have got a number of couples out of it that we have got contact with, and I think we will continue to get couples with.

It is a thing where I have really seen some growth. When we did softball last year, I never say much. I watch everything, I listen to everything, I try to observe, and that is why I really, I do not want to be a captain, I do not need to be. I can observe better by being away and watching because I look at people the way they deal with things. I remember in softball, we had a little gal that was coming, and she was a Roman Catholic gal, and somebody invited her to come. I talked with her a couple of times, and I could tell that she was a tad uncomfortable with us. Well, because you know how we are, we are hugging everybody, and we are praising the Lord, and we are out there, and you are behind, and the whole thing, "Hold the line, hold the line!" And all that stuff. That is just the way we are, we are nuts. If you are a Catholic, and all you ever do is sit

there and listen, that is kind of weird. I am sure she was waiting for us to pull out the bags of snakes and pass them around.

Somebody talked to her, and I do not even know who this was, I do not even want to know. But somebody went up to her and asked her if she was a Christian, and she says, "Well, I am Catholic." And then they said, "Oh, then you are not a real Christian." The girl never came back after that. Now, that is a terrible mistake, and that is a mistake that, I can put up with a lot of things, and do not take this wrong, but I would rather have you go out and get down, black, staggering drunk on Saturday night than to do that. I could deal with your being drunk and stumbling in on Sunday morning and wanting to sing "Amazing Grace" in front of the thing for the offertory. I would probably even let you do it because we all need to laugh. I could deal with that a lot better than hurting some young person that we might have the chance that now we will never have the chance because of one stupid thing or one stupid thing that you do or say. That person, I do not think, was even a leader. I think it was just Barney Fife from Mayberry R.F.D. But the bottom line is that cannot ever happen in leadership. That person never had and lost sight of the fact of the three prongs that we are trying to do. They never saw the job as edifying, the work of the ministry, and perfecting people. That is not edifying to anybody.

Of course, it is those kind of things that happen when people do not understand what we are trying to do. You are not going to stop it. There will always be some bozo from the land of Oz who just does stupid stuff. You are not going to stop it. You try to stop it as much as you can, and you try to deal with it. But I am telling you right now, there is no excuse for that in somebody who needs to be held to a higher accountability. If you are a leader and you have those things, there is no place for it. If you are a captain and it happens on your softball team or whatever, you need to deal with it because those kind of things only show me that somebody is not getting the big picture, and they have lost that perspective. I am not saying that even, I do not even know that that happened in any way, shape, or form. I think volleyball went fine as far as I know. But it is one of those things where I just remembered that, and I wanted to use that as an example this morning because those things just cannot happen.

I know you have got to give people time. When I deal with circumstances in people's lives, no matter what it may be, I follow about 15 or 20 hard-line biblical principles. I have found over the years that whatever circumstance I find myself in with somebody, whatever their problem is, there are just about 15 or 20 absolute ironclad principles in the Word of God that dictate how they operate. I have them all named in different little marks in the back of my Bible. Someday, when you guys get to that point where you are really working with me on that level, and in counseling or working with people, we will get to that point.

One of them I call the Solomon Principle. The Solomon Principle is probably the principle that I use more than anything and everything, and it is a great principle. You do not have to turn to it, but the story is back in 1 Kings chapter 3. In 1 Kings chapter 3, here is the story: Solomon had just asked for the right things in his life. God appeared to him and said, "Solomon, what do you want to lead My people?" Solomon could have asked for riches and all of that stuff; he did not. Solomon asked for wisdom to deal with God's people. That encounter with God shows me all the character qualities that I look for in a young man or a young lady at that early stage of their life.

He simply wanted to do what God wanted to do, and God gave him wisdom. But with wisdom, listen to me now, with wisdom comes a testing. It always happens because you do not grow in knowledge by just getting wisdom. You do not get wisdom by God just giving it to you. You get wisdom by God giving it to you and then putting you through a series of testings that helps you draw on that wisdom to see if you are... it all comes back to that thing of proving yourself, knowing yourself, and then examining yourself.

