

I. Introduction to Great Truths for Ministry

I have 400 different concepts, things that God has shown me over my life that really set me in a different direction. They were things that helped me really refocus. Many of those things, at the time that I got them, it's one of those things, and I know some of you understand what I'm saying about this. You have a lot of things going on in your life that God is showing you, but you are dismissing like one piece of the puzzle. Then somebody will say something, and that whole puzzle will just come into focus for you. It is things like that that are in my own book, and I go through this book a couple of times a year. I never want to forget the great truths I live by. I try to live by all of them. Some of them I found you use in different situations. Some of them I found that they really set the whole, or should set, the basis for our lives.

We have talked about, I think we had two weeks of it, and I want to talk about some more great truths. In the last couple of weeks, we have been talking about the ones that really affect us as far as ministering the Word of God. I know I need to preface what I am about to say by this: Nowhere in the Bible do you hear me talk all the time about guys in growls that minister. I know that a lot of you are young Christians, and to you, you are not at that point in your life yet. But let me just say this: When I am saying that, I am not necessarily talking about a select group, because I believe that nowhere in the Word of God does God ever acknowledge a child of God that does not minister the Word of God to someone else.

I think the fundamental, basic concept of your life as a Christian is to reproduce yourself in somebody else. I believe that with all of my heart. I think that you coming to the point in your life where you take what somebody has given you and you reproduce that now in the life of somebody else is where it all begins. That ought to be one of the goals in your life. I do not know anywhere in the Word of God where God ever acknowledges a Christian that is not involved in ministering the Word of God to somebody else.

A number of years ago, this has been quite a while ago, I was in New York in a Bible conference. We were sitting around after one of the services, and a bunch of us pastors were talking. One of the pastors, they were talking about their churches, as pastors are, and everybody was talking about how big their churches were and the people they had in them. One of the pastors made a statement that he had like 800 people in his church, when the truth of the matter is he had about 400 in his church. When somebody questioned him on it, he said, "Well," he says, "I have 400 that are active. You put all the inactive people to there, we got 800 in our church." That was his reasoning.

I remember in a conversation a little bit later on with a couple of pastors, and they asked me what I thought about it. I said, "Well, here's how I look at it." I said, "I can't speak for him." I said, "Here's how I look at it." I speak this today, the same concept: Most churches have two lists in their church. They have an active and they have an inactive. The active are the people who come every Sunday. The inactive are people that have come at some point in their life and do not come

anymore. So they put them on the inactive list. Most churches you are going to find today have an active and an inactive list. The active list being folks like you that come every Sunday. The inactive being people that do not come at all anymore, but we just keep them on the rolls until they die or they send in that we ask to move.

I never look at it that way. I told the guy, "I have two lists in my church. My active list is everybody who is involved in ministry. My inactive list is everybody who comes every Sunday who is not involved in ministry." I do not take it any farther than that. The Bible never acknowledges anywhere a Christian that is not involved in ministry. Obviously, some of you are not there yet. My job, your job, is to get you there. So when I make a statement like that, I am not making a statement to castigate you in any way, unless you have been around here for 10 or 12 years and you are not in ministry someplace, or since we started the church. I am talking about the fact that that ought to be a goal. That is what I want to help you with.

I want you to see today, and I know that we have some young men in here that are going to make really good pastors, and you are certainly going to make really good ministers. Maybe not all of you will pastor. But I also look in here, and I have such a burden to help you understand these great truths quicker than it took me to learn them. It took me 25 years of my life to learn what I am about to give you today. I hope it does not take you that long from today to get the truths that I am trying to give to you. I am going to give to you today probably the core of where my heart and my life and my ministry is. All of these things are important, but what I have strategically designed for you today, to the best of my human abilities, is what you better get and better learn if you are ever going to get there.

Some of you maybe just come into the church, or you are checking it out, or you have been here for six months or a year or whatever. I understand where you are at. We will get you where you want to be if you begin to do in your life what you need to do. Remember I talked about Deuteronomy 29:29, how that the Bible says the secret things belong to the Lord, but the things that He reveals unto you, they become yours. I am basically sharing with you out of my secret book the things that God has taught me. I am not preaching these, and I have a dual motive in this. There are some of you guys and gals out there that really need this. But I study it all the time, and I reread them all the time. I have to be honest with you, it is good for me to preach them to me again, because I need to hear it over and over again. Sometimes when you just read it, you lose the impact of it. I need to reinforce these things in my own heart and my own mind.

II. Review of Previous Great Truths

We talked about last time, not last week but the time before, we talked about five or so great truths. I want to just go over them again, just in mentioning, so we kind of set a kind of... we talked about the great truth that if you do not do it before, you will not do it after. Every time I try putting some new Bible study thing together to help people get the Bible, you always have people that want to jump in and get in on it. After about two or three weeks, they are gone again. You know why? That same principle: If you are not willing to study the Bible on your own before you meet with me, you are certainly not going to do it after you meet with me. I told you that the best preparation for tomorrow is what you do today. That is a great concept.

