

## I. Introduction to Revelation and the Seven Churches

I want to invite you to turn to Revelation chapter 2. I always feel a little bad when we have people that are visiting from out of town and show up with us, or visitors, or people that haven't been here for a while. I feel bad only in the sense that I always like to have everything concise for people, and I feel a little inconcise when I'm in the middle of something and you don't have any idea of the beginning or the ending. I just like everything to flow for people when it comes to the Bible. So I am always aware of my crowd.

What we are into today is we have been going through a study for a number of months now on the systematic study of how the Bible goes together. We talked about how the number seven is the key to that. God does everything by sevens. In fact, the number seven is God's perfect number, and you are going to find that probably over 890 times in the Old Testament alone, He does things by the number seven. He created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. All the clean animals went into the ark by sevens. We have seven years of tribulation, Daniel's seventy weeks; everything is by sevens in the Bible. That is God's way of breaking down the scriptures for you, and we have been coming through those for months now.

When we finished the last study, what I began to show them is I wanted to show them how the hardest book in the Bible, as far as man is concerned—the book of Revelation, the hardest book in the Bible as far as man's perception of it—I wanted to show them how easy of a book it is if you just follow the same concept of the book. The sevens are perfect. I showed them in an introduction how the whole book of Revelation is just built around the number seven. We talked about all the multiples of sevens, and what we are doing now is coming through them in a systematic way, breaking down the book of Revelation. We are glad that you are here today, and we are right in the middle of a study here on the seven churches. What God has done, really, is taken the book of Revelation and broken it down as far as the church age is concerned. He has broken it down into seven sections, and each one of these sections represents a time in our history, starting with the book of Acts and running right up to, yes, even the time period that we are living today in 2006. It is all recorded for you with the main events of what is going on in history.

## II. The Purpose of the Church: Building People to Help Others

I told you a few moments ago that I get a lot of people calling me. I have had a lot of marital problems coming in this last week, a lot of people that are calling me. I have cases of depression that people are calling me with, just a lot of things have come up in the last week, and this is all normal. What I want to say to you is this, and I am speaking now to a group here that has been here for a while, you younger Christians that have just come in in the last six months or a year: my goal for you is to get you to the place where you can function this way. That is what we are

all about here. We are not about just coming to church so we can tickle your ears with something sweet and nice. No, we are here to build men and women that will take a stand for the Word of God and then will take their own lives and give it back to God as a living sacrifice to be used to help somebody else with a problem.

There is never a person that comes in to see me. I have a lady right now that you are probably going to meet this next Thursday night. I think she finally got enough courage to come to Thursday night Bible study. This woman was struggling with depression for 28 years. By the way, depression is my specialty. I like dealing with it because I was depressed most of my life, so I get to deal with it. I love dealing with people with depression because the secular world makes it like a dream. I love it. It is so hard. They put you down with all kinds of stuff. This woman was diagnosed. She was a walking psychiatrist's dream. She was supposed to be bipolar. The first thing her husband asked me was, "Do you believe in bipolar?" I said, "Sure do." I said, "The earth has a North Pole and a South Pole; it is bipolar." I have no problem with it whatsoever.

What I have done with this lady is basically what I am trying to teach you. We have been meeting now for 10 weeks. What the psychologists could not do—in fact, the last two psychiatrists just said, "Go somewhere else, you are beyond our help," of course, they were getting 200 bucks an hour—what the psychiatrists have failed to do, the Word of God has done in just 10 short weeks. Last week was a pivotal point for her because she got the Bible. She got one book of the Bible, and it fell open to her. I have talked to you, boy, it was like a hallelujah thing that night. She is probably going to be here with her husband this Thursday night.

I am saying all that to say that I have to have people help me with these people. My whole goal is to get you ready, and I am going to be calling on some of you. I am going to tell you right up front right now, I am going to be calling on some of you to help me with all this. This is where we are at.

### III. The Breakdown of Lives, Churches, and America

I know the first thing you are probably thinking here: "What in the world does the book of Revelation and the concept of church history where we are in right now have to do with a lady that is depressed?" It is simply this, folks: you have to get the basics down in everything in life before you can function with the Word of God. If you are going to deal with life's issues, then I am not interested in just giving you a couple of scriptural verses on a little play card and having you go out and do your magic. You are going to have to know what the Bible says. I am not interested in teaching people and raising up Christians that just know a lot of things about the Bible. I want you to know the Bible and the concept of you learning and understanding how it all goes together.

The reason why people's lives break down is because the churches broke down. The reason why the churches broke down is because America broke down. The whole thing comes back to this right here. What we are studying right now and right in the middle of is why it is so messed up today. If you do not know how the thing got broken, you are not going to know how to fix it. You have got to be able to learn to use this material. This is why I take you, and you know my

philosophy of ministry. I have told you the number one aspect of ministry for me in a church as you grow up is simply this. To me, it is the number one principle by which ministry is successful or unsuccessful.