Here is what Solomon did right after he got that: two women showed up in front of his throne. The Bible takes time to tell you that they were both harlots. Here is the story they give him. They come to him and the first woman says, "Well, we both had a child, both had children, and we went to sleep one night, and she rolled over on her child and killed it. Then she took my child and put it in her, and put the dead child with my... and that is my child, her child is dead." The other woman said, "No, no, no, no, no, it was just the opposite," and she reversed the story and said she did what she said I did. Now, this is the beauty of Solomon. This is what I call the Solomon Principle. Both these women are harlots. That tells me they are both sinners. Neither one has a reputable character. They are both prone to lying. Solomon did not know which one was lying. They both come in with a story. He had "he said, she said." In this case, "she said, she said." He did not know which one was which.

Do you know what Solomon did? He did one of the... and when you look at the story, and I first read this years ago, I thought that was the dumbest thing in the world. Do you know what he did? He called for a sword and he said, "Let us take this sword and cut that baby in half." Well, the woman whose baby it was not, she could have cared less. But the woman whose baby it was did not want her baby cut in half, so she said, "Give my baby to that woman. I would rather have somebody else raise it than have my baby dead." From that, Solomon got the truth.

Now, you would not think that that story that happened in 1000 BC would be relevant to us today. Obviously, if you come into me with a situation, I am not going to pull out a six-foot sword and threaten to cut you in half. But do not miss the point of the story. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 11 that that sword is the type of the Word of God. From that story, I learned a great principle in dealing with people. It is called the Solomon Principle. The Solomon Principle is how many times in my life I have had a husband and wife come in for marital counseling, and it is a "he says, she says." I do not know which one is lying, and I know in very volatile situations that both can lie. I know when you get into a highly charged situation and emotions get involved, and maybe anger and hatred and whatever happens when marriages go awry, I know that there can be problems on both sides.

Do you know what I do? I use the Solomon Principle. I just put them both, I just draw out a sword, and I put them individually under this sword. I put this guy under the Book and say, "Here is what you need to do every day, every week. We are going to check it every three days, and we are going to find out what you are going to do." I say to her, "Here is what you are going to do, sweetheart. This is your job. You take the Book, you do this with it, and I am going to keep you accountable." In two weeks' time, you will find out who is telling the truth and who will not. Because you can lie to me, you can lie to each other, but when you get put under the sword, the truth always comes out. Solomon did not know who was lying. He just said, "Hey, bring me a

sword," and the sword produced the truth. The sword will always produce the truth. So I do not have to sit there and take sides. I just watch who is doing what is right with the Word of God and who is not.

See how easy that is? Because I do not have the energy to spend chasing everybody around trying to find out who is doing what is right. I do not have the money to hire a private detective to follow you around to see who is doing what is right. I do not need that. I have a sword, and if I use the Solomon Principle and put you under the sword, the truth will come out just like it did in 1 Kings 10. I use that in every aspect of life. When I train a guy for the ministry, I put him under the Solomon Principle. I put him in a situation, tell him what I expect, tell him what their job is, threaten them with the inch in their life if they do not do it. You have had an example of two or three years of how I do it. Nobody in this room knows any better than you guys do how I run what I do. You want part of my ministry? Have all you want, but you do it the way I do. You put them under the sword, you watch them, you will find out who is growing and who is not. Everybody makes mistakes; I make mistakes. But the bottom line is there are some mistakes you can make in ministry and some mistakes you cannot. There are some mistakes you just make because you are green and you have not learned it, and there are some mistakes you make because you quit growing, and I know the difference. My job, I know the difference. I know the difference.

