

Proverbs

Sunday 11/25/2007

Professors and scholars often hold themselves up as if there is nothing more for them to learn; they are there now to teach you. There is a real danger in that. One of the greatest single things that has helped me in everything else in my life is the fact that God's school is never out for you and for me. There is always something more to learn; there is always something more to do.

A friend of mine, who has read through the Bible well over 200 times, told me one time that when he had read through the Bible 125 times, he found 478 things he had never seen before in his life. That is the way the Bible is because the Bible is God's mind; it is inexhaustible, it never ends. When you take that same concept and apply it to everything that God created, you are going to find out that to really be successful with God, you have got to be a student of more than just the Bible.

I do not look at myself as a scholar; I never have. I look at myself as a student of the Word of God because in my life, I have learned a lesson that school is never out. There is never going to be a time in my life where I know it all, and there should never be a time in your life where you think you know it all. Mark Twain said one time, "It's not the things that we don't, the things that we know that get us in trouble, it's the things that we're sure of that aren't true that get us in trouble." Boy, is not that true?

I think personally, the mark of a man of God and God using a man is based on how he applies himself as a student throughout his life to learn, and not only just learn it, but to remember what he has learned. I find today in most pastors, in most teachers, and certainly in most Christians, that many of them, I believe, are probably saved and many of them are going to Heaven. But I will tell you what is lacking in their life, and I see it, and it is something that I do not want to be lacking in your life: there is no depth to them. They are very one-dimensional.

You hear they are one-dimensional in their preaching. They will always preach about something along the same lines. They will always preach about something that is just surface. They will always preach about something that will always leave you in a good mood and never break your heart or never have you deal with the reality of life. You realize that a preacher who just preaches always about the good things in life, who wants to give you a nice feeling every time you go there, is deceiving you. Life is not that way. Many times, disillusionment comes in because you do not prepare people for the realities of life.

Some of you, as you grow, and we saw this last week in our study of Samuel, as you grow in life through the Word of God, you are going to experience some tough times. Sometimes we get the feeling that when we go through something in a tough time in our life, we think that it is because we have done something wrong. I want to tell you that that is not always the case.

I. Understanding Life's Difficulties

In dealing with people, you are going to find two kinds of Christian people going through things. You will find some who have absolutely violated every principle found in the Word of God.

Galatians 6:7 needs to be stenciled on their forehead backwards so they can read it every time they look in the mirror.

Galatians 6:7

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Many of the things in our lives that we go through are simply because of that. We have done a lot of dumb things, we have made a lot of bad decisions, we have gotten into a lot of things we never should have gotten into, and therefore there are consequences to that. There are some people that just go through the tough times in life because they just will not learn from their mistakes, and they will never turn around their life the way they need to. That is just the way it is. As long as there were people on this earth, and as long as there will be people on the earth, you will have people that fall into that category.

But then you have the other category where God brings things into your life because you are doing what is right. Sometimes we have a tendency, especially young Christians, maybe you will lose your job, or maybe you will go through some thing that puts a stress or strain on your family or your own personal life. Many times we sell ourselves short, and I am not saying you should do this, we look inside just thinking that we must have done something wrong.

I have learned over the years that things happen to us in our life basically for three reasons. There is never a fourth; it will be one of three.

1. Either you have got something wrong in your life with God, and God is trying to get your attention. When something goes down in my life really bad, that is the first thing I look for. You know in your life better than I do or anybody else does what you are going through and where your life is at with God. So sometimes, the first thing I will do is look into my life and say, "Okay, is everything right with God the way it needs to be?"
2. When that is checked off that it is okay, the second thing I look at is, "Okay, then God is putting me through this in my life because I am going to get some kind of strengthening from it." God is letting me go through this because He is going to purge me, He is going to mold me, and He is going to make me. Any fine vessel has to go through the refiner's fire to become useful in the Master's house.
3. Once I look at that, then I look at the third reason. Maybe God is allowing this to come into my life for somebody else's life. Maybe somebody else is going to benefit from my pain, my problem.

You have got to understand, many times I see some of you going through things that are tough in your life, and I guarantee you, and I know you probably, some of you as well as you know yourself, I almost double guarantee you it is not because of the fact that you are way out in left field somewhere with God. It is because God is molding you and making you into what He wants you to be.

We all make mistakes. I am the last guy in the world that will ever point my finger at you and condescendingly or castigate you because of some stupid thing you have done in your life. We have always done stupid things in our lives. I never care about what a person does or where they

are at or what they are into. I only care about, "Do you want to do what is right and turn around in the right direction what is in the wrong direction?"

You are going to find a building process is going on in some of your lives to learn to trust God. In some cases, it is a process to humble you because we all have things in our lives that we have got to work through. Nobody is perfect. Sometimes God will bring something in your life just for the sake of the fact that He wants to humble you. Sometimes He will bring things into your life because He wants you to get to the end of self. I am not saying that you are very selfish. I am just saying that for God to really use you the way He wants to use you, you have got to turn it all over to Him.

Sometimes, especially in young Christians' lives, we get ahead of God sometimes. We make some bad financial decisions. We make some bad decisions here and there. God just has to slow us up before we get way over our heads where you are going to cancel out the rest of your life and be so bound to what you are into that you are not going to be able to do it.

Sometimes it is just about God wanting to perfect you. He wants to make you everything that He wants you to be. Some of you, bless your hearts, you are just too hard on yourself sometimes. Some of you, very frankly, are not hard enough on yourself.

II. Disciplines of a Lifelong Student

As a child of God and as a student of God, I have learned to be a student of many things. The thing I want to get across today, and in the next couple of weeks, because we are going to take some time talking about this, I want to help you any way that I can. I do not want you to stay one-dimensional all your life. I want you to have some depth to you. I want you to be able to see any given situation in your own life or maybe somebody else's life and see it for what it really is, not as it appears as you view it through our emotions.

As a student, being a student of the things that God has around you, and the many things that we need to really focus on in our life, is really key.