## IV. Understanding Spiritual Growth and Philippians 4:13

When you come into this church, most of you know very little about the Bible. Some of you know more than others. Through the process of growth, God wants to get you to the place in your life where we see and understand how all of this stuff works. The principle is simply that Jesus said, or Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Now the problem is that every time you hear that verse today, it is misquoted. Here is what you hear: you hear that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." In fact, in all your new translations of the Bible, it takes out "which" and it puts in "who." Because we are under the assumption today, and we are under the idea today, that when you get saved, here is how it works: we are under the idea today that when you get saved and I get saved, then how we function is that you start coming to church. Then, as you pay your dues, come to church, and you keep coming and you keep being faithful and showing up, that someplace along the line, 5, 10, 15 years from now, God is just going to, while you are sleeping, it will happen. He will back up the great gospel knowledge dump truck that drives around the streets of heaven. It is a gold dump truck, and He will tilt the bed of that, and while you are sleeping, cascading down on your brain will be all this spiritual stuff that you need to have to really become a mature Christian. That is in essence, and I am obviously being facetious here, but that is the mindset of most of God's people. That is not how it works.

You never become spiritual by just going to church. I will tell you something else: you never become spiritual by just reading your Bible. I guess if there are any two concepts that are totally misused today and misapplied today, it is those two. You do not become spiritual by going to church, and you do not become spiritual by reading your Bible.

## V. The Book of Proverbs and Life's Issues

The book of Proverbs, and I love the book of Proverbs. I was telling this lady the other night when she was over there, I was telling the lady, I said, "You know what? The book of Proverbs is the one book that if I could get in my mind and in my heart, if there is one book that I could really get down in my life that I could have 100% total recall, it would be the book of Proverbs." Because the book of Proverbs, as far as I am concerned, is the book that lays out all the issues of life. I have never found a situation in somebody's life, saved or unsaved, that the principle involved was not in the book of Proverbs.

You know what I believe? I believe the book of Proverbs is a book that lays out the issues of life and the principles of life in word form. Then I believe that every other story in the Bible, every other circumstance in the Bible, every other character or lifestyle that is laid out in the Bible, I believe is nothing more than a playing out of that great principle. I believe that God tells us about the issues of life. Somebody asked me one time, "Why does the Bible talk about so many dirty

things?" My mother asked me that a number of years ago when she was questioning my studying the Bible. She said, "Why does the Bible talk about incest? That is a terrible thing. Why does the Bible talk about adultery or talk about murder? Why does the Bible put so much emphasis on those things?"

The reason why it does is because the Bible is the only honest book you are going to find in this world that deals with the issues of life the way they really are. You know what the Bible does? The Bible shows you what is wrong with man, and then the Bible shows you how man can fix what is wrong with him. It shows man what to do to keep it fixed the rest of his life.

## VI. The True Meaning of "Strengtheneth Me" and Practical Application

When you get saved, you do not just come to church, and you do not just show up, and you do not just read your Bible, and someday you become spiritual. When the Bible says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," here is what He is talking about. This is the book of Philippians, by the way.

*Philippians 4:13*

*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

You see, the key point is it is not Christ that strengthens you. Now the new theology today is that it is Christ; therefore, they take out the "which" and they put in the "who," making Christ the one that strengthens you. No, no, no, no. That is not the way it works. He says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is not Christ that strengthens you. It is the things that you begin to do for Christ that Christ takes in your life and strengthens you. That is why some of you are ready to step out into the next realm of things and help me. This is my ultimate goal.

By the way, our website is up today and should be fully functioning by today. The front page is up; it looks great. You can get the "how to use it," and then all the books of the Bible are up, and you can download those. You can start getting into it already, and we have done that because there are people around the country and around the world that want to get this material that have been waiting for this to come. The bottom line is now they can just download it and get whatever they want, and we are going to update it every week so you can get it on a weekly basis, and it will be good to go probably by the end of this week. It has been a good process, but Kyle has done a great job with it, and I appreciate all the labors that he has put into that, and it is just going to be a great thing.

You know what my next project, Kyle, is simply this, and we are not ready to do this yet: my next goal project is to put a website up that has to do with the issues of life and a counseling situation where anybody in this city can go online and find out how to get the help that they really need to solve life problems.

## VII. Identifying and Meeting Cultural Needs

I know that that is the key to reaching Kansas City. I know that as well as I am standing here. I know the key to reaching Kansas City is that years and years ago I learned a great lesson, and that is this: every culture has its issues, and if you want to penetrate the culture with the gospel, you find out what that particular issue is.

If you would go down to, we have got a missionary down in South America, and we have got that little orphanage down there, and we are basically helping him with all that we can do. Their need down there is for the people to be able to do that, or Bibles, or basic clothing. Their need down there is for the basic things in life as they get the Bible taught to them. So if you are going to that part of the world, or Africa, or South America, or Central America, wherever, you identify the need, and then you take the Word of God and you reach that culture through that need with the Word of God. That is what we are helping him do.