I know every excuse that everybody ever gave for ever doing anything stupid in a ministry. Do you know why? I made the same mistakes and tried to use the same excuses. But the Solomon Principle will always follow through, putting people in situations that require them to be of higher accountability because they say, "I want to be this, I want to do that, I want to do the ministry." As I am going to use a favorite verse today:

Luke 12:48

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more:

Taking the responsibility of ministry without taking the accountability of your own personal life, of holding yourself to a higher standard, will never work with me, and it is just as simple as that. Somebody says, "Well, you are going to take so-and-so, will you ever take anybody out of the ministry?" I have never taken anybody out of the ministry in the 40 years that I have been in the ministry. Do you know why? They take themselves out. Solomon Principle, it will work. I have used it for 25 years. I use it in every situation I am in, from marital situations to individual situations. Everybody tells you what you want to hear. I never listen to what somebody says, never. You tell me what you want to do, and it will go in one ear and out the other. I will not pay attention to what you tell me you are going to do any more than a man on the moon. I will tell you what, I watch what you do. I watch what you do because what you do is what you really are, not what you say. It is as simple as that. That is how you build men and women for the ministry. That is how you take young Christians who want to do what is right, and you begin to build into their lives the things that really help them, and that is the way we are doing it.

SEC: Building a Biblical Marriage

The next thing we are going to talk about is our aspect of building a biblical marriage. After last week, you know now why this is so vital. Your marriage will only be as strong as your personal relationship is with God, and vice versa. We talked about it in Ephesians last week, about it being one flesh. I really believe now that we are entering into our third year, and we have had a lot of key people grow. I am so pleased with that. We have had a lot of new people come in that are in the process of growing, and a lot of just come in in the last two or three months that are going to start to grow, and I am absolutely ecstatic about that. I believe we have come to the place now that because of that accountability structure and that way that we are doing it, that the next year will be a defining year for many of you. It is no accident that we are doing this first really full weekend in January because I want you to know where we are going, and with that, we will up the level of responsibility and accountability, and many of you this year will get put under the Solomon Principle and see how you do.

The next level of spiritual growth is understanding the biblical concept of your marriage. It does me no good to train you in the ministry without at some point taking your marriage, breaking it down into every component piece, and then showing you what the pieces are, defining the pieces, and showing them how they put back together and they work together. It is the only way, and we are at that point right now. Now it is open to anybody. I look at five different people groups that are going to get into this. We are tying this in with the end of our athletic ministry, so if you have people on your teams, your job is to invite them, to encourage them, give them the information, and try to get them to come and be part of that, and we will get that going.

I look at five different people groups:

4. People who are not with our church that we can use as an outreach.
5. People who are in our church that have good marriages but want to make them better.
6. People in our church who have severe problems in their marriage and want to try to fix them.
7. Couples who are contemplating getting married and want to find out what it is all about.
8. Maybe just single men and women who say, "I want to learn about this," and then there will be people who say, "I am married, I am single, or whatever, but I want to help Bob someplace down the line. I want to get involved in the counseling ministry, and I need to know this stuff."

So there will be all different variations, and it is up to you. But I have to say this, I do not have any brochures on this, and I do not have a CD out on it, but if I did, down at the bottom of the brochure and on the label of the CD, it would say this: "Caution: This class may be harmful to your marriage." Because, friends, Romans, and countrymen, we are not leaving any stone unturned. If there is ever a time that you will be under the Solomon Principle, it will be here. We are going to do it one week on, one week off. Why? Because there are things that you are going to have to do, and if you do not do them, you are going to look like an idiot in front of your wife or your husband or whoever because you are going to show up the next week, and everybody is going to know you are not taking this seriously.

I have had people that were all excited about learning the Bible, and I said, "Okay, you come over." They will come over every week or every other week or once a month, depending on what

the deal is, and I have had hundreds of people do this in all my life. They will come over, and in the first couple of months, they are all fired up. Then, as it goes on, they just, suddenly you can tell by their questions they are not studying, and then pretty soon they do not come at all anymore. That is just the way that it works. I want everybody to learn the Word of God. I want everybody to come and be where God wants you to be, but I cannot make you do what you need to do. I cannot make you find time in your schedule, especially when you find time for everything else you want to do. I cannot do that. If it is not a priority in your life, I do not know what to tell you. I am here. I will do everything for you except get in a warm bathtub and slit my wrists. You do that because the warm water makes you bleed faster. How many knew that? See, you knew that, did not you, Lieutenant Ryan? You are my man. You need to move out of Lynch, come back down here. You meet me, you could build many camps, kill many BC. I love you. I always love when you come. I love that ugly-looking scruffy guy that was standing for King Kong too. The Solomon Principle, it works. It works.