4. First of all, obviously, is the Bible. The Bible is the absolute answer to everything. You are going to have to become a student of the Word of God. You are going to have to understand the basic fundamental structure of the Bible. I think it is absolutely essential that somebody coming up begins to really see and grasp how the Bible goes together. Everything I give you, I give you as an investment into you, because I realize that is the key. There have got to be enough people in this church, and there are, who really, really want to learn the Bible. The Bible is the key to everything. It is the absolute foundation from which everything else is built on. So you have got to begin to be a student of the Bible.
5. Connected with the Bible, you have to be a student of history. You cannot separate the Bible and history; you just cannot. I find a tragic mistake in most people's lives. The tragic mistake is that, and this is taught just about wherever you go, I say this all the time, and people look at me really funny when I say it: I always tell them, "You never want to study the Bible from a Christian standpoint." They look at me thinking, "Well, I am a Christian, how else can I study the Bible?" That is a very dangerous position to be in. You never want to study the

Bible from a Christian standpoint. You know why? Because if the Bible was a 36-inch yardstick, Christianity was only four inches on that yardstick. When you study the whole 36 inches by just four inches, you lose your perspective. In other words, do not study the Bible from a Christian standpoint, but you want to study the Bible from God's standpoint. God is doing more in history than just 2,000 years of Christianity. There is a lot more going on. What happens is, and I see this all the time, when a person studies the Bible or history from a Christian standpoint, what they do then is that they pretend to read everything that they believe into everything else that God is doing. Boy, that will get you in trouble real quick when it comes to understanding the Bible and understanding history.

A couple of Thursday nights ago, somebody asked a question, and I talked about how people today, God's people, do not understand the concept of God. They do not understand the concept of Christ, and they do not understand the concept of the Holy Spirit of God. If you really understood today what God is really interested in, if you really understood today the only thing that is on God's mind, if you really understood today the only thing that is on Christ's mind, if you really understood today the only thing that is on the Holy Spirit's mind, you would have an unbelievable understanding of what God is doing and how God is working.

We think God is interested in 99.999% of the things that we think God really cares about in this world. God cares nothing about watching the ball game last night, or any ball game. When someone makes a touchdown, the first thing he does is point to God, like God is interested in a ball game. Like God really helped him get across that line. God never gave you legs or muscles in your legs or the abilities you have to make a touchdown. God gave you those muscles in your leg to carry the Gospel to the end of the earth. Some people have a tough time with that. They really do. It goes to show what God is really interested in.

I am just going to give you a key, and I could spend all morning just on this, but I do not want to do it because if I really told you, half of you probably would never come back next week, so I will let you find it out for yourself at the judgment seat. That way you cannot run away from that one. If you want to find out the greatest thing God ever taught me about finding out where God's real attention is, it is found in the book of Esther. The greatest thing that ever taught me about what Christ's thoughts are is in the book of Song of Solomon. The greatest thing that God ever taught me to show me where the Holy Spirit of God's mind and heart are, and the only thing He cares about, is back there in Genesis 24. If you take those three places, you will find in those three places what God is interested in, what Christ is interested in, and what the Holy Spirit of God is interested in. I guarantee you it will not match up to 99.9999% of what you think. It will not match up to the tsunami over there in the Indian Ocean. It will not match up to earthquakes. It will not match up to natural disasters. It will not match up to 9/11. It will not match up to any of those things. When you start to talk like that today to God's people, they start to look at you like you are a three-headed monster. You know why? Because they do not know anything about God.

6. You have got to be a student of science. 1 Timothy 6:20 says, "science falsely so called." The Bible is the greatest scientific book in the world. I can take you in the Bible and show you the telephone and the telegraph 4,000 years before Christ ever showed up. I can take you in the

Bible and show you automobiles. I can take you in the Bible and show you spaceships. I can take you in the Bible and show you a spectrograph. I can take you in the Bible and show you all the laws of condensation and natural, I can take you in the Bible in 1900 BC and show you those things in the Bible.

1 Timothy 6:20

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

Back in the Dark Ages, when the Black Plague was sweeping across Europe and there were not enough live people to bury the dead people, the Jews did not get the Black Plague. The reason why they did not get it was because they were following the most scientific medical book the world has ever seen. The man who discovered blood transfusions got it out of the book of Leviticus. When the Jews back there in the Middle Ages were not getting the Black Plague, it was because the Gentiles or the Europeans were washing their hands in bowls of water, and the Leviticus Jews were following Leviticus, which said to wash their hands in running water. Therefore, they did not get the plague. Consequently, they got blamed for it and got killed for it anyhow. But that is what the Bible does for you; it is a great scientific book. You want to study astronomy, you want to study the galaxies, you want to study the planets, you want to study all of that stuff. That is where you want to get into the Bible. You have got to be a student of science.

7. You have got to be a student of human nature. There are patterns of human nature, and the Bible catalogs those patterns. People all follow the same patterns. I do not care if you are living in Genesis 6 or Genesis 50. I do not care if you are living in the Old Testament or the Law, or you are living in the Church Age, or you are in the Tribulation or the Millennium. Human nature will always be the same. Learn and be a student of the patterns of human nature; you will learn how to deal with people. People do not change in the problems they have got; they just change geographical locations, shapes, sizes, colors. They are all the same problems. Human nature is always the same. Once you understand the patterns taught in the Word of God about why man does what he does, you have got to be a student of human nature.
8. You have to be a student of life in general. I could sit here all day and tell you, but my point is this: if you are ever going to grow to the place where God wants you to go, I am firmly convinced that it takes a lifelong commitment of being God's student to learn the great lessons that lead to where God wants you to be.

The Bible talks about knowledge in the Word of God, talks about wisdom, and it talks about understanding. The Bible talks about that when you get knowledge, knowledge is facts. When you get wisdom, wisdom is facts applied. But when you get understanding, that is the key of putting and being God's student, and you learn all the things that God wants you to see. Once you get understanding from God, then you get the two greatest keys that you have got to have as a child of God to figure it all out: you get discretion and you get discernment. Discernment shows you what is right and what is wrong. Discretion tells you to stay out of one and go into the other. Those are the absolutely two things that are missing in God's people's lives today.

I want to tell you, in relationship to that, in 35 some years of dealing with that, being a student of these things and many other things that I could go on in today, I have learned this: there is no easy way to get there. There is no quick start way to do it. There is no hurry-up mode in your Bible. There is no fast-forward button on this one. This is not a fast-food restaurant where you can get in and get it, and if it is not fast enough inside, drive through the drive lane and get it even faster. That is not this; you cannot do this. It certainly is not like Burger King where you can have it your way. No, no, it takes a lifelong process.

We are in more of a hurry than God is, and I will tell you something, if you want to be a student, I guarantee you the first thing you are going to need is patience because you are not going to get this in your own time. You are not going to figure it all out. Isaiah 55:11 says God does things His own way in His own time, and He does them His way.

Isaiah 55:11

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

That is why you will find in the Old Testament a man could not even be a priest until he was 30 years old. We talked about that story last week about Samuel. All of you guys got the idea that Samuel's mother had the baby Samuel and then took him over when he was about two years old and dumped him off. That is not what happened. A child in the Bible can be somebody all the way up to 20 years old. A child in the Bible is not three or four or five years old. Somebody called a child in the Bible can be 15, 16, 17, 18 years old. So Samuel, whenever he was dropped off, I suspect he was dropped off probably when he was 15 or 16. But he could not even be a priest until he was 30 years old. So this time is taking place in his life. His mother just did not drop him off over there and say, "I will see you later." His mother trained him at home, got him ready in the things of God, and then getting toward the age where he was going, he needed the experience on another level. She took him down to Eli, and when he became 30 years old, he became a priest.