I talked about some of you guys that have the ability to preach, that the voice that the congregation hears in the pulpit must be first heard in private by the Lord, your own personal prayer life, preparation for what you do. I talked to you about the trumpet does not need to be made of silver. The sound, that alarm, that God is not looking for the perfect speaker. He is looking for any old ram's horn that God can get a sound through, no matter how bad it sounds.

Then we talked about getting to the lowest common denominator. I told you about one of the greatest sermons that I ever heard at the Brown Street Mission by Tommy Thomas. It was the defining of an unsaved man: an unsaved man being without strength, without God, without hope, without excuse. Those things are things that I learned over the years.

Today, I really want to get to the core of it. We talked about how Solomon applied his heart and how he studied. I talked about how Solomon was an observer of life. He observed the things that were around him. I think that is something as God's people we really fail to do. We fail to observe the issues of life. It is like the old Sherlock Holmes movie. If you like those kind of things, one of my favorites is one called "The Scandal in Bohemia," made back in 1936, Basil Rathbone. That is right after he beat Errol Flynn, beat him in "Robin Hood of Loxley."

Anyway, it is one of those things where Sherlock Holmes was always a guy who always got the answer when nobody else did. The whole series was about, here is a guy, when Scotland Yard could not figure it out, when all the investigators could not figure it out, Sherlock Holmes comes in and he figures it out when nobody else could. Of course, Sherlock Holmes has his trusty compadre. They all had them back in the 50s. I mean, Long Ranger had Tonto. Sherlock Holmes has Dr. Watson. They all did. One time in that movie, it is just one of those little lines that is in there that is typically Sherlock Holmes, but it is one of the greatest. When I saw it, it is one of the greatest concepts I ever learned in my life.

He says, they were dealing with a case here in this little movie, and they are sitting around. He has got the cape on with a two-flap hat with a drop-down pipe, typical Sherlock Holmes. They are all standing around trying to figure it out, and he takes the pipe out of his mouth. He is always giving great concepts in the field of what he does. He is the guy that always got the answer when nobody else does, because that is the whole theme of it. He takes his pipe out and he says, "Dr. Watson," he says, "you see, but you must learn to observe, because the two, sir, are not the same."

I thought when he said that, "Boy, there is no truer ism in life." Most of God's people go through life listening, but they never hear. Most of God's people go through life seeing, but never observing. I think one of the things that all of this taught me about studying the five wisdom books, and there is a lot in those books. We have talked about before how that the bottom line of the wisdom books is you and I getting discernment and discretion. But I think the thing that really comes out of it is that in the books Solomon writes, and obviously Job and David and the writers of Psalms, we begin to see that every one of those guys was an observer of what was going on around him. I think that is the failure today of God's people. I really do.

If there is one thing, and you hear me all the time, when we started our leadership concepts, I talked about the great, and it is one of these things, but I have said it so much I did not include it

in here, but I have used it throughout this, and that is simply that every Christian, every leader, every minister, and certainly every pastor needs to do three things. You have heard me say it a million times:

- Look around
- Look behind
- Look ahead

That amounts to observing what is going on around you.

So I want to begin today where I left off a couple of weeks ago, and I want to talk to you about some great truths. These truths are things that are absolutely absolute. They are the things in my world that absolutely will either make you or break you when it comes to the ministry. I give these to you because this church is very unique. We have a host of young men and young ladies that have the ability and time to be good ministers. Some of you are already there, but do not take too much stock in that, because it only takes one time of you making a bad choice or a bad decision, or one time, or one thing of quitting growing in your life, and all that can dissipate as fast as it came. When it comes to spirituality, relationship with God, I have learned one truth: You can lose a lot faster than it takes for you to get it. Brother, you better write that down. There is going to be a lot of sub-things in here, because there are so many things I have got packed in here.

III. Great Truth 1: He Who Angers You Controls You

Here is the first one. This is an absolute truth, and you guys and gals need to learn this. The first thing I want to talk to you about today, or the first great concept I learned from Solomon himself. In my book, I have them listed where I learned these things, and Solomon is studying the wisdom books. I learned one great truth, and it was reinforced by many, many things that I saw in life, and many things that God told me or men told me through God, and it is simply this: He who angers you controls you. That is one of the greatest basic truths of life I could ever give you when it comes to the ministry, certainly when it comes to pastoring. You understand now the difference between ministering and pastoring. Not all of you will pastor, but all of you should minister, and my job is to get you to that point. Your job is to do what I give you to help you get to that point. You can either help me with it and get there, or fight me and not get there. It is your choice. But he who angers you will control you.

There is no place for anger in the ministry. There never is. The first week we talked about one of the great truths, and you have heard me say this before, that if you can forgive, you can forget. But if you cannot learn to forgive somebody as a Christian, you might as well forget it as far as ministry is concerned. You know why that is? I will tell you why that is, because anger, uncontrolled anger, is what I call a gateway emotion. Anger leads to hatred, and you know where hatred leads? It leads to bitterness. You know where bitterness leads? It leaves you on the outside in when it comes to ministry, because it will consume you.