There will be a sign-up sheet back there, and you can sign up. We are going to start taking your sign-up today, and we will talk about it. You do not have two or three weeks; it is going to start. I said February 6th, is that right, Nikki? Is that what I said? I cannot forget that. That is when everybody is going to start, and we will give you the details on it later.

SEC: Church Finances and Philosophy

The next thing I want to talk to you about is our personal accountability and responsibility to our church. I told you from day one that this is not my church; it is your church. I am the pastor, and you have a right to dump me anytime you want to. I told you from day one that I would be everything the Bible says I need to be, but the bottom line is I am not taking responsibility for this church. If we are not all in this together, then we are not in it at all. From our text in Ephesians chapter 4, you know now that our job is plain and simple: perfecting the saints, work in the ministry, and edifying the body of Christ.

I have been around churches for a long time, and I know that churches have two aspects to them: you have the physical aspect of the church, and you have the spiritual aspect of the church. I want to talk to you about the physical aspect of it for just a minute. We talk about the spiritual a lot, but I want to talk about the physical aspect. When we were looking for a church, there is no question in my mind that God gave us this building, and this building has been, up to this point, just absolutely wonderful for us. The people in this place, they love us. They basically, and Kelly knows this, and Jason knows this, and Chris knows this, they basically bend over backwards for us. There is nothing that we have not asked that they have not done. They have gone out of their way without us asking. They really like us being here, and I will tell you what, it has been a thing that it has absolutely been out of heaven.

I am saying all that to say this: right now, as we speak, the building that God has given us is 90% good for our needs and 10% bad. Now, there will come a point, maybe I do not know, but I would think if we keep moving the way we are moving, where it is going to become 90% bad and 10% good. Right now, it is still good for us, and this is where, as we speak right now, God wants us to be. I have no doubt in my mind about that. Last year, we have seen tremendous

growth in our church, and we have come to the place that we probably in the last six months have grown 20 or 30 people. People keep coming in all the time, and that is quite incredible, which puts more of the monkey on my back to get men and women who will raise up and take that accountability factor to help take the pressure off. We have had to, when we started, we were down at that end. We have had to move out of the original area and up here, and she redid the whole children's thing for us because, last year, Nicky and Jamie, how many times did we redo the elementary? It just kept growing faster than we could get on with it. You guys, I do not have all the Bible down, but you have got "be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth" down, I promise you. It just grown, and that is a good problem to have. I love it. I absolutely love it.

But I told you when that all happened, what took place, that it had doubled our rent. You know me, in all the times that we have had our church, I have never preached one message on giving. I will not insult God by doing that. You will never hear me stand up here and preach a message on what you ought to give, never. I abhor it. I think it is an absolute insult in the face of God. I think I abhor it so terribly; it disgusts me. All of my life, I have been around preachers and churches that have manipulated people to give money, and it has turned me off. So, if it has done anything, it has given me a clear biblical perspective. I tell you what, 99% of the preachers in this city this morning are just in their pulpit preaching 10-minute messages and then 40 minutes on giving money, and then the next week it is the sermon on money, and then a week after that it is the sermon on "give more money," and it just keeps going on. I promise you, I will never, never, never stand up here and preach to you about giving a dime. I will not. I promise you I will not. I absolutely hate it with every aspect in my life. I absolutely detest it. I think that it is an insult to God. I think that if a church is preaching the Word of God and doing what is right, that everybody just does what they know is right to do. The church never has a problem.