David goes out and fights Goliath back there in Samuel. He fights Goliath when he is probably 15 or 16 years old. Sometimes we do not see the parallels between the time element. After Saul's death, he is called to be the king. When all the kids pass around, Jesse's kids, and they say, "Where is, you got one more, where is he at?" "Oh, he is a little run out there," and they bring him in. He probably was 15 or 16 years old. He said, "This is going to be the king," but he did not take the throne until he was 30 years old, probably 20 years later. God never gets in a hurry with what He wants you to do. He never does, and you better learn that.

John the Baptist did not start his public ministry until he was 30. Christ did not start His public ministry; He did His first miracle when He was 30 years old. I would say, based on what I have observed in life and read in the Bible, being a student of the things in life, I would say a man will not really reach his full potential probably until he is 50 or 60 years old.

My father in the Lord is Mel Subaca. Some of you know him. I met Mel Subaca the first time when I was just a kid. I really got plugged into him about 1971 and was with him for about five

or six years. I thought in my life, he is one of the guys that taught me what I know. I look back at the years between 1970 and 1975-76, I thought, this guy was, he would do an unbelievable thing. If you had asked me right then at that particular point in time, I would have said, "That is his peak time right now." That was not his peak time. He was 56 years old. Most people are thinking about retiring. He was 56 years old. He was successful in his ministry, had one of the largest college career classes in all of the country. He was traveling, he could preach anywhere he wanted, anytime, any place. He had a standing offer around this country; he could go anywhere. He was successful in his ministry.

At 56 years of age, when most guys are sitting back and enjoying it all, and enjoying the fruits of their labor, and saying, "Boy, I have arrived," he got the idea that, and he had no money in the bank. He played Christian roulette. You know what that is? He saved his money all year long, and every Christmas he would dump it into the Christian missionary office offering, and he would give it away to God, and he would start over again. Somebody asked him one time, "Why did you do that?" He said, "Because I want to start the year even with God." That is the way he lived his life.

So at 56 years of age, when I am viewing the fact that he has now reached the pinnacle of his ministry, and most guys are thinking about retirement, and thinking about this, and thinking about that, he comes up with the idea at 56 years old, without any money in the bank, without knowing anybody anywhere in New York City, that he is going to go to New York and start a church. In New York City. If you know anything about New York City, you just do not go to New York City and build a church. He went to Staten Island, resigned his job, left everything there, sold everything he had. He and his family went to New York City and built, carved out of a rock. The greatest part of his ministry was when he did that and went from 56 up to the next 25 years of his life. You know why? I look back at that, and everything up to that point, God had prepared him for what He wanted him to do right then. Many times we do not see it that way.

He was a student of everything that he saw. He learned from every experience in life. It takes that long to watch and observe, to pass some crucial test in your life, to prove yourself, to observe and learn some absolute truths and lessons in life. Listen, and do not you ever doubt this: God would rather use you for 10 years with all the well-equipment that you need than 40 years doing it halfway. He would. He would rather get 10 good years out of your life and have you hitting on all eight cylinders for those 10 years than 40 years that are banging on four cylinders out of eight. Most of God's people cannot even comprehend what I just said because we have done things halfway all our lives. When it comes to God, God is always the last one on the list. That is just the way it is. The tragedy is most people never get there.

III. Obstacles to Spiritual Growth

Do you know what really messes God's people up? I mean, really. I have watched this thing for 35 years. I told you last week, the great side of the ministry is seeing what God does in your individual lives. The downside of the ministry is to see God's people waste their lives. But you know what really messes God's people up? I have watched this for over 30 years. It is usually just one thing.

You have your people who get into drugs and all kinds of pornography and all that stuff. They never had a chance to start with. They get booze and that, and they may get out of it, bless God, and they may get past it, praise the Lord. But the average Christian in churches today never had those experiences. The average Christian in churches never, they were raised in Christian homes. They were brought up the right way. Oh, they may have some tough time, maybe their family went through a divorce or whatever. But they never got experience on those levels. The churches are filled with them. Those people never figure it out, and it is usually because of one thing in their life that you are just not willing to change.

Many times it is just as simple as laziness. They are just lazy. They have bad study habits. How many times have I heard somebody say, "Well, I do not read very well." Well, you look like you are eating well. Did somebody have to teach you how to eat? If you do not read very well, then learn how to read better. Somebody said, "Well, I just do not do that well." Well, then work on it until you do it better. If you went to kindergarten or grade school and you took that attitude, you would not even talk the English language. You would not be able to add. You would not be able to hold down a job. In other words, in everything else in life, we will apply ourselves. But when it comes to really the most important thing in life, your spiritual relationship with God, laziness will kill you just like that. Some people are lazy; they are going to stay lazy all their lives and are never going to do a thing for God.

I will tell you something else. It is never a big thing. We do not have any drug addicts in here. We do not have any people in here that are messed up in some deep, dark sin, at least I do not think so. But the bottom line is, many of you will never do a thing for God. You will never turn the tap for God. You know why? It will be something just basically like this that you are not willing to correct in your life.

- Some of you will never do anything for God because of a lack of faithfulness. You cannot do anything for God. You cannot put three Sundays in a row for God where you can do something meaningful for Him.
- Some of you, it will be a lack of self-discipline. Bless your heart, your personal life is a disaster. You have never learned the concept: you cannot spend more money than you have. It is so easy when there is no self-discipline in your life, there is no control of your own personal life. You wind up selling yourself into the credit card system or to the financial people. You are absolutely so chained and bound because there is one area in your life you are just not willing to turn over to God.
- Some of you, it is self. Very frankly, the things in this world mean more to you than the things of God.
- Some of you, it is immaturity. You have no common sense. You live beyond your income. You make bad choices in whatever you decide to do. God always gets the sharp end of the stick at the end of the day.
- Some of you are dysfunctional. Let me ask you a question. Would you trust a doctor that when you went to the doctor and he checked you out, he gave you the wrong prescription? Would you go back to him again? Could you ever trust him? I mean, with a simple "oops," would it be okay? If you took your child to the doctor and that child was sick and the doctor