I do not know about you. I cannot stand the thought—maybe you can, maybe you are cold, maybe you are callous, maybe you are all about yourself, I do not know—I cannot stand the thought of some little kid wanting to have a Bible but not having the money to buy a Bible. I cannot deal with that, not when I have 28 of them sitting at home. I cannot deal with that. I just cannot. That is the need. They do not want a Pack Man, they do not want a Robo Reptile. I do, but they do not want Robo Reptiles. All they want is a Bible. All they want is a copy of God's Word that they know is true. So a missionary takes that concept. He sees what the need is, and he takes the gospel through that need.

Now in America, that is not the need. In Central America, South America, that is not the need. If you went to Europe, that was not a need. It is another whole culture. America is its own brand of culture. America has a completely different set of needs than they do in other parts of the world. The problem that most pastors make and the problem most churches make is they never see what that need really is. So therefore, they never, never, never really get into it as far as trying to meet that need.

Now in America, America's need is simply this: America is an insane asylum run by the inmates. It is just that simple. America's families and marriages are busted and broken. It is the number one country in this world monetarily, with all the physical things, with all of the things that we have, all the theme parks, all of the NASCAR, all of the golf games, everything that America has. It does not have the one essential thing that it needs, and that is the stability in its very fabric of families and marriages. America is absolutely busted and shattered.

So you want to build a church, ladies and gentlemen? Is that what we are going to do at Old Path Baptist Church? Really? Well, let me tell you how you build a church: you find out what that need is, and then you take the Word of God and you identify that need and open a door to that need in that culture, and God will bring them in. If I put a website up tomorrow talking about biblical counseling, talking about getting the answers to your problem, I would never, never, never get back to teaching Thursday night Bible study. I would be overwhelmed and swamped. I am getting them coming in just by word of mouth when I have not even cracked a thing on the website.

## VIII. The Call to Service and Faithfulness

Now, if that is the way we have to do it, and we want to really reach Kansas City as our base for missions and ministry, why am I not doing that? I will tell you why I am not. It is real simple: because I do not have the people to help me do what I have got to do. Some of you are coming along, and some of you are going to have to step out by faith, and you are going to have to, if you want to take this thing seriously. I have taken a handful of you and worked with you as far as ministry is concerned and leadership is concerned, and I have no complaints. You are coming along. I know I am going to put some of you into situations that maybe you are not quite ready to step into, but I have got to tell you this, and obviously if you feel like you cannot do that or you do not want to do it, please, no problem, I understand.

Here is the bottom line: you are never going to grow spiritually unless you begin to do something for Christ. It is an illusion in your mind, ladies and gentlemen, if you think that you are simply going to come to church and occupy the seat that you are in today, drop your tithe in or whatever you do, and just simply come and then leave with a bunch of CDs and a bunch of notes and a King James 1611 Bible under your arm. If you are not going to let God use you and grow you, this thing in time will turn into a nice big theme park. When it does, I am out of here. I am not building any more theme parks. I want men and women that want to do something and reach people's lives. That is what it takes. That is why you are here. That is why you supposedly learn everything that you can. That is why I meet with you one on one. It is not so we can just punch your spiritual time card.

Some of you in here, there is not a person I have not dealt with that has come into me with problems. This lady that comes over on Tuesday night, she wanted to pay me. I told her, I said, "You know what? Just keep your money. I will tell you what I want from you. Here is what I want from you: I want you to learn by this and grow by this, and I want you to become a student of the Word of God. What you can do to pay me back is someplace down the line, let me call you on the phone and say, 'Hey, I have got a gal over here that had the same problem you got. Take her through what I took you through and bring her through the other side.'" That is how you repay. We cannot pay back what God gave us. What price tag can we put on that book or what Christ did on the cross? There is no price tag. What do we do with that? There is only one thing you do: you make an investment. You take what God has given to you. Instead of giving back money, you give back the true riches. But too many pastors, too many churches, all they want is the money, and they never get to the true riches.

Hey Mikey, you know what Mikey wants to do? Mikey is going to jail. We are going to need a lawyer. Now I love Mikey. Mikey is my man. But Mikey is going to wind up in jail because Mikey cannot keep his mouth shut. But Mikey has got some good things to say. Mikey is going to get a big banner, put it across 350 highway that says, "The latest in church: The coffee is hot, but the Bible is not." That will get you about 20 days, son. But it is true. It is true. The big thing in churches today is a Starbucks. The coffee is hot, but the Bible is not. That is exactly right. But saying that or emulating that is going to get you in trouble. But we will get you out. We will bail you out.

The bottom line is this: it does not happen that way. You have got to grow. You have got to grow by starting out and doing wherever you are at what God has wanted you to do.

➤ Principle number one in training men and women is getting you to do something.

Because that is the only way that God gets you to stretch your senses, exercise your senses, and then God takes what you do and then He divides it from there.