The problem is this: when your ideas of ministry outshine God's clear plan for you, you are in trouble. I have no aspirations. When I read to you Ephesians chapter 4, where he said that he gave the plan for the church, did anybody read in that passage or hear that passage about building a building? No, because it is about building people. I do not give a flip about a building. I would meet in a barn if that is all we had. It means nothing to me, absolutely zilch. I do not want a steeple where you open the door and there are the people. I do not want that. I do not want stained glass windows. I want four walls and a roof and something to put my Bible on, and if we do not have chairs, we will sit on the floor. I do not care about that. I have never been one for the frills. We had a fountain ordered out front, but it got canceled. I am not interested in that in no way, shape, or form. This church has to be about people. People do not build buildings; God makes the buildings when it is time. Our job is to focus on our job; it is people. You did not read one thing about that building. But at the same time, I am saying that a church has physical needs, and a church has spiritual needs. The problem with 99% of the preachers is they get more focused on the physical than they do the spiritual.

Everybody likes to be somebody. You have never been in the world of the ministry, some of you have been around it, but none of you have been to the extent that I have, and I have seen it to the place of the egos that get into this thing. How you want to be known as somebody great in your circle, that you want to be the leading spiritual guru of the city, that you want to be held up, and

you want everybody to look at you, and when you go to the fellowship meetings, they all bow down and worship, and you all talk about so-and-so church, and he has got the biggest church in Missouri, and they have got this and they have got that. All that means absolutely nothing to me, absolutely nothing. That is why God has always kept me down in the mud. That is why God has always kept me down in the mud, and anytime I tried to get myself to the place where I thought I was better than what I am, He just stopped me right back down to mud again. Now, after all these years, I like the mud. I think mud is where it is at. In fact, I was thinking about putting a resolution, we changed the name of this church from Old Paths to the Muddy Baptist Temple.

We are not about money, never will be, but it takes money to run a ministry. I have told you this before, and I am going to say it again because a lot of people are here, and I want you to clearly understand what I am saying. The church pays my salary and pays my medical insurance. Every church in this city, they provide a pastor a car; you do not give me a car. They pay for his housing; I pay for my own house. He has an unlimited expense account that he can buy his books; I buy my own books unless it is something that is particular to this church here. He has an expense account for his trip. When we go on canoe trips, my wife and I pay the same amount as everybody else. Nobody figures in more money, five dollars extra for you so you can pay the preacher's way. No, no way. I pay my own way. When we played volleyball, we paid our dues just like you did. I am sorry, I did not mean that, it did not come out the wrong way. I have a terrible cold, I have been sick all week, I have been hacking and coughing, and I gave to God that I am not going to smoke them cheap Cuban cigars anymore.

You do not do that for me. You do not pay for my car. You do not pay for my house. You do not pay for my books. You do not pay for my trips. You do not pay if I take somebody out to eat. Your church may pay his if he is speaking here; I pay my own. I do not have a retirement from this church. I do not want one. There is no 401k. I will never become better than you. There are times that our wife and I wonder where we are going to get money to do things, and there are some of you that are in the same boat, and I have no business living higher than you do off of what you do. We are in this together. I am no better than you, and when I tell you that, I mean that. If you do not believe what I said, you check with the boys back there that keep the books. I will never allow it. I will never permit it because that is exactly where it starts when somebody gets treated like a god and he does not have to worry about sweating out car payments or house payments or gas payments or this payment. He will lose touch with his people, and it is not going to happen.

But I wanted to say that. Forget what I am ready to say. We are not about money, but it takes money to run a ministry. Bottom line: physical and spiritual. But I want to show you, we are on the spiritual side of it, not the physical, but we have to pay the bills. Our budget every week is probably around this, probably not exactly accurate, but it is close enough: \$2,400. That is my salary, my medical insurance, the rent, all of it. It is a total yearly concept all put into a week. That would include missions, the office supply, the Bibles we give away, the Christmas things that we did for everybody, all the elementary stuff we have to buy, the toys. New Year's, you all came and had a good time. New Year's cost this church a thousand dollars. I do not care; what we got out of that was worth it. I do not know what else to tell you, and I will keep on doing it. It is

one of those things where you cannot put a price on what you get out of that. Would you rather have, I mean, would you rather do that and have the people that came that night that have been back ever since? You guys cost me a thousand bucks, and what does he want to do? First thing, he came last week, both of them, they want to go down and get involved in the prison ministry down at the mission. Amen. God bless you, son. I love you. I love you both. Now, would you rather have them or a statue puking water out front? I am on this statue thing, am I not? I am telling you, I do not know what to tell you, but that is what it does. Memorial Day cost us probably \$1,500-\$1,600 to do that. Anniversary Sunday, another thousand dollars. Songbooks, all the things we have to do. When you put it all together, that is what it basically runs us.