misdiagnosed him and he gave him the wrong prescription, or I do not know how they ever figured out the way they write. You take him there for a cold antibiotic, and a doctor or a pharmacist misreads it or it is written wrong and it gives him some dangerous drug for diabetes. Would you go back to that doctor again? If you had an electrician and he came over and he wired your house wrong and it almost burnt the house down, would you have him come back and do your next house? Could you trust him again? If you went to Jiffy Lube down here, right down the street, you always got that guy out. I am a Jiffy Lube special right now, \$9.95. I went to a Jiffy Lube one time. Never go back to a Jiffy Lube again. You know why? Did you ever see the guys that work in a Jiffy Lube? They changed my oil, checked everything, and forgot to put oil in the car. Do you think I am going back to any Jiffy Lube? Would you keep your insurance with a man that sells you car insurance or your house insurance, and you know how you get a new car and you call the guy up and he says, "Hey, I got a new car, would you change out the oil and put on a new one?" He says, "Oh yeah," and then he just forgets to do it, and then you have a wreck with that car and you find out you are not insured. Are you going to keep your insurance with him? Dysfunctional. If you had a lawyer and a lawyer, you know you had a court date and the lawyer blew it off and forgot about it, never showed up. You are standing there at the bench with your mouth open. Are you going to hire him again? Would you ever trust anybody like that in life?

You know what the problem is with God, with many of us? He just cannot trust us. He has given us the call, we dropped the ball, and then you wonder why God will not use you. You know why God will not use us, the bottom line? He cannot trust us.

I will put up with a lot of things in life and a lot of mistakes. I do not really care, but I will tell you one place I will not put up with mistakes, and that is the place when you take part of my ministry, when you take something and you let the thing drop to the ground. You are out. You become the church the rest of your life, but you are out. We say, "What can I do for God?" "Make sure they have got toilet paper in the men's room." That is your job. When it comes to people, you better not screw it up. When you get to that level, you better be smart enough, in tune enough, and understand enough that there are some things that are non-negotiable, and when you are messing with somebody else's life, you better be on track with it.

Just one of these things will take a life for God, and all that God has for you, and it is gone. All of these things are just the little things. They are things that we want to hang on to that we are not willing to correct. They are not big things; they are just little things. They are little things of character flaws that we are just not going to target that we ever change about us.

IV. The Two Essential Books for Growth

If you have been saved and in this battle now for 10 or 20 years or so, you should have two books in your life that are absolutely the most precious prize possessions in your life.

9. One of them, obviously, is the Bible itself. The Bible is the anvil of which all the hammers of time have been broken. The Bible is the Book. It is the Book that tells you everything about anything and tells you everything about life on planet Earth and faith and practice.

10. The second book is one that you should have compiled yourself the day you started to get into this thing. The book that you have kept over all these years are the absolute essential things that God has taught you. If you are going to be a student, a student has to remember the lessons. You should have two books in your life that you cannot get along with in life. One of them is the Word of God. The other one is your own personal notebook.

I was coming through Proverbs last week just looking through some things, and I told you this before. If there is ever a book that I wish I could master, if there is ever a book that has more in it that I think is the most essential book in the Bible, it is the book of Proverbs. If there was one book I could commit every proverb to memory, because every proverb is something on an issue of life on a practical level. If there was one book that I could grasp, it would be this book.

Then I thought about it. You know what the book of Proverbs is? In its lowest form, common denominator, you know what the book of Proverbs is? It is nothing more than Solomon combining a book of the things that God taught him. Everybody in this room, if you have been saved five years or more, you ought to have your own book of Proverbs. You ought to have a book filled with the absolute principles of life, the lessons that you have learned as a student down through your life that you never want to forget, and you ought to go over that thing month after month after month so that you never forget those absolute principles that God gave you.

1 Kings 4:32

And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

If I was to ask some of you today what in your life was the greatest thing that God taught you that changed the direction and the understanding of your life, I wonder what some of you would say. I wonder if you would just give me the flippant answer, or you would really pull out your notebook and say, "Brother Bob, let me show you what God has given me this last year." I bet some of you have got more information on your cell phone than you have got in a book of what God has taught you. Then you wonder why you struggle in life.

To me, that is when a man of God gets his wisdom and understanding. To me, that is when he really becomes useful to God. It is not about the mistakes that we make; it is about, "Do we learn the lessons and not make the same mistake twice and profit from them?" The reason why some of you are in the same mess today as you were 10 or 20 years ago, and why some of you younger Christians will be alibiing your way around the Word of God 20 years from today, is because you will not learn what God teaches you, you will not write it down, you will not get your own book of Proverbs of the things that God has given you that you never want to forget and He has taught you.

You bring me somebody that does not understand eternal security, you bring me somebody that thinks they can lose their salvation, you know why they are that way? Because they have no record of what God has done for them. That record is found in 1 John 5:11-13.

1 John 5:11-13

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

You know the reason why I know I am saved and I am secure in my salvation? God gave me a record. Solomon had a record, the wisest man that ever lived had a record of the things that God taught him, and God gave it to you and to me that you and I might start our own record. Please do not give me this, "Well, I will just remember." God Himself, who never forgets anything, in Malachi chapter 3 wrote a book of remembrance. Where is your book of remembrance this morning?

Today I want to spend a little time and I want to help some of you get better. Be better, perfect yourself. I already know in any given crowd, in any given size, some of you are just going to go on with life and you are never going to fix the things about you that need to get fixed. I understand that. I love you anyhow. But let me let you in on something that I hold very dear to my heart. I want to share a little bit out of my number two book in the next couple of weeks. I have a book at home that has probably 300, 350 absolute things that I live by. Things that God has given me, things that God has shown me. I have things that are about life, they are about politics, they are about Christians, they are about churches, they are about the Christian life, they are about struggles, they are about pastors, they are about churches, generally about God, about salvation. Over the years, as God has shown me something, I have written it down because I never want to forget it. I wrote it down because I realized it was absolutely a life-changing essential that I had to not only know, but keep in my heart because it was part of my own book of Proverbs. If you do not have one going for you, you need to start getting one. Because wisdom and understanding does not come from just the Bible alone. You have to make the association that shows the truths that work. By the way, this is all laid out for you in 1 Corinthians 10, if anybody is paying attention.

1 Corinthians 10:11

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

From the time you get saved, from the time I got saved, class is in. That school is never out. You need to personally put these things down, and they will represent whether you have been in school or you were playing hooky. I cannot give you all these; some of you I would not give. Some of them are so special to me that I would not insult your intelligence by giving them to you because they do not mean anything to you, and they mean something to me.

Here is how I have done this over the years. Some of these things God showed me myself coming through life, my own trials, my own struggles. Some of the things I have learned from men that were my teachers. Many of these things I learned from men that I heard preaching that I only got one thing from in his message. Not that his whole message was not good, but what he gave me was so profound I could not wait to write it down because I knew that I never wanted to forget that truth. I even marked down in my book where I got them from and the day. I have

often thought someday I would like to write, put a public season in a book and put them out, but it just would not work, not today anyhow.