Anger will cloud your judgment. Anger will make you make bad choices. You are going to see it all the time. I have seen preachers, I have seen preachers that when they get up to preach, there

was something obviously in their life that was not right, because they had an anger problem. Barb, remember when we got there, the guy that played the piano real well, and every time he got up, every time they got up, this guy was one of the greatest preachers that I had the ability to be, one of the greatest preachers I ever heard. But he had a problem in his life with something or somebody or whatever, I do not know. But his anger took over, and no matter what he tried to do, no matter what he tried to say, no matter what he tried to get across, it was canceled out by his not being able to control his anger. It just canceled out everything that he did.

When you get into preaching, when you get into ministry, let me just tell you the bottom line: There is going to be a lot of things that have the ability to anger you. Why I say, and this is another great truism, you better learn in the ministry not to take it personal. That is how you deal with not getting angry or controlling your anger. And yet at the same time, anger is a God-given emotion. There are things that you should be angry about. What I find in God's people's lives, the things they ought to be angry about, they are not, and the things they should not be angry about, they are.

You know what I mean? Solomon said in Proverbs 14:29:

Proverbs 14:29

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

What a great statement, because when you are hasty in wrath, when you are hasty in your spirit toward wrath, then you are going to do dumb things. You are going to say things, you are going to say things that five minutes later you will wish you would not have said, but you will never be able to take back.

Proverbs 14:17 says:

Proverbs 14:17

He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 says:

Ecclesiastes 7:9

Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

Proverbs 16:32 says:

Proverbs 16:32

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

You know what it is saying there? Real strength in a Christian's life is not how much weight you can pump, how many you can knock the ball over the fence out there in a softball, or how you can play volleyball or basketball, or how you do the physical thing. That is not, and yet that is exactly what most young men your age, guys, think it really is. No, real strength in a Christian's

life is having his emotions under control. That in any given situation in ministry, you never lose control. That you are always in control of the circumstances, because when you get angry, when I get into debates with people like Jehovah Witnesses or whoever it can be, the first thing I try to do, if I am in a group setting, the first thing I will try to do is get them angry. The last thing they will ever get me to do is be angry.

But I am smarter than they are, and I know that they are already feeling intimidated by the fact that they do not have the Holy Spirit of God. I do. Now they may not recognize that, but I know that. I know that I am working in the power of the Spirit of God. They are working in a power of something else. So I know I already have that advantage, even though they do not recognize it. So the first thing I will do is kick them off. I will say something and make them mad, because once they get angry at me, I have won. Because the rest of the conversation, they will focus on their anger toward me and lose sight of the concept. Me, who never loses sight of it, will just take and beat them senseless. Once you have the, if you are smart, once you have the upper hand, you never let them catch you again, because it is that old thing, adding insult to injury. The more you bust them up, the angrier they get, and the more out of control they get. I have had them get up and throw things in the air and walk out. That is what I want. I want everybody to see that they cannot defend their position. They are getting mad, walk out. Here is me, Mr. Cool, calm, collected. You never lose control, never.

Anger is never an emotion that can get into your ministry, ever. Because unchecked and uncontrolled, it will lead to the ability that you cannot forgive. It leads to the ability that you hate something or somebody. It will get to the place where it becomes bitterness in your life, and when it gets to that stage, you are completely out of control. Everything you view, I do not care what it is, you cannot look at one thing that God does for you that you do not view it through your struggle of inability to forgive. You may have the brightest day in the morning, and in 15 seconds, because you have not dealt with and do not have control of your emotions, it turns into the darkest day, and the dark storms and the clouds roll in. Why? Because he who angers you controls you. You have to be smarter than the situations that you deal with. It is that simple.

Now, as I said earlier, anger is a God-given emotion. We talk about there needs to be a filtering process for your anger. I had a guy say to me a number of years ago who had a terrible anger problem, and he said, "Well, that is just the way I am." I said, "Well, I know that, but that is not the way God is, and you represent God. Now what are we going to do with that? Is that a good enough answer? That is just the way I am." We are never just to be the way we are. There needs to be a filtering process in our lives of dealing and keeping control in anger. That filtering process is the Word of God. It starts with you not taking anything personal.

If you are going to get into the ministry, and certainly, guys, if you are going to pastor, you need to get up every morning expecting you are going to get clobbered. It is like when I was in the army, they told us, "You know what, you guys, you guys are all worried about getting killed." He said, "Everybody," he said, "you are all worried about getting killed." He said, "Let me give you a bit of advice." This guy has been around for 40 years when he gave us this advice, great advice. He said, "You know what you ought to do?" He says, "Just consider yourself already dead." He said, "You are going to find when you already accept the fact that you are not going home, you

are not going to have another crash." That is all you do is you lay and sit around here worrying about your girl back home, worrying about your family, worrying about Christmas, worrying about this, worrying about that. He says, "Get rid of those things. Accept the fact you are not going home. You are already dead." When you get to that point in your life, it will be easier to deal with. It was right. You in the ministry, expect you are going to get it. You think you are something special? He hung on the cross, they clobbered Him six ways from Sunday. You are above all that? Where we are at today, he who angers you controls you.