It is one of those things where I never preach about that, and I am telling you one time right now, it is not my problem. I am not going to bring it up again. You will never see me get up here and say this and that, and I will not. I am not going to do it. I will not do it. If it comes to that point, and I am not saying it is, but if it comes to that point, I will simply call another meeting and say, "Okay, we have some decisions to make. We are not making our budget. We have to cut Thursday night Bible study, or we cut my shower, and I get a part-time job." My vote is cut my shower, and I will get a part-time job. Thursday night Bible study is more important. I do not care. I will do whatever I have to do. But I am not taking responsibility for this church by myself. If it is not worth the investment of your tithes, offering, and sacrificial giving, if what you get here and what we have is not worth paying for it, it is fine with me. I am not mad at you. But I am not going to embarrass God by standing up here and telling Him, "Hey, the problem is that our rent went up, and all our things went up, and our offerings have not." That is not my problem.

I know, and I thank God for this, let me tell you something, and please, if you are here this morning, do not be mad at me for this, but there are couples in our church today that do not have the abundance of what we have. Our church, for the first time last year, we did the kids with the prison thing with their moms and dads, and that was a great thing, and I loved it, and there was nothing wrong with doing that because that is where we were. This year, the thing that blessed my heart is God gave us some families that we got to take care of that are ours, and I love it. God gave us some people that are great people, and I love them. Five or six couples that I absolutely love. Their character is sterling. Their desire to learn the Bible is unprecedented, and I love them to death, and I will tell you what, they are going to grow, and God is going to bless them. But it is our job, and I said about the athletic thing, and here has been our policy, here has always been our policy, and always will be our policy: anything that you cannot afford in this church that we do, this church will pay for it. If you are down and out to the place and you cannot, I have told my captains that I have given him a list, "Do not get any money from this person, do not take any money from this," because some of you will not do it, and I know you do not have it, so the church will pay for it. I do not want anybody to suffer because you are financially not where maybe you need to be. I am not going to pay that. I am going to, this church is here for you, and as long as you are doing what is right, you and I will die together.

How many saw the movie *Backdraft*? Remember when the fireman fell in the hole, and they are holding on to him down there, and he is slipping, and he says, "I am going to go, I am going

to go." The fireman says, "You go, we all go. You go, I go. We are in this together." And that is our job. My job is to help you right now, to get you to a place that down the line you can help somebody else. That is the way it is. I am saying all that to say this because what I am saying about money, I do not want some of you in here to think that because you do not have the money to give or you are really struggling right now, that this thing is directed to you. I am telling you, this thing is a whole concept. If everybody does what they are supposed to do, we do not have a problem. I am not, nor will I preach to you about money. This is your church. If it is not worth taking care of, then fine. But I am not going to pay the responsibility. I told you before, we get to the judgment seat of Christ, it is not going to be me taking all the credit for it. No, no. We are all going to stand there together. We will be the only church at the judgment seat of Christ that will be judged in mass. Everybody else will come up one at a time. We will not. The Lord will say, "Where are them renegades from that Old Mud Baptist Church or whatever it was down there? Bring them over here together," because this is not mine. It is yours. It is ours, and it goes or it does not go based on us. There is not one man that puts this up, but there is not one man that can take it down. We are in it together. That is what the ministry is.