## IX. The Principle of Faithfulness in Little Things

➤ The second principle: You have heard me say this a million times. The second principle is found in Matthew chapter 25, Luke chapter 10, a number of places. It is this principle: He says this: "If you are faithful in the little things, I will make you rule over many things."

You see, that is the process. That is the process. The process is when God begins to give you something to do, it is faithfulness in it. Faithfulness in whatever it is. I like, you had done a study on it, and somebody else we were doing a study on. Mary and I were doing a study on it when he came over. But the mighty men of Valor back in Kings, what a great study that is.

The mighty men of Valor in your Bible are men that David, a type of Christ, had. They were mighty men of Valor that were over the other men of the nation of Israel. These men are called the mighty men of Valor because they distinguished themselves with valor in combat. He gives you a reading and a listing of some of them, and they are incredible. In fact, some of them are hard to believe. You have got one of those guys down there that he by himself, one guy, he kills 800 men. I have got to tell you that is hard for me to believe, but I believe it. Another guy over there, he goes down and he kills a guy whose staff is like a weaver's beam. You know what a weaver's beam is, but that is about 12 by 12. This guy was so big that his staff of his spear was 12 by 12. This one guy goes down there and just lays him out. Of course, we have got the story of David going down and fighting Goliath. But in there you are going to find, and it is a great study.

Now, when we think of mighty men of Valor, we think that they are fighting for real causes that would be like us today, going out and preaching on the street or going out here and doing this and going down here and doing that and some great thing. I mean, who does not like to preach? I know you guys, when you grow up, it is a natural thing. You want to preach, you want to do this, you want to be a captain of volleyball, you want to do this, you want to do the things. But you know what? When I came down through that mighty men of Valor, some of them fought and defended cities. One of them defended Jerusalem. Wow, that is a big deal. Another one went down and he defended something else. But you know what? The thing that struck me is that one guy who went down and all he defended, all he defended was a bean field.

Now, what is the big deal about a bean field? Let me tell you something, if I saw a big guy about 14 feet tall with a staff of a weaver's beam in one of my bean fields, I would say, "Hey, you know

what? You have all the beans you want, pal, no problem." I mean, there are things to die for in life as a Christian. I am not sure a bean field is one of them. But this guy was willing to stand and fight and take this guy down for a bean field. You know what I learned from that? Whatever job God has called you to do is just as important as the big ones, whether it be preaching somewhere or a bean field.

## X. The Danger of Spiritual Stagnation and the Need for Action

I am telling you all this because I am seeing it, and I want to get to the point, I might as well, I want to get to the point where we get that website up. But I have got to say very frankly, some of you need to get your head out of wherever it is at and figure out if you are going to really serve God or you are just going along for the ride. Now, I do not mean that. I know we have got a lot of young Christians here, and you are finding things out in life. Hey, I am not against that. What I am saying is that, friend, there is a judgment seat of Christ coming, and you are going to stand before God, not based on what you did do or what you did not do, but what you could have found out that God wanted to do, but you simply chose not to do.

I am going to be guilty of a lot of things at the judgment seat of Christ, and I do not expect much at all. But I do know this: I know one thing I am not going to be guilty of is you are not going to stand there and point your finger at me and say, "You mealy-mouthed me around in the pulpit, and you told me all these nice, loving, warm stories, and you extracted all kinds of accolades out of me, but you never told me the truth." It is not going to happen. It is not going to happen. I know this church is not for everybody. I never pretended it was. I like the guy that said on the radio that if you do not like my station, turn it to another station.

But I know this, ladies and gentlemen, if we are going to build a church, it is going to be built on two concepts.

1. The first concept is going to be that you are not going to become spiritual by just sitting here. You are going to have to start taking what God gives you in your life, and you are going to have to do something with it. You are going to have to let God exercise that and stretch that and bring it to the place that God really uses you in everything that He wants to do. That is what it is going to take.
2. The second thing is going to take faithfulness. You are going to have to be faithful in the little things that God gives you, or it is an illusion that you are going to be faithful in the big things. It is just that simple.

When I look at you, when I watch your spiritual growth, when I watch where you are at spiritually, I look at two things: I look at what you are doing and how faithful you are in what you are doing. I do not look at the big things. I never do. The big things mean nothing to me. The big things are where the great chandeliers of life are. I am not interested in the great chandeliers in this ministry. I am interested in light bulbs on the back porch. I am interested in men and women who will do whatever nobody else wants to do because that is where you start. That is where your faithfulness to God in ministry is born. That is how I know that when you get down

the line someplace and you are touching somebody's life with the Word of God, I know I can trust you there because I could trust you in the bean field.