IV. Great Truth 2: It's Never Right to Do Wrong to Get the Chance to Do Right

Then the second one, you have heard me say this before, but I have never really talked about it in the light that we want to talk about it and explain it today. It is simply this, and this one is the, I call this one the creed of the Laodicean church: It is never right to do wrong. Bob Jones Sr. said this: "It is never right to do wrong to get the chance to do right." Now you stop and think about that. That is one of the most profound statements I have ever heard in my life. It is never right to do wrong to get the chance to do right. That, my friend, is the creed of the Laodicean church. It is called Christian situation ethics, the end justifying the means, results over the truth.

There are two driving forces in this world today. You know what it is? One of them is power, and the other one is money. Those two forces are the same two forces you find impregnating themselves into Christianity and into churches and into the leadership of churches. It is power and money. In the world today, the problem in America is not who we are going to get for president. It does not matter who gets president, because the bottom line is this: It is all about you. It is not about me. You think the guys that are running for office, who are willing to spend what, 500 million dollars to get the presidency, worry whether you really have health care or not? Are you that dumb? Do you think they are really concerned about fixing the injustices in your life? Do you think they care? I mean, who in the world, who they want, they want to be the most powerful man in the world. Who in the world would spend 900 million dollars to get a job that lasts for four years that pays 300,000 dollars a year? Hello? Who would spend 10 million dollars to become a senator or a congressman for a job that pays what, 50,000 dollars a year for what, four or five years? There is only one answer to that: power, being in control.

That is what we have today. That is what churches want. That is what pastors want. They want the two driving forces that drive everything is success. Our world today is, if it is big and it is bright and it is glittery and it has all the little bells and whistles, it has got all those things, "Wow, what a great church!" We will spend, I do not know, what do we, we will spend a hundred million dollars building a complex that meets the family needs, meets the social needs. We will put in a gymnasium, we will put in a racquetball court, we will put in a restaurant, we will put in a Starbucks, we will put in this, we will put in that. The bottom line is they meet all of the social needs. They do not meet one spiritual need your family has. Because those Muslim limbs on the hillside, that is what everybody is looking for.

I have seen him in revival services, I have seen him in revival services or preaching services where the guy gives the invitation, and he is preaching, and he gives the invitation, and nobody raises their hand to get saved. You know what he does? Like we do sometimes, you say, "You know, everybody, everybody close your eyes," go through a little spiel, and he said, "Is anybody here? Just let me pray for them, anybody?" And nobody raised their hands. You know what he does? He will say, "Yes, I see that hand." Now, in his mind, he is helping you out. In his mind, he feels that if he pretends somebody rose their hand out there, that you who are on the edge will feel better now and raise your hand. You see it in Billy Graham crusades. You know what Billy Graham does? He has 5,000 personal workers, and the moment the invitation is given, those 5,000 personal workers who were planted throughout this auditorium stand up and come forward, giving the illusion that thousands are coming to Christ.

Here is my view on this: If God is not going to do it, I am not going to do it. If God does not motivate you to put your hand up, I am not helping you do it. If God does not motivate you to come forward, if the Holy Spirit of God cannot, if the power of God cannot do it, the power of man will never do it. That is where I am at. It is never right to do wrong so we can say we will get the chance to do what is right. You ever see Jesus compromising any truth so anybody would get saved? You ever see Him say, "Well, you do not have to work"? He held them to the line, and the bottom of it was this: Do what I tell you to do, or do not get saved.

We believe today that the bottom line is results. We believe today that the only thing that matters is getting people saved. Now, I am all for getting people saved, but I want to tell you that is not the bottom line with God. The bottom line with God is not whether you get saved or not, that is your choice. The bottom line with God is truth. You do not preach half-truth, you do not preach no truth, you do not preach error, and then say, "Well, we get it, so people would get saved." You get saved, and if they go to hell, it is your choice, pal, not mine. Truth will always lend itself to the result of what you want to do. The problem is today, we are not preaching the truth. We are not preaching at all. We are living in a day and age where Bible teaching has replaced Bible preaching. Why? Because we do not want to offend.

Now we are going to have a little fun today, and we are going to just find out where some of you are at. I do appreciate it. The guy said one time, he said, "Well, you know what? Preaching pleases God." He preached the message, "Preaching Pleases God." When I was done with his sermon, I thought to myself, I am glad if I talked to that guy, I am keeping both hands on my wallet, because he is a crook. Because the verse does not say preaching pleases God. The verse says the foolishness of preaching pleases God. We want to preach, we do not want to look like a fool. You know what I look like up here to anybody that is not on the same page? A fool.