SEC: Learning Our Bibles and Future Ministry

The last thing I want to talk to you about, and we are going to be done, and I am not going to bring up the thing of money anymore, that is it. I have a responsibility to tell you. I have a responsibility to tell you my philosophy. I felt like I needed to tell you where I am at, of what this church does for me, so you understand better, and that is the way it is, and that is the way it will be. That is not something that the boys decided; that is what I decided from day one, and that is the way it will remain because I am never going to come to the place that I live higher than you do, and we are going to do it together, or we are not going to do it at all.

The last area has to do with learning our Bibles. When it comes to putting your Bible together, it takes:

9. Self-discipline
10. Balance
11. Commitment
12. Accountability

When I have worked with you one-on-one, I have to tell you, Marion, when he has been with me the longest, in his story, how him and his wife came to work with her, she has been my daughter for a thousand years. But when I met Marion, we started studying the Bible. Marion, we have been every week almost, have we not? You get a couple days when you have been drunk, you have not been over, but most of the time you are right there. Even a couple of times you were drunk, you got more out of it when you were sober, but that is okay. I have watched that young man grow, and I do not mean to put you on the spot, and I know you do not, look at his face, he already does not like this. But he needs to learn to be humble a little bit. There are so many of that way. I can name all of you. We spend time together, but he has been the longest, and I am just saying it through this, I love it. My week is built around all of you. We have a good time on Thursday night. Our Monday Bible studies, when I do not do it, we have not done it, you guys

are out of fellowship, I know you are. I know I am. The times we spend together, the times we spend together coming over and just having times in the Word of God together. There are so many of you, and I do not mean to pick one out, I am just talking here, but you all can have that. There is nothing better than that, and it just is what we have to do. In that, I try to teach you those four concepts: self-discipline, balance, commitment, accountability.

In the last two and a half years, we have spent a lot of time, and I love it. It is the highlight of my week. I get up in the morning, and I know that I am coming over to your house or you are coming over to my house, so we are going to... it just makes my day all day long. I look forward to who is coming over that night, and I am looking through there, and I said, "Oh, they are coming tonight, that is great. Oh, yeah, they are coming tonight, oh, that is great. Oh, yeah, they are coming tonight, okay." No, I am just kidding. It is wonderful. It is the highlight of my life.

I watch you spend a lot of time in your Bibles, and I watch the two main problems that have come up, and it has taken me almost two and a half years to see this and to figure out a way to get around it, but I have got it. One of the two problems we have coming through this is most of you are new to this, and the first problem I find is a mode to study it that you get the most out of it. The second problem is, "How do I work my schedule around this to get everything out of it I need to get?" The second one is not so much a problem as the first one.

Anyway, I have got this thing solved. I have got it worked out. Starting sometime in February, when for sure, I am not sure, here is what we are going to do. Those of you that, and this is not a new class, this is not something that we are going to meet another, it is not going to take another day of your week. I have to just meet with you one time in my home, and if we have a bunch of people do it, then we will do it several nights throughout the thing, and I am going to lay this thing out to you. I do not have time to do it this morning, do not need to do it this morning, but it is an absolute plan to deal with the issue. It is going to build for you one of the greatest resource libraries that you will use the rest of your life. It is going to teach you the Bible in that everybody is on the same page, going in the same direction, and it is also going to give you and me time together one-on-one that everybody can work. That was one of my things I struggled with. I have only so many hours in a day. You work, I work, we have to do things, and then we get it all in there. This will solve that problem, and everybody, and at the same time, it will absolutely build these four things:

You are going to have to discipline yourself to do it.

You are going to have to balance yourself as far as your time.

Your commitment is going to be crucial to it.

Your accountability, because in the time that you have from point A to when you come back with me, there is a number of things you are going to have to have done. If you do not have it done, it is going to be very obvious.

I figure that if we take it one thing a month, give you a whole month, some of you will do it quicker than that, that is fine. But if you cannot get through what I want you to get through in one month's time, you need to become an Episcopalian. You are not going to make it as a Bible

believer, and I do not know what else to tell you. This is so easy. It is so foolproof, and it will teach you the Bible in a structured way that will all go in the same direction, and it yet allows me to have the one-on-one with you, which is exactly what I want, and that is where we are at.