Now, folks, life is just that simple, and the ministry is even more simple. The ministry is nothing more than you and I coming to a common agreement that we understand that God saved us for a purpose and for a reason. What we are to do, and I know that as I say this, I look at you and I look at everybody here at different levels of spiritual growth. I look at some of you that have just come in the last six months, and you love what you have here, and I have no doubt in my mind. Please do not take what I am saying today to you. I mean, take what you can get out of it, but do not think that I give everybody, really, the first five years of your life since you have been saved, you have got a clear path with me because it takes you that long to figure it out. So I look when you come in here and you are trying to figure it all out, hey, I give you all the help in the world. But there comes a point in your life when you start to begin for God to use you.

There are so many examples in the Bible, so many examples. Have you ever noticed that David was faithful in keeping his sheep before he was faithful killing Goliath? Did you ever catch that? I cannot think of a more boring job in the world than to be a little shepherd boy out there with nobody looking, nobody watching, and your own brothers giving you a tough time about it and thinking you were the runt of the litter. I cannot think of anything more worthless in life than that, but that is what prepared him. It was the faithfulness over that flock of his father's that prepared him to take on Goliath. Because if he would have never done it back there, he would have never done it over there. That is how it works. Ministry is not hard to understand; it is just hard to do. The key of ministry is faith. Nothing will reveal your spiritual immaturity. Nothing will show what you really are when it comes to God more than your inability to be faithful.

The Marine Corps, without a doubt probably, and I know that the branches argue back and forth—you know I was in the Army, and we did not like the Marines, and they did not like us, and the Army and the Air Force and the Navy, they all have their rivals. I know that, but the bottom line is this: you know what, you can have your little rivals all you want, but at the end of the day, the Marines are still the Marines. Their training was always tougher, their assignments were always tougher. Let us just face it, when it came to the Pacific, they were the first ones in, they took the beachhead, and they turned it over to the Army. I was in the Army, I do not like that, but that is the way it is. The Army had their own group, I am not just fighting that, but the bottom line is the Marines are the Marines. One thing about them that I think sets them apart is a concept that is in their globe and anchor, that little Latin word called "Semper Fidelis." You know what it means: always faithful, always faithful, always faithful.

If there is any term that needs to be applied to God's people when it comes to the Marines, and let us face it, there are a lot of things that get your eyes off the ministry. They have all got jobs, most of you have husbands and kids, and let us face it, most of you and your husbands are not balancing it out the way you should. Well, you know what, that just takes time, somebody, you will never make it, bless your hearts, I do not know what to tell you. But it is one of those things where you are just, you know, there are a lot of issues out there. The devil throws a lot of side balls at you. But you have got to come to realize that you have a mission and you have a task that God saved you for, and the only thing that is going to get you there is always being faithful.

When you take the little things that God gives you and you start those things, it will get you to the big places.

Hey, I am going to tell you, and I told you before, it is up to you. This is not my church; this is your church. We will take it to whatever level you want, and then if I get bored and you do not want to go any higher, then I will go someplace else and start over again. I have done it three times now; I know it can be done. In fact, it is getting old hat. But I know what happens, you see, I know the danger of what you get here. I know the danger of coming Thursday night and coming Sunday morning and coming over and asking you any questions you want to ask and just getting everything you want. I know the danger of that; the danger is you put on a lot of spiritual weight. I do not ever give you any fat teaching that I do not expect you to run it off during the week. I do not ever prepare a fat dinner for you when you come on Sunday morning that is way over-balanced on calories that I do not expect you to run it off throughout the week.

You are all like sponges. Have you ever had a sponge? Go home and take a sponge out of that thing, throw up a bucket of water, put that sponge in there, watch how it picks up the water until it gets so saturated that it cannot pick up anymore. Then you know what you have got? You have got a big, wet, nasty blob. You know what most of God's people are? They are big, wet, nasty blobs. They have absorbed so much, but if you want to use that sponge again, you have got to wring it out. Oh, we are great absorbers. We just do not like to wring it out.

## XI. The Urgency of Ministry and Discipleship

I cannot get to this time of year knowing that there are hundreds of thousands of people out there that are just absolutely waiting for somebody with the truth to show up and know that I do not have more people ready to do it. That just bothers me to death. It really does. But I am going to tell you the truth: if you think I will put people in ministry just so we can say we do ministry without doing it by the book, you are crazy. You are nuts. It will not happen. It will never happen. Because I know this. You see, you may not have learned this yet, but I have learned this: taking a shortcut in spirituality may pay off on the short end, but it only comes back to bite you on the long end. Now some of you have not been around long enough to figure that out. I have, and I have seen it in action, and I am not interested. You do not do it by the book now, you will not do it by the book then. You are not faithful in the little things now, you will not be faithful then. In your mind it may be an illusion. In your mind you may think, "Well, I can." In my mind I think, "You know what? I am not interested in what you think you can do." I know how the principles work. The principle is simple: if you do not do the work now and you do not let Him stretch you and you are not faithful in what He gives you to do, you will never get to the place down here.