I do not know how many times somebody brought somebody to church, not in this crowd, but over the years, and they come up to me before and they say, "I got my brother coming today." I say, "And what do you want me to do?" "Well, just be sensitive to the fact that he has never been here before." "Well, let him be sensitive. Let God be sensitive. I will be sensitive. He has never been here before, so I got you. Give him a double dose, is what you are telling me, right?" "Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no. He will never come back if you preach the way you preach." Hey, I have got news for you, me preaching anyway has nothing to do with him coming back. That is

the Holy Spirit of God. It is knocking him on the head. That is the device whether he comes back or not. You have got to get it straight. Never right to do wrong to get the chance to do right, never.

By the way, folks, we are all going to be ministers. You all love God, do you? All right, there are seven things in that Bible that says a Christian has to have to please God, seven of them. We will understand that. I will give you four minutes to go through them. Do not use your Bible. If you really love God, you ought to know what they are. My God, folks, do not tell me you are sitting here this morning claiming you love God when you do not even know the seven things the Bible says you need to know to love God. Nobody. Nobody. All seven distinct things that it takes to please God, seven. I already gave you one: foolishness of preaching. You are going to sit there and tell me you pleased God by your life this morning when you, and hey, I am going to say, some of you guys, do not look at me that way. You have only been coming here for about a year, it is okay. I am not talking about you. You could not know these things. But come on, you are going to tell me you meet some gal or some guy, you start to build a relationship with them, and you are going to wait till you are married 40 years before you find out what makes them happy? Well, maybe that is why it answers a lot of questions.

Simple truth is this: Preaching, well, preaching is a lifting up of the message. What it is about, the message should always be more important than the messenger. I will tell you, folks, you look across this world, across the city, wherever you want to look, I will guarantee you, and it does not make it right, it is a simple truth, the more you are willing to compromise and the more you are willing to sell that book, the bigger crowd you will get.

- Just because you have a crowd does not mean you have a church.

V. Great Truth 3: Give God What's Right, Not What's Left

The third one, I learned this from Buddy Cargill in 1988. Buddy Cargill, dead now, he would only be a Lord, good friend of mine, loved him, loved me. Buddy said to me one time, and I heard him preach this a number of times, but I wrote it down the first time I heard it, and this is my own personal life. You know what he said? He says, "As the child of God, make sure you give God what is right, not what is left."

Now you stop and analyze that for a moment. You know what? In America, we take better care of our pets than we do of God. We do. I heard a story last week of somebody was talking about on the news, and he was a great success story. He was talking about how he was growing up, that how in his family he was the youngest, and he never got anything new. How that in his family everything came down the line of hand-me-downs. He said, "You know what? I did not get my first pair of pants until I got my first job when I was 19 years old." He said, "All my life I got the hand-me-downs of what was left." He said, "I believe that that is what has driven me to my success." That was his point.

I am going to tell you something, if God could give a testimony this morning of His relationship with you, I wonder if He would say the same thing: "All my life Bob just gave me the hand-me-downs of his life. All his life Bob made sure he had everything he wanted, he did everything he

wanted to do, he got everything he wanted, and he just gave me what was left over. My whole life with Bob Alexander is just a story of hand-me-downs." I guarantee you, brother, 99% of the time, God's people, when it comes to issues in their life and dealing with God, God will always get the short end of the stick in their life.

I have seen some of you guys want to love God, do what is right with God, and I will tell you what, some sweetheart comes into your life, or some of you gals, some guys from your life, and you forget who God was. You get in a jam. First thing you do is quit reading your Bible, do not you? You get in a jam, first thing you do is quit coming to church. I had a lady tell me one time, I said, "Where have you been the last four weeks?" "Well, I have got some real problems in my life." I said, "Well, why are you not in church?" "Oh, I am too upset for that."

Let me ask you a question, what did you give God this year for Christmas? Do you know what He wants? Do you even know what He wants? You know what your kids want. You know what your husband wants. You know what your wife wants. You know what your neighbors want. You know whatever your friends want. But how many really say, "God, I know what You want, and I am going to give You this for Christmas"?

Here is another one. This is a sub one. I live on this. I gave this to somebody this week, forget who, twice this week. I do not care about giving money, but I am not, none of this has anything to do with that. But I want to say this, I get asked for all the time. I get people that get into a jam. I need to quantify everything I say today, because here is what happened. This is another great truth, and you have got to be aware of this as a preacher. When you say hard things like we are talking about today that are what I call the bedrock foundation, here is how it always works. You want to write this down, guys? You keep this in the back of your mind. Here is how it always works: The ones who should hear it never hear it, and the ones that are legitimate are the ones that take it to heart. Now, maybe that is a good thing, I do not know. But I know there are some of you in here that you got into a jam not because of your stupidity. God is trying to teach you something from it, and you will learn from it. I am not putting you in this category.