I want to start going through some of these today, and we will finish it up in a couple of weeks, but I want to just give you some of the great things that I have learned in life. Some of them, when you hear them, you will scratch your head and say, "What in the world is that?" These guys had depth to them. I had the privilege of being around some of the last of the Philadelphia Age preachers. They are all dead now, most of them, or they are so old that they could not preach anymore, but boy, there was some wisdom. These boys were not trained in a seminary or a college; they were trained in the backwoods of Alabama, Dothan, Alabama, Little Creek, Alabama. They were raised in the backwoods. They started preaching when they were 15 years old and did not even have a pair of shoes. They learned the real issues of life. They knew what it meant to work and preach. They knew what it meant to put a sermon together. They knew what it meant to have the fervent fire of God in your heart. They knew what it meant to have a burden. They knew what it meant to sacrifice to preach the Word of God. In their lives, and in many people's lives, they gleaned truths of God that God allowed me to glean from them.

V. Profound Lessons from Experience

I think of old Harold Seitler. Harold Seitler was a preacher down in South Carolina, a backwoods guy, one of the hottest preachers you have ever heard in your life. He lived right down the road from Bob Jones University; his church was right down the road. Bob Jones University hated him. When the new students came into Bob Jones University every year, they were supposed to go to church someplace. They were given a piece of paper of the churches they could not go to because of their stand on the King James 1611 Authorized Version. Harold's church was on the top of the list. Harold Seitler was something else. I heard him preach many times. He is dead now, long dead. I heard him tell a story one time that he went, and these guys had their whole sermon, you had to listen because their whole sermon was illustrated with truths and stories that just impacted the message they were trying to get across.

Old Harold Seitler one time, he is down there and he is preaching, he says, "You know what? I pulled into a gas station. I was on my way to preach down in Kentucky, and I pulled into a gas station about six o'clock in the morning to get some gas, get a cup of coffee before I hit the church." He said, "I was putting gas in the car there and I had a cup of coffee, and three little guys came up. They were just as dirty little guys as you ever saw in your life, filthy dirty. Just like they had been rolling in the mud." Harold looked at them, and another boy came over, and they were talking there, and Harold says, "How did you boys get so dirty so early in the morning?" And a little boy looked up and said, "Well, we went to bed that way." Harold got up and preached and said, "You know what? I bet a lot of God's people went to bed that way last night."

11. He had it. He is the one that gave my favorite quote. I have got this as number one because this is my favorite quote. It is the one that people look after the most. Harold Seitler was preaching, I was just a young guy, and I was sitting back there, and I did not get it at the time. But boy, I sure got a chance. He said, "I want to tell you folks something, and you better

listen to this. You want good advice for finding a church? You want good advice for somebody that teaches the Bible? Let me give you a great illustration, and you can take this and use it all your life." He said, "Never accept the shirt off the back of a naked man. Never accept the shirt off of a back of a naked man who wants to give you a shirt." I looked at that and I thought to myself, "What in the world has that got to do with finding a church?" Translation: Never think you can get something from somebody if he does not have it himself. That is some wisdom. That is the real wisdom. That is South Carolina, Alabama, Kentucky wisdom. Never trust a naked man who wants to give you the shirt off his back because he cannot give you anything if he does not have anything to give. He said, "That is a good piece of advice when you are looking for a church. Do not go to a church that does not preach the Bible. Do not think you are going to learn the Bible there because if he does not have the Bible himself, he cannot give it to you." He said, "Do not go to a Sunday school class where a man does not teach you the Word of God. Why? Because if he does not have the Bible himself, he will not be able to teach you anything about the Bible." That was one of the greatest practical lessons I ever learned in my life because a lot of people around want to tell you what they want to give you, and they have nothing to give. They have nothing to give.

I have never understood why people stay in dead churches. To this day, I do not. Well, I do understand, but I do not understand. I guess it is because grandpa built the bathroom or Aunt Edna bought the front pew and it has got her name on it, and you just cannot leave because you have got so many memories and it is a nice place. The church may be dead, it may be in apostasy, it may absolutely not preach anything, it may have gone completely down the tube, and you are not going to leave because grandpa built the bathroom. "Never trust a naked man who wants to give you the shirt off his back." It is one of the most phenomenal things I have ever seen in my life, how people will think they will get something from somebody that does not have anything to give them. Harold Seitler was a great guy.

12. The second thing, I learned myself. This is one of the greatest things that my wife and kids would hear this, they are so sick of hearing this, but it is so true. I have even said, and some of these you have heard me say before, I have never explained them in great detail. They are out of my book, they are out of my proverbs. They are out of the things that God has taught me. The second thing is, and you better learn this lesson, boy, because this is a good lesson: Everything in this life is a trade-off. Your life is nothing more than God gives you something to start with, and then you either trade up or you trade down. It is just that simple.

Matthew 25:16

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

Every decision you make in life, you will trade something for something else. I have seen people trade God, the life of blessing to God, for a good job. I have seen people trade their kids. I have seen people trade their wife or their husband or their families. I have seen people make some of the worst trades you could ever make in your life. I have seen them trade their millennial rewards

for money or a career. I have seen them trade everything that God had in their life because it is for some boyfriend or some girlfriend. In everything you choose to do, you trade something for it. I am telling you, everything in this life is a trade-off, an absolute trade-off. You will trade whatever God has given you, either good or bad, and you will suffer the consequences based on that trade at the judgment seat of Christ. God gives you only so much to work with. God only gives you so much ability and talent. You have to trade up or trade down. Some of you could be great Bible teachers. Some of you could be great ministers. Some of you could be great pastors. Some of you ladies could be great in your life for God. But you have already made some bad trades. Everything in life is a trade-off.

13. The third thing, I learned in 1972 by a guy named Glenn Mays. Glenn Mays was not a preacher. Glenn Mays was not a pastor. Glenn Mays is one of those guys that God puts into your life when you are a young Christian, just to keep you straight and mold you. Glenn Mays was one of the finest Christian men I ever met. He has gone home to be with the Lord now. Glenn Mays used to be a Jehovah's Witness for like 25 years. Then he got saved. Glenn Mays' whole life in ministry was built around his burden for Jehovah's Witnesses. Every Tuesday night, he would go out and he would visit Jehovah's Witnesses. I was just a young Christian then, and God had put some of these guys into my life. I remember old Glenn Mays, he took me out and he showed me some great things. He showed me some great things about dealing with cults. He showed me probably the greatest way to deal with any cult. He showed me the fast track as far as, you do not want to mess with this. He gave me the insight. He was a Jehovah's Witness for 25 years, and they are all the same. He knew everything that they were going to say before they said it. He had his own, because he knew of his own insecurities when he was one. He made this statement to me one time, and it was one of the greatest statements I ever learned. He said, "You know what, Bob?" we were driving. Every Tuesday night I went out with him for like two years. He said to me one night, we were driving down the road, we just left somebody's house, and we were talking about some things. He said, "You know what, Bob? You know what we learned tonight, Bob? We learned a great lesson." I said, "What was that, Glenn?" He says, "We learned tonight that every heresy in this life will contain an element of truth." I thought to myself, "I need to write that down." That is so true. Then he said something else right on the heels of it. He said, "What I meant to say about that is that every bad thing in this life, Bob, is a good thing twisted." I thought to myself, "That is profound." You know that is true? That thing changed my life.