I do not care. You know what? Forget the message. This one, I am not going to make it. But I do not care. Because what is another message if we are not willing to apply it to do what we need to do? Really? What good is it now to walk me through Pergamos, tickle your ears one more time, when there are a hundred thousand people out there that want help? Again, I know some of you are just starting out. I know that. I am not fighting it. I am not. But I am saying this: if you want to get to that point, I want to get to that point. Because it is unrealistic right now in this group

where we have got 130, 140 people that we can ever do that. I know this. I know that with any church, only 10% is going to really cut it. The rest of this is going to loaf for a ride. I know that. But you know what? I do not feel that about this group. I think God put a special group together and keeps bringing special people in. Oh, I know we have got our idiots. But you know what? Wherever you have life, you have bugs. I do not know what to tell you. That just comes with the territory. You are always going to have them. You are always going to have them to call you up at 6 o'clock in the morning and say, "Brother Bob, where is everybody at?" And I said, "Well, what do you mean where everybody is at?" "Well, you said the activity was going to start at 6:30, and it is 6:15, and there is nobody here." I said, "That is 6:30 at night, not 6:30 in the morning." Think it does not happen? Sure it happens. Kidding me? You are always going to have that. You are always going to. I mean, I do not know what else to tell you, but that is just the way it is. Love them too. Now, we do not have anybody here like that, but I have had them in my life.

That is what I am saying. You know what? You have people that float in and float out. That is why I hesitated so long putting the sign out front. I have a buddy that passes the church up there and leaves some, a good friend of mine, Bubby Menelor. He has got a nice church building, a nice church, people too. He has got a nice church, and he is a good man. He has got a church that we would all kill for if you would see it. Right on up. You talk about a prime location corner. Whoo! He has got a sign out front. That guy will get 10, 15, 20 people a week just stop and come to his church because they see the sign out there. Now, you think that is good. Okay. You think that is good. That is what you want. Okay. Maybe there was a time that was true. That is not true anymore. Because he tells me now that, and I knew this was true, what you have got is when people drive by and look for a church building. Now, I am not saying it is true all the time. I mean, we have got Matt and Shelby that way. You saw the sign out there, Matt. I have got to tell you this, Matt, you are the only ones that ever were worth anything and saw the sign out front. I mean, I do not know what to tell you. We have had some real bed bugs come in. You are the best one. In fact, I am tearing the sign down after you are here now. I know now God had it up to get you and her here. After hearing her sing, the sign is going down this afternoon. You are worth the gold, man. You are worth it. It cost \$600 to put that sign up. You know what? You are worth every penny of it. We are taking it down now. No more needed. We got what we wanted out of it. The sign has fulfilled its purpose; tear it down.

But I never, but everybody else, they came in. They were mad at somebody else, some other church, got their notes better than a joint, so they came in here. We had a church in town here. It used to run 3,000 people. It is down around 1,500 now. They had a big church split, and a buddy of mine's church, it ran on a lease summit, not this guy, the other guy. You know what? I will show you what goes on. They all got mad there. About 400 of them went up to this guy's church. All 400 of them. They had a guy that was in charge of the delegation. They walked into this pastor's church and said, "We are thinking about coming to your church." Now, what pastor who is running about, what, 300? And you have got 400 people sitting out there in the car, saying, "Who would not want that deal? Who would not want that? Who would not look at that and say, 'Now, that is what I am talking about?'" Who would not want that? I mean, come on. Who would not be a pastor? You have 300 people, and your guy walks in and says, "Hey, I represent 400 people of so-and-so church. We just got mad. We are looking for a church. We are all going to

come here." Whoa. Whoa. I say, "Honey, I am going to be home late tonight. Got something going on here." Who would not want that? I would not. I would not. Hey, it never comes that way without a condition and a string. You know what the string was? "We have got 400 people. We are mad at so-and-so. We want to come here. Only one thing you have got to do: you cannot bring up the issue of the King James Bible." You know what that pastor did? He said, "I will not bring it up at all. Come on in." And he went from 400 to 700 overnight. Boy, that is a deal. He will win the award for the fastest growing church in Missouri next year. No question about it. That boy just went overnight from 400 to 700 and went into the judgment seat of Christ from a nice white-shirt robe to a speedo.

I am telling you, that is not how you build it. People today are just looking for a church or are mad because where they came from last time they did not get what they want or they could not control it. So they want to come in and see. Not everybody. Obviously, not everybody. And I am willing. I am obviously not going to take the sign down. But that is that. My point is this: we started out three years ago with 22 people. Other than Matt and Shelby, nobody has come because of that sign. You know how they came? They came because somebody else won somebody else to Christ or saw somebody looking for the truth. It was like one beggar sharing his bread with another beggar who was hungry and said, "Let me show you where we can go eat." That is how you build a church. You do not build it fast that way. You do not build it slick that way. But you build it right that way. Then you take those men and those women who are looking for the truth. That is why you take the cream of the crop, as far as I am concerned. You take the male. You are going to have your problems. It is just part of it. But you know what? The problems are not overwhelming. There is nothing you cannot deal with.