But I have people call me up and they will say, "Well, you know what? I do not know what to do. I am about to lose this, we are about to do this, I lost this, I just died, I did this, I did that." I know, and what I do not ever say it, but I want to say it, and sometimes the silence on my end is not indifference, it is I cannot say talk, because I am biting my tongue to say what I know I want to say. Let me just give you a hard rule of life, folks. You can do what you want to do with it, I do not care. I know it is true in my own life, but I will just throw this out. It is Merry Christmas. This is a stocking stuffer. If you do not put it in your stuffing, stuff it wherever you want to stuff it, I do not care.

- 90% of your income will go farther with God's blessing on it than 100% without God's blessing on it.

Take it from there.

But you see, in Christianity, it is just, it is all about us. Some of you, bless your heart, do not take this personal, I do not care, have nobody in mind. Some of you live in a better house than you

provided for God. The Bible says over there in Second Timothy that your, He lives inside you, your body is His house, and you are to furnish that. Some of you spent more time picking out the carpet in your house than you did the furnishings you put in Him to be comfortable. Some of you are living in a Taj Mahal. I am all for it. You do not see my palace. I have got three eunuchs living down the basement. I do whatever I ask them to do. I even got one trained, she will not bring the paper in. I have got them trained. I do not think they look at me as their king. I am living high on the hog.

Some of God's people, as we speak today, are living in a better house than they provided for God. They spent more time, more money on preparing the fixtures of their house than the very house God is living in. Merry Christmas. It is all about us. It is about our house, our car, our business, your girlfriend, your boyfriend. I saw driving down the road the other day a bumper sticker, "God is my co-pilot." Pulled up alongside, looked over, it was very obvious God was not the pilot. See, those little phrases are supposed to be neat. That is supposed to be semi-good. "God is my co-pilot." I just made a statement. Yeah, the statement you made is the fact that you keep Him as co-pilot, and you refuse to let Him pilot your life. That is the statement you just made.

You give God what is right, not what is left. I am telling you that is what is wrong with God's people today. They have no clue. They have no clue of what God has provided for them, and this world is so geared for every material thing. Everything that we have, we can go through our houses, all of us can say this, I say it to my shame, you ought to be saying it to your shame. All of us to go through our house and look at the time, the money, the things we put into it, and then compare that to the time when we put in building the house for God. Then we have the audacity to say, "I do not understand what is wrong."

I heard this from John Rawlings in 1972. It was in a sermon. I wish I could preach the sermon. I would not even try. I could never do it like John did. John was the pastor of Landmark Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Landmark Baptist Church was the first church in Ohio back in the 1700s, the first Baptist Church that was put together in the state of Ohio before the state was even a state. They changed the name, and after a while it became Landmark Baptist Church. He was preaching, and he was preaching on the comparison between the world and Christianity, preaching, in fact, he was preaching to pastors. Boy, this guy back then was what, I do not know, 70, 80 years old. Nobody, nobody, nobody could dress down a pastor like this guy could. He would say whatever he wanted to say, he would cuss, he did not care. I guess when you are 80 years old, you have been through all the things he has been through, you say whatever you want to say. He did not care. He told you right the way it was and stuck it right to you. He did not think twice about it, not at all.

I will tell you, he was coming down through there and he said, "You know what?" He says, "In the world, we have what we call a standard of living." He says, "Now in Christianity, you know, pastors need to know this," he says, "in Christianity, it is not about a standard of living. In the ministry, it is about a standard of life." He says, "The world looks at the standard of living, and you judge it and you make your living by what you get. But," he says, "you make your life as a by what you give." I thought to myself when I heard that, "My goodness, what a statement!" You

make your living by what you get, but you make your life by what you give. You have a standard of living that the world holds you to, and you have a standard of life that God holds you to.

The mark of a true pastor, true minister, and some of you boys someplace down the line, you better learn this one. You better learn this one. The mark of a true pastor and minister is not what you get, but it is what you give. I have a rule that I have followed all of my life, all of my life, from the day I heard this. I follow this, I live by it, I draw it, I think about it every day. There is not a person that I meet, there is not someone that God crosses my path that I do not put this in principle, and that is just something that I just have ingrained in my mind, because the old John Rawlings simply this: Whoever I meet, whoever I meet, whoever I spend time with, whatever the circumstances, I try to leave them with more than they had when I met them. It may just be an encouraging word. It just may be helping them here, helping them there. But the ministry is not about getting, the ministry is about giving.

There is something that is going on in America that is absolutely, as far as I am concerned, worse than any age epidemic that ever befalls this world. I do not know what the alcoholism rate is or the drug rate is, but these pale in comparison. We are seeing it all across this country. We are seeing the lives of young couples everywhere. We are seeing it in the family. We are seeing it everywhere. We are certainly, it is not excluded itself from Christianity. It is everywhere, absolutely everywhere. As we stand here and speak right now, the national debt of this country, the national debt of the United States of America, is just past nine trillion dollars. Nine trillion dollars. I cannot even comprehend nine trillion dollars. You know what a billion is? A billion dollars is a hundred thousand times less than a trillion. But you know how big a billion is? If you would sit down right now and count out a billion dollars, or to a number of a billion, and you would not stop 24/7, and you would count one, two, three, four up to one billion non-stop, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it would take you 32 years. Nine trillion dollars.