Those things are going to be what we focus on as we get to that next level in this next year. We are going to focus on the fact that when volleyball is over, we get into the marriage enrichment, building a biblical marriage. We are going to get through that. We are going to start the Bible thing in a process with that. Then we are going to move into softball. We are going to do the same thing with softball that we did with volleyball. At the end of softball, then we are going to move into the next area, and that is going to be biblical training of your children, and we are going to walk you through and take that part of it and show you all the details of that. Very frankly, it is no use trying to get the children worked out until you get the marriage worked out, until you understand where you are at, because if you do not have that solid, forget the kids. So that is how we are doing it. There is a method to my madness, and that is how we are going to do this, and that is going to encompass everything that we do for the rest of this year and in the next year. Then next year, we will evaluate it again, and it will be the thing that everything I do is going to get...

Here is what I want: put you under the Solomon Principle, turn the heat up, make you operate in a biblical atmosphere that either you do what is right or you do not do what is right. If you do not, from the start, do not get in it. Suddenly, you have to work on things, I understand. "Well, I cannot come Saturday, I take the trash out." Good deal, I understand. But the bottom line is the silver comes to the top, dross goes to the bottom. You take the silver off the top, put them to work. See how easy it is? It is foolproof, absolutely foolproof, and it has nothing to do with me. It has everything to do with you because I am not a pastor, nor am I a church that just feeds you and gives you without asking something back, because to whom much is given, much is required. If you want it, it is here, and I do not know what else to tell you.

SEC: The Importance of Prayer

The last thing I am going to say to you, and then we are done, is this: you need to pray for our church. You need to pray for the people in our church. I am going to tell you something, my day does not go by but I do not think of, in a week's time, probably all of you several times, and I will pray for you on the spot. There are times that I go through that old roll that I have got, and I pray for, of course, I have added all the new people to the back of it in my own handwriting, and I just gloss over that roll and I pray for you. I know you are at work. I may know your personal struggles, and I just ask God to take care of you. I thank God for you being in my church, our church. I thank God for me having the privilege to be your pastor, and I just ask God to give you a good day.

You need to pray for each other. You husbands need to start praying for your wife and with your wife and with your kids. You need to pray for your pastor, and I know a lot of you do, but I am not above all of the problems that hit people either, and you need to pray for me. I pray for you. A church that does not have the power of prayer is a church that does not have any power. I do not call 6:00 in the morning on Saturday morning prayer meetings for the men; that is stupid.

You work all day, you do not need to be up at 6:00. If you just learn how to pray every day, it will take care of itself. There is nothing magical about getting you out of bed at 5:30, having you here at 6:00 as the sun comes up so we can all have prayer and then go home thinking, "Well, God really answered our prayers more now because we made the effort to get up at 6:00." No, God sits there and says, "Well, you guys are stupid, I am not even up at 6:00." We put so much foolishness in things. Just teach people to do what is right, and it will take care of themselves.

I love you. I love you with all my heart. I would not trade you bunch for anybody in the world, and I just want you to know that. Nancy, I am glad you came today. Thank you. You made my day, sweetheart. I love you. I just want you to know that I love all of you, and I want you to have everything that God has for you. My whole life is open to you to help you be what God wants you to be. I cannot do anymore. I cannot make you want to learn the Bible. I cannot make you want to do what is right. I cannot make you discipline yourself to do it. I can only take you after you have made that decision and help perfect you for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Let us pray. Father, thank You and praise You today. We love You. Thank You for all You do for us, and Lord, I just ask You today to just undertake on our behalf. I love You so much, Father, and I thank You for these dear people. I just pray, Lord, today that You would speak to their hearts about everything that I said, that they would leave here today understanding better why our church is here, what we have to do, and understand their part in it. I thank You for those that came today, and Lord, I love everybody here, and I just thank You for all that You have done. Lord, bless us now. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Every head bow and every eye close real quick. Maybe you are here this morning...