What you do is you begin to take and you begin to work, and you begin to take the ones that are serious, and you begin to build it along the lines, and then you get disciplined. Very frankly, some of you need to be disciplined. Some of you have been here long enough now, you need to get disciplined. Some of you that have already been disciplined or you are past that point, you are spiritualized, you know what? You need to get into another level. You need to start taking and being faithful with what God gives you in the little things. Hey, I am telling you, they are out there. It breaks my heart every year at Christmas. I look at these two families, and I know that probably by the grace of God, we are going to be able to have a long-term relationship with these families and doing something. But then I look around and said, "Now, who am I going to put?" A lot of the ones I already have, I feel bad about this because I have got you already so overburdened. Some of you I have got working with four or five people. I feel bad about that. I really do.

That is why I am not putting up a website. I am not putting up a website because I am not going to overload this place when I do not have the people that have stepped up to the plate that are willing to be faithful over the little things. Again, just let me say it one more time: please do not insult my intelligence. Do not tell me you are going to be really good with a marriage counseling situation. Please do not tell me you are really going to be good at doing this when you cannot even be faithful down there in that nursery. Please do not insult my intelligence with that. Will you please just not do that? Do not tell me you are going to really be good when you cannot

make your ushers meetings out here with your guys. Please do not. Please. Go sell that someplace else. I do not work by that principle. I am not that stupid. Maybe you are. I do not know. If you think that you can just not do the little things and then strut into the big things, you will screw up this thing fast. No thank you. No thank you. I will stick with what I have. If I have to cancel Thursday night Bible study to take another night to counsel, then I will do it. I do not care.

But some of you are going to have to understand that it is time to look at this thing and take it seriously. It is time to grow up spiritually. It is time to begin to take this thing and look at it for what it really is and ask yourself, "Why am I here? What am I going to accomplish? Is my job to build the greatest business that I am in? Is my job to further my career to the point? Is my job this or my job that?" I mean, I do not know what to tell you. I just do not know. But it is your choice. You see, it is your choice. But I know they are waiting out there. I do everything I know how to do to get you focused on that point where you have got to say, "You know what?" I am telling you what, until you get the concept that until you are faithful over the little things, He will never make you rule over the many, you are wasting your time. Because that is where it starts. That is what is going to make it work.

Next year I would like to have that website up and running. I would like to have 20 or 30 of you that could handle two people a week. Man, if we got husbands and wives, that would be 120 people. 120 people. I could fire that website up. But you see, I am not going to put it in with you when you cannot even figure out what is going on in your own life. I am not going to do that when I cannot trust you to do the most basic things. I am just not. I am just not going to do it. If we are not going to do this the way that it needs to be done, then let us not do it. But that is how it has to start. You have to decide if this is your choice. If not your choice, do not worry about it. But if this is where you call yourself your spiritual home, the bottom line is this: wherever you are at, whatever level, you need to have a goal. That goal is to get to the point. Whatever problem you are struggling with, and I do not care, there is never a problem that you will have that if you do what the Bible says and you follow the principles, you cannot get past it. Then you take it and you help somebody else with it. That is the plan. That is the plan. That is the way God designed it. That is what we have to do.

Now, you need to think about this. You really do. Because I do not want to have to say no to somebody on the phone. I do not want to have to say, "Well, call this guy." I do not want to have to do that. But at the same time, I am not going to put in with somebody who I do not trust. It is just that simple. When I give you something to do and then you drop the ball and you do not do it, hit the road, man. Hit the road. I cannot use that. I cannot. Do not tell me you are sorry. Do not tell me it is never happening. I cannot. This is a life and death situation. People dying and going to heaven or going to hell based on your care level and you being able to sort out your busy little life and giving a little bit to God while you have everything else you are going to do yourself.

This is where we are at. I really got burdened this week. I do not know how to tell you. I got four phone calls. Four phone calls with people that said, "Hey, I really need to come and talk to you. My wife and I are having some severe problems." And I just said, "Yeah, you betcha." And I booked them all this week. Then the rest of the week I thought about, "Now, who am I going to

give these people to? Who am I going to give them to? Well, I cannot give them to him and her, and I already have them working with four people. I cannot do that to them. They have their family. Who am I going to give them to? Well, I am not sure they are ready yet." See where you are at?

Now, I am just telling you, every once in a while we need to have one of these. If you are a visitor here this morning, I am sorry, you fell on a day where it is a "come to Jesus" meeting, but I do not know what else to tell you. We have to decide what we are going to do. We have to decide, and we are either going to reach people and do with them what the Word of God says, or we are not. But you are going to have to learn. You are going to have to get past your own problems. Deal with them biblically. It may be you have to make some hard line decisions. You know what? Stand up and do it. Then get in a book and then go from there. Let God bring you to the point by "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," and then being faithful in the little things that God gives you.