I heard some statistics last week. They said 80% of America were professing Christians. Now, I am going to buy that. But what a sad statement that is for a nation to have nine trillion dollars in a national deficit with 80% Christians professing to be children of God, in the light of Romans 13:8 when Paul says:

Romans 13:8

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

There lies the problem. We have got a thousand, it is an epidemic across this country of young couples that are losing their homes. "Oh, the federal government, we are going to go after the mortgages, we are going to go after the mortgage cover, we are going to go after the people that took advantage." Here, let me tell you something, if anybody takes advantage of you in anything, it is your fault, not the person that took advantage of you. But that is what is wrong with us. We buy without ever thinking we have to pay for it. It will lose us. We have got a credit card so we can put whatever we want on the credit card. We see it, we buy it, we want it. I am not sure that is what Paul meant when he said in Romans 1:14:

Romans 1:14

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

There is nothing, absolutely nothing. I dealt with a young couple this week, not a member of our church. I am getting three or four a week by other pastors calling me and saying, "I have got a situation here, I need your help. This is way over my head." I dealt with one of the sweetest couples this week that you could ever want. I wish I would have done anything in the world to have them in our church. But you know what? I am not going to compromise the guy, and he is a good guy, and he will do what he can do, but this was way over his head, and almost over my head. Here was one of the nicest couples I have met in my life, three kids, and their debt is so absolutely astounding. Absolutely astounding. I have never seen a situation where it is absolutely irreversible.

There is one reason for it: bad choices, lack of self-control, lack of discipline, lack of the simple understanding you only have so many dollars a month to spend, lacking the concept you put it on the plastic, you have got to pay for it someday at 28% interest. I have never seen a situation, and more in it, and the problem, and it is real tragic, is this: I am going to tell you right now, they will not make it. They will not make it. Two years from now, they will be divorced. Because now they are in a situation where now he has to get two jobs, she has to work. They are going to be separated from each other. They have got three little kids. He is going to spend the rest of his life in the salt mines, and he is never going to get out. You might as well have taken those two, threw their kids under a bus someplace, put them in shackles, and marched them to the slave market, because that is where they are going to be for the rest of their life, and no relationship will stand that.

I am telling you, those kind of problems, you do not think about it when you are running up the bills. You do not think about it when you say, "I just have to have that." You do not see him going to work for the rest of his life, you going to work for the rest of your life, somebody else raising your kids because you have got to pay the debt. Then down the line, compound it, you get tired, you get irritable, you start blaming each other, and you know, running the rules already, you know God is going to get the short stick in the eye. There will be no church, there will be no ministry. It will cancel you out of whatever God wants to do and sell you into the slave market.

I want to tell you, my friend, there is a standard of living. By that standard of living, we are all geared to think about everything we can get. But there is a standard of life which God judges you by, and it is not what you get, it is what you give. I am not talking about money. The mark of a true pastor or minister is what you give, not what you get. I am just going to say this to you, because I have a lot of young guys here that someday you are going to be in ministry, and you are going to have to deal with these scenarios too. As a pastor of a church or someplace down the line as you are in ministry, I am going to give you a bit of advice and a line you never want to cross. If you do not hear anything else I say, guys, you hear this, because we have been in too many churches, John, when a church was in the black until they got a pastor that did not know what he was doing, and it was upside down. Amen.

If you do not have good spending habits in your own personal life, you will never have them in the ministry. Somebody want to tell me that principle? I already gave it to you. Thank you,

ma'am. Absolutely. Somebody get her an ordination sheet. If you do not do it before, you will not do it after. It is like losing weight. We all can lose weight, but I am going to tell you what, you are going to gain some in a good way, yeah, in a good way. But here is the bottom line: You know what, and he makes millions off of our stupidity. I saw a commercial today, fat burner pills, "Send me in \$49. Take a pill today, you can eat whatever you want to eat, and it burns the fat off." That place is making a million dollars. It is like a friend of mine when I was five years old sold me smart pills. Yeah, I gave him three dollars for a little box of smart pills because I was bad in school, and after about a week I said, "I am not, I think this is a rabbit." Little round pellets. He says, "Well, what is the point? Look how much smarter you got just in the time I sold them to you."

Let me tell you something, you can go get every fad diet you want, you can spend a million dollars on every pill, you can go out and do everything you want to do, until you change your personal lifestyle, you are not changing anything. I do not care what you do, I do not care what you think, there is a reality of life. That is just the bottom line, you have got to change about you what if you want to change you. You can go get every loan in the world, you can go out, have somebody come in, and I could have taken out a checkbook and said, "Kids, you have got a debt of a million dollars, I am going to write you out a check, you are out of here debt-free, bless God, praise God from all blessings flow." You know what? They would be right back in the same situation again, because paying your bills does not fix the problem. You have got to change you. It is about stewardship, young men.