I do not care where you go. Every heresy in the world, every bad teaching in the world can only exist and be forwarded because it has to have an element of truth in it. You take the Mormon church, with all the crazy things they believe, they believe that they are going to be God someday. Well, that is 1 John chapter 3. You take the Charismatics, with all the goofy stuff they believe, tongues are okay, they just got in the wrong dispensation. You take the Jehovah's Witnesses who think they are part of the 144,000. There are 144,000 in tribulation, they just are not them. There is an element of truth in every bad teaching on this planet. That is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:19:

1 Corinthians 11:19

For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

You know what the heresy does? When you know the Bible, when you know the truth, when you know the reality, the heresy produces and shows who is right. One of the things I love about the Bible, and you always want to watch for this: always be careful with a man who is teaching the Bible with a pair of scissors in his back pocket. That is another profound one you can put down, and that one is mine. Forget the naked man and his shirt; be very dubious of a man with a Bible with scissors in his back pocket. You know what he has those scissors for? To cut off all the pieces left over after he teaches you what they teach that do not fit. The one thing about what you get here, and the one thing about that Book, the way it stands, you do not have to have any scissors. That thing fits just the way it is supposed to fit with no pieces left over. You take a guy that wants to teach you the Bible, but there are a lot of strings left over that he does not know where to tie into it, so he just cuts them off.

You take the Jehovah's Witnesses and they want to teach the third part of the 144,000, but he does not want to deal with a little string dangling in Revelation 7 and 14 that says they have got to be Jews and one of the 12 tribes. What do we do? Let us just snip that off. He does not want to deal with Revelation 7 and 14 that says they have to be male and they have to be virgin. We will just snip that off. You have got to take the Bible the way it is, the way it stands, and you have got to let it make itself fit with no scissors involved. Paul says there is nothing wrong with heresy. Heresy shows you those who are approved because of what they teach.

When you get into science, when you get into science and you get into astronomy, I am telling you, you read those things. I get scientific periodicals every month, they have got to be read. Right now, whether you know it or not, right now they have found what they call exoplanets. Right now, the list is up to 450. 450 exoplanets, "exo" meaning outside our solar system, way out in other galaxies. Right now, they know of 450 planets that are revolving around distant suns. They cannot even see them. There is no telescope large enough, big enough, or powerful enough to show any disk. The reason why they know it is because they measure the gravitational wobble of that star, and they know there is some planet or planets pulling on that sun or that star, making it pull out of its orbit a little bit, just like all the planets in our solar system put a gravitational strain on the sun. In fact, when you want to get a rocket really going some speed out in outer space, you take it out there and you fly it around the moon first and you pick up some gravity, and then you slingshot that sucker. Why? Because you use the gravity force as a launch pad even after you launched it from Cape Canaveral, the Kennedys, whatever. So when you are down there, these guys take these things and they see these stars, and they are shifting, and they say the only thing that that can be is a planet or planets around that star. Right now, I was just at the grocery store last week, and I was looking through the *Sky & Telescope* magazine. On the front cover was, "Is there life on exoplanet 451?" It is the nearest, it is the greatest chance of having life on it that scientists have ever found in the last 20 years. Whoop-de-do. They have got millions of galaxies out there.

Carl Sagan said something one time before he died and got the whole thing figured out. He said, "There has to be at least 100 billion galaxies in our universe. 100 billion galaxies in our

universe." He said, "The thing that there is no intelligent civilization out there and living on some other planet, it is so stupid for us not to think that this life could not replicate itself someplace out in this vast universe with millions and billions and billions of galaxies just like our own." Carl Sagan had the concept. Carl Sagan, they see the planets, they just do not have the understanding and the truth that puts it in where it really goes. If I could say something to Carl Sagan between the flame blowing up in his face, I would say, "Pal, what you missed was Isaiah 9:6-7." If I could say something to every scientist out there that believes in the exoplanets, I would tell them this: "Hey pal, go back to Revelation 20-21. Go back to Job 38, 36. Go back to the book of Zechariah." I will tell you what, they are all out there, but they are all out there. You have got the element of truth, you just have got it in this place because you do not have the Book of Truth. Great lesson, folks: Every heresy in this life will contain an element of truth.

Isaiah 9:6-7

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Once you believe that, I love to listen to guys that are bad teachers or teaching heresy. It is like a little mental game with me. I will listen to the guy and I will follow him along very carefully. It is like a mental exercise, and I will find out every one of these guys will do this. Somebody sent me last year a tape of a guy that teaches in the book of Revelation. He taught that the great whore of Revelation 7 and 18 was the nation of Israel and Jerusalem. I listened to that tape with great intent, and I love to do that. I like to listen, and every one of them do the same thing. They will come along and then they will hit one point that they will miss, one Bible concept that they did not get. Then from that point on, it is just completely off track. The farther they go, the farther out they get. They miss one central truth, and it sends them the wrong way.

It is like the guy one time, I told you this story before. Years ago, I helped the old Pioneer Gun Club down here on Military Road, Brickyard Road down here in A-Ray Town. It used to have a really fine shooting range out there until they put the golf course up on the top of it, and yelling "fore" was not good enough for them anymore as the rounds came in. Every year before deer season, they had a "come sight in your gun" day. I was fairly active in the club back then, and they asked me if I would come out and be a range officer and help people sight in their rifles for deer season, a safety thing. I said, "Yeah, sure." So I am out there, and I get this guy comes out, and he has still got the rifle in the box. He bought a Marlin lever action 30-30, had a scope on it. He did not have any sandbags, did not have nothing. So I said, "Hey, no problem, you use mine." I went out and set him up a target about 35 yards out there, a big target. You could not miss it if you wanted to, and a big bullseye on it. I said, "Now here is what we are going to do. I want you to," and I gave him some basics. I said, "I want you to really work at putting three shots real close together. I do not care where they go on the target. What I want you to do is just count and

hold those sights at the same spot on that target every time. Give me the tightest group you can somewhere on that target, and then we will go from there." He said, "Okay." So I put three rounds in. The first one was boom, and he hit about, here is the bullseye, center of the bullseye, he hit down here. Then the second one was right down there too. And the next one was boom, right down there too. I walked in with binoculars and I said, "Okay." I looked down, he is getting up and going. I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "Oh, that is good enough to get a deer." Now let me tell you something. We are at 30 yards. At 30 yards, he was four inches out and five inches down. At 100 yards, you are going to be 20 inches out and 20 inches down. At 200 yards, you are going to be four feet out and four feet down. At 300 yards, that bull is going to come around and hit you in the back of the head. My point is this: when you are off just a little bit at 35 meters, you are off a lot at 300. You miss your first point teaching something in the Bible, you are not going to get closer to the truth, you are going to get farther from the truth. That is how you spot that stuff.