## XII. Christmas Outreach and Final Exhortation

Now, I am finished. I am done. We have got a lot of things to do for Christmas where we can all reach out right now and do what we can do with these families that God has given us. God brought them into our lives. We have a chance as a church to love them, to take care of them, and to be everything to them that they need right now. I am not talking about supplying Christmas. Can you imagine what it must be like to be a single mother, to have no husband in your life that gives nothing to the kids? I do not care what mistakes she has made in life. I do not care about that. Show me anybody in here that has not made mistakes in their life. Give me a break. I do not care. I do not care what she has done. I do not care how she has got herself in this situation. I just know she is open to the gospel and the Word of God right now, and God gave us the play up the middle. We are going to run the play.

How can we, I mean, can you imagine what it must be like to have a baby, a young kid in the hospital 24/7, and you have got three other kids living out of a suitcase in a Ronald McDonald place where nothing is your family, but no family is here? Can you understand that? Is there no lady here that will say, "Well, I will go down and teach her the Bible twice a week"? Is there nobody here that will say, "Hey, you know what? I will go pick her up. I will spend time with her. I will be an encouragement"? That is all it takes. My God, folks, you do not have to know all, even all the books in the Bible in order. You just have to have a heart. But you have to be faithful.

I have this couple over here that has problems. I know why they have the problem in depression. Man, I will tell you what, I can fix depression just like that. You give me the people. I know that out of this thing, you know, they are going to come to me and they are going to say, "Hey, you know what? Can we come in and just see you?" And I am going to say, "You bet you can." Then what do I do? Is there anybody here that has been here two, three years now that can show me the first case of bipolar in the Bible? Anybody? Somebody here that can take me and show me in the, you know, somebody says, "Well, I do not feel like I want to commit suicide." Oh, yeah, you want to help with that? There are seven suicides in the Bible. Can anybody run me through them

and show me how they all tie together and show you why people commit suicide? No, probably not. No. Are you going to help me? What are you going to do? Fill my car up with gas while I am working with them? Run the dogs out for me? I need more than that. I need some of you to start picking up this load and start saying, "Hey, I am going to, I will learn this. I will get into this. I will get this." I cannot wait around until I teach a class on it. You have got to be digging it in there. You have got to be going after this thing because you ought to know that the end result is I want to give everything I have got to the Lord, and I want to be His, I want to be used in His hands to touch people's lives.

The only reason why I am here this morning and the reason why I meet with you every week, it is not just so you can learn your Bible, so you can do something with the Bible you learn. Because I told you, you started out, you will not get to your body, you will not get to the place in your spiritual life where you get there by reading your Bible, and you will not get there by coming to church. You get to the spiritual place in your life by coming to church and doing and using what God has given to you. Then you learn how to do it by taking the Word of God and not just reading it, but applying what you read and changing your life and putting it in line with those principles. That is where we are at. So let us go to work on this thing.

I do not expect it from everybody. I thank God for the group of young ones that God has given. I will tell you what, some of you young ones coming in here, man, you just, wow, you are gold, man. I see in you, boy, a fire and a zeal to learn that book that I just have not seen in a long time, and it is encouraging to me. I do not want to dispel doom this morning. I am not walking around saying, "Oh, I think things are going absolutely great," but you know what? You cannot ever be satisfied with where we are at spiritually, not as a church, not as a pastor, not as individuals, because the day we do, then we just become dead like everybody else. We start just living and rolling in our own glory. That is not going to happen. You have to be lean and mean when it comes to the ministry, and you have to be able to do what has got to be done and turn on a dime and give nine cents change and accomplish the mission, whatever it may be.

My goal down the line is to have 40 or 50 of you, no matter what the circumstances are, I could give it to you, and I do not even have to think twice about it. I do not even have to worry about if you are going to cross all the T's and dot all the I's. You are going to do it exactly the way I know it needs to be done because you are doing it the same way I do it. You are doing it by biblical principles. That is right. So pray about it, folks. I love you to death. We have got a lot of things coming up this month. I know it is a busy time of year, but we have got to reach out and talk to these people's lives. God has given us some great things. My advice to you would be this: sort it out. Take it one thing at a time.

3. First thing we have got to do is get those presents wrapped.
4. The second thing we have got to do is get out there and make Christmas morning.

All the people that are coming, we need to make this a special thing. In fact, you know what? Where is the other out counting? You guys can hear me behind the curtain back there, Jason and Chris. Hey, next week or next Christmas morning, let us see if we can get that back room. It has got the Christmas tree in it, and try to make the place a little Christmasy. Hello. I will work it out

with them later. I feel really stupid talking to a curtain anyhow. Somebody thinks I am back at the Old Testament in the Holy of Holies. I do not think the veil had a lock on it, do you? I do not think so.

Hey, I love you. A lot done. Let me just tell you this. Leave you with this: "To whom much is given, much is required." He died for you and me. Anything less than our best is wrong. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You so much. Thank You.