Never as a pastor, never, never, never, under any circumstances, get into a position where you take from your people. My job is to make sure when you go through tough times you have what you need, that is my job. It is not my job to take from you. My job is to be, I have another rule I follow: If I cannot pay cash for it, I do not buy it. You have got to discipline yourself. How in the world can you be a leader? How can you be a stewardship of this church when you cannot even be a steward of your own finances? Never under any circumstances take from your people. Your job is giving, not taking. Never cross the line of any circumstance if you are a leader in any church where you become financially obligated to somebody you are ministering to. My goodness, who could respect anybody's leadership when you owe them money? Who could respect anybody's leadership, "Follow me, come with me, watch me," when your own life is a disaster?

I am telling you, boys, that old principle, "Owe no man anything," is a good principle. When Paul said, "I am debtor," he was talking about to the Lord. You make your living by what you get, but you make your life by what you give. That is what is wrong with this country, nine trillion dollars in deficit. That is what is wrong with God's people: no accountability and responsibility. No, look around, look behind, look ahead. Buy it today, who cares how we pay for it?

VI. Great Truth 4: You Cannot Fake True Spirituality

I will tell you the next one. This is my own. I learned this by 30 some years of watching people, and it is simply this: You cannot fake true spirituality. You cannot.

1 Corinthians 8:3

But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

Love always identifies yourself with the object. You cannot fake true spirituality. You just cannot. There are seven attributes of spirituality in the Bible. Another little test, who wants to stand up, tell me what they are? Seven clear attributes, seven clear attributes of your spirituality in the Bible, which are the foundation of your spirituality, seven of them. I am waiting. Come on, Mr. Spiritual. Come on, pastor. Come on, deacon. Mr. Spiritual, Miss Spiritual, seven of them. Show me. You probably do not even know what they are yet in your life. I see God already building in some of your lives. I see God already building in some of your life these things. You do not even see it. You have it. God is going to develop it. It is coming along. But please, please, please, please, please deceive yourself.

I had another old saying I would, I would give anything in the world to tell you this morning. My grandmother gave me this one. I am not going to. So that panic look on your face. I have a saying my grandmother used to say that is the greatest saying in the whole world, but unfortunately, I cannot tell you what it is today because it is just not proper. But it is the truest statement I have ever heard in my life, and I use it under my breath all the time. It is in my book, but it is written in code. You cannot fake true spirituality. You cannot. You cannot say, "I am a Christian," and not have the characteristics of Christianity in your life. You cannot say one thing and then do something else. You have got to stay consistent with the whole thing.

VII. Great Truth 5: Four Kinds of People in Any Church

I will give you the sixth one. Old Dallas Billington said this in 1971. Pastors, you want to learn this, this is the truth. I heard this in 1971, 1972, long before I was ever a pastor, and I put it through the test for over 30 years, and it is absolutely true. Old Dallas Billington came across in the early 1900s from Kentucky up through the Bible Belt, came to Akron, Ohio, built the Akron Baptist Temple, one of the strongest, most powerful, dynamic churches by the time it got into the 60s. He was running 10,000. If you ever get this book, you want a book on eBay to buy, it is probably worth 20 cents. If you ever want to get a book that every Christian ought to read, you probably get it for nothing, they probably pay you to take it. It is a book called "God is Real" by Dallas Billington. One of the greatest books I have ever read in my life. One of the greatest books. You talk about studying a great preacher, he was one.

He taught me, he said that there are four kinds of people that make up any church. This is so true. This is so true. You know what? When it comes down the line, guys, that you are pastoring a church, when it comes down the line that you are in ministry someplace, this is something that is invaluable. It is something you put in the back of your mind. I am sure Roy, you have learned this already. I am sure when I say it, you are going to know what I am saying about, even though you may not put it in saying, you have been there. You know what I am talking about. It is so, and he said it, and he said there are in any church, I do not care where it is, four kinds of people make up any church:

1. The people who make things happen. I mean, they are in there, and boy, the electricity is flying when they are doing what God wants them to do. They make it happen.
2. Then you have people who just watch what is happening.
3. Then you have people who have no clue what is happening.
4. Then you have people, the fourth group, who just stick around and just complain about what is happening.

Am I telling the truth? You know it, right? All the way, brother. You betcha, you betcha. Four kinds of people. I have never seen it fail. Now, the only good thing about this is this church is high on the number one side and low on the rest. That is a good thing. But you have people who make things happen, people who watch what is happening, people who have no clue what is happening, and people who complain about what is happening. That is so true. That is getting it down to the lowest common denominator.

VIII. Great Truth 6: Eight Qualities of a Good Pastor/Minister

The last thing, it is going to take us a little while, we have plenty of time, and boys, listen to what I am about to give you. I do not know if anything, any advice that anybody has ever given me about the ministry or pastoring, has been more valuable than what Mel Shabaka gave