14. The next thing was taught to me by an old Kentucky preacher by the name of John Rawlings. John Rawlings came over on the Kentucky border about 1928, 1922, started a Baptist church, the first Baptist church that was in Cincinnati, Ohio. In fact, he took over, it was the first church ever in Ohio, and they changed the name to Landmark Baptist Church. John Rawlings was something else. When I met him, he was probably 65 years old, that was 30 years ago. I am sure he is dead now. But I know he pastored that church right up to the point he was about 80 years old. He was something else. Old John Rawlings was one of these guys that, boy, he told you the way it was. Sometimes he used a lot of four-letter words to get his point across. That is just the way he was, love him or leave him. But boy, he was something else. I never forget him. We had a Bible conference every year at our church back home, we had it out at camp. He was always a featured camp speaker, one of my favorite speakers. He could tell more stories that had more impact in them than anybody I ever heard in my life.

He said one time, and boy, this was a true statement. He was talking to the people and he said, "You know what folks, I want to tell you what is wrong with a lot of God's people today." He says, "Here is what you never want to do: Never put a question mark where God puts a period." I thought to myself, "Well, that is profound." You know the first time that happens in your Bible? The first time that happens in your Bible, Genesis chapter 3. The first time that happens in Genesis chapter 3, when the devil shows up with Eve. When the devil showed up with Eve, he simply says, "Yea, hath God said?" He put a question mark after it. He put a question mark where God put a period. He basically said to Eve, "Did God really mean what He said?" Then he went about changing what God said and completely deceived Eve in the whole concept. Those are the promises in the Bible, ladies and gentlemen, are simply those. They are your promises. Your lack of faith many times will put a question mark where God puts a period. Many times it will be something that you just cannot grasp or somebody will try to talk you out of. The greatest model in the Bible is what the devil did to Eve in Genesis chapter 3, when he comes out with a statement, "Yea, hath God said?" and put a question mark on it, making her doubt in her mind that God meant what He said. I can guarantee you, the devil destroyed her faith and the fact that God means what He said the way He said it. We find this carrying right over into 2 Corinthians 11:3, where the Bible says that as the devil beguiled Eve through his subtleties, he beguiled you

and I from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. You know how he takes the simple things of God and makes them complicated? It is simple. He puts a question mark where God put a period. He questions if God knew what He was talking about.

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

15. I am going to give you this last one. We are going to hold up here and we will pick them up some more next week, but this is probably one of the greatest things you will ever learn. I got this from a pastor of the Cleveland Baptist Church. His name was Roy Thompson. Roy Thompson was one of the greatest preachers I ever heard in my life. He preached a message one night on Zacchaeus that I never have gotten over. In fact, it was in 1972. I still have the original cassette tape of 1972. I am afraid to play it, that it will break the tape after so many years now. But he preached one of the greatest messages. I stole that message, cleaned it up, and used it. I preached that message more places than I can remember. It was one of the greatest messages that I have ever heard in my life and changed my whole outlook about preaching. When I told some of you guys about listening to great preachers, boy, Roy Thompson was a great one. He was a great preacher in many, many ways.

He said something one time all the way back in 1973, and I have carried this on in my life ever since, and you have heard me say this many, many times, but I am telling you now, this is in my book. He was talking about God one night, and he was talking about the great attributes of God. He was talking about the great attribute of God that God not only can forgive us of our sin, but God can forget our sin. He said that night, "Many people think that that is not true for people, human beings. Because God has the ability to forget, and we do not have the ability to forget, that we can forgive like God, but we cannot forget like God." He said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I want to give you a great lesson and a great statement. If you can learn to forgive what someone has done for you, then you can learn to forget what they have done to you. But if you cannot forgive what they have done for you, you cannot forget it."

I thought to myself, man, he said the greatest attribute that Christ had was His ability to forgive. The second greatest attribute that He had was not only to forgive but was then to forget. Some of God's people have a tough time with that. You realize that we have all done terrible things before we got saved, some have done terrible things after we got saved. When you take Him to Christ, get on your knees and plead the blood and ask God to forgive you, either as a sinner or as a saved man over in 1 John chapter 1, God not only forgives you, He forgets you.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Some of you have a tough time with that. I have met Christians all my life that carried all their life, "I am worried about what they did before they got saved or after they got saved," that God forgot about a long time ago. They are always walking around waiting for God to stomp on them.

Something will go bad in their life, and they will say, "Well, that is God getting back at me because I did this so many years ago." I feel sorry for those people. What are you going to do? I have sat down with them and I said, "You know what, it is under the blood, it is under the blood." And they said, "Oh, I know, I know what it is, I know what it is, but oh, I just, I am so fret over this and I did this so many years ago, I did that back then." I had one lady one time years ago, and she just could not get past some things. She was probably the most forgiven person I ever met in my life. She just could not see it.

I thought to myself one time, and I said, when I found out I was fed up with her, I said, "Doris, you know what it is going to be like at the judgment seat of Christ?" She goes, "Oh, Brother Bob," she says, "I know, I know God is going to whack me good." I said, "Yeah, let me tell you how it is going to go because I want you to understand, you are so worried about this, I want you to grasp this. This is how it is going to go when you, Doris, get to the judgment seat of Christ and stand before God." She was literally trembling. I said, "Here is what you are going to do. You are going to walk up to the Lord, and you are going to get there early because you want to see Him alone because you do not want anybody else to know all the deep dark things that you did that you have confided in me that I have never told anybody, but God knows. You are going to go up there and you are going to stand and you are going to say, 'Lord, Lord.'" The Lord is going to look down and say, "Well, hi Doris, how are you today?" She says, "Oh, I am not very good." He is going to say, "Well, what is the matter? We are up in Heaven now, we are having a good time. We are just getting ready to have the marriage supper. Look at those tables." She says, "Oh Lord, I do not know that I can go to that." He says, "Why, do not you like Heaven? What is the matter?" She says, "Well, Lord, I have got to tell you some things." And He says, "Tell me, all right, I have got time, tell me. Tell me, cast all your care upon Him for He cares for you, that is Me. Go ahead and tell Him it." She says, "Well, when I was 20 years old, Lord, I did that." And the Lord just looks at her. She says, "And Lord, when I was 28, I did this." The Lord just looks at her. She says, "And Lord, when I was 32 years old, I got into this and I did this and I did that." She says, "I just know, I have just disappointed You so much. I have tried that. I have asked 1,000 times for You to forgive me." And the Lord just looking at her like this. She is just waiting, and she says, "Lord, I just had to get it off my chest. When the rapture took place, the first thing I wanted to do is get over here and tell You. I am so..." And the Lord looked at her and said, "You know what, Doris? Hmm, I had forgotten all those things. I had forgotten all those things."

You see, if you can learn to forgive, you can forget. God did. You cannot tell me that you can learn how to forgive like God, but not learn how to forget the wrong that somebody did to you.

Now do not take this wrong, but I hope everybody in here at some point in your life gets whacked really good. I do, I really do. I really do, it is good for you. I think everybody should get it in the neck, at least once. We live in such a shallow world. You have these telephone calls, you call up and get your blessing for the day. You get some soupy, perfect on the other side that says, "This is the day," you are dialing up. "Hello, this is the day the Lord hath made. Let us be glad and rejoice. Take this with you today." Click. See, that is not reality. Should we get into the building, we are going to put in a set of phone banks, we are going to have our own call up. You are going to dial up, and it is going to say, "Hi, this is Bob, you are going to get it in the neck

today, and you better enjoy it, and you can either endure your salvation or you can enjoy your salvation." Click. That is reality. I hear the atheist has got one now, you call up and nobody answers. Ha ha ha.

If you can learn to forgive like God, you can learn to forget like God. It is an attribute of God. He not only forgives, He has the ability to forget. In ministry, people are going to do you wrong. In life, people are going to do you wrong. On the cross of Calvary, they did Him wrong. What did He say? "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." I guarantee you, the people in life, either saved or unsaved, they try to hurt you, they try to damage you, or you think you did something terrible in your life, or betrayed you, or whatever. I need to tell you, every Christian should get it at least one time. You have got to get blindsided by somebody you love. You have got to be betrayed by somebody you think was faithful. You have got to be forsaken by somebody you thought they would stand with you. You have got to be used, you have got to be abused. You have got to be taken just one time and thrown under the bus. So you can stand up and give God the glory and say, "You know what, God, if You on the cross who got used and abused could forgive them and forget it because they knew not what they did, bless God, I am going to do it too."

Forgiveness in your life is the thing that will keep you from ever being used of God because when you cannot forgive others, God ceases to forgive you. You better grasp that truth. You better grasp it. You cannot forgive people in your life, God stopped forgiving you.

You say, "Well, how do you do that? How do you do it?" The greatest example in the Bible is Genesis chapter 50, in the life of Joseph. Here is a man who was just like Christ. He did absolutely nothing in life that was wrong. His only crime against him was that he was his father's favorite. If you get it in the neck because you are the father's favorite, that is a pretty good deal to get it for. I can think of a lot of other ways you could get it in the neck. If you pay the price because God loves you and looks at you and you are doing what is right for Him, then that is a good thing. You have got to understand that whatever you do for God, if you really do it, there is going to come opposition. There is always going to be a price to pay.

Poor Joseph, they took him out. "We are going to kill him," threw him down in a hole. Then some Midianites came along, and they took him out and they sold him into slavery. He went back and told his father, "Some animal killed him," got his coat in blood to prove the point. While they are sitting around thinking they got rid of their problem, he is down there in Egypt, and God is forging for him where He wants him to go. Then, about 20 years later, payback time. The tables were reversed. During that time, he was put now where he is elevated to a great spot in the kingdom, number two. Now his brethren are coming to him. It is like in Star Trek, "Revenge is a dish best served cold." Now here they come in, Joseph is on the throne. Now, payback time. "Oh, you did to me, you did this, you did that. Now I am in charge, you have no food, and you are in my kingdom and standing before me, and you do not even know it." You know what he said? After all he had been through, he said, "Hey guys, do not worry, it is all right. It is okay," he said, "God showed me. You meant it for my evil, but God meant it for my good. It is okay." He learned to forgive and he learned to forget.

When you get your heart where God wants you to be and you get to be like Him, you realize that people in this life are going to hurt you, people in this life are going to betray you. People in this life are going to sell you out, and they are going to stick it to you, and they are going to give it to you, and they are going to do everything they can to you, and it just comes with the territory. The bottom line is this: they mean it for your evil, but God will always mean it for your good. If you can grasp that, when somebody does something, you do not take it personal. One of the greatest verses is found in Ephesians 4:32, where it says:

Ephesians 4:32

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

If God can forgive you and me for all the wickedness we have done to Him before and after we are saved, who are you and I to hold a grudge against somebody else? You have got to recognize that not only forgiveness but forgetting is the key. You will carry that around. I know people that cannot serve God. I know people that have been out of the service for God and have not gotten one thing done for God in 20 years, and it is all because something happened to them 20 some years ago that they just never got over. It never takes a big thing. It is just some little thing, some little stupid thing that you are unwilling to deal with in your life, that you are not willing to put depth in your life, that you go beyond the surface, that the roots of you in God and the Word of God go down deep. But it has to start with you not only having the number one book in your life, the Word of God, but the number two book in your life is your book of Proverbs, your book of wisdom, of the things that God has shown you and given you that you hold and cherish just as much as you do the things that are in that Bible because they are all connected.

That is what will take you from a one-dimensional Christian and make you multi-dimensional. That is what will give you the ability to have the discernment, the discretion. That is what will take you and let you go beyond where the ordinary person goes because ordinary things that mess up ordinary people do not mess you up because you are not ordinary anymore. It is the difference between living in the natural and living in the supernatural. It is the difference between walking behind God and walking with God. It is the difference between making that Bible into your life, everything that you live by, and just a coffee table ornament that just badges you as a Christian.

There are some great lessons in life. I have been very fortunate. I am dumb enough to believe what God says at face value. I have two great qualities: I am dumb enough just to believe that Book, but I am smart enough to write down what He shows me in it. That is where it needs to be. I have got some great ones. In the next couple of weeks, some of you guys that want to pastor sometime, I am going to walk you through the things God has taught me about pastoring. I am going to show you things that one thing that God gave me that I learned from this guy or this guy, or maybe my own self. I just write them down in that book. I will go over it two or three times a year and just never, never, never forget the great lessons that God has taught me and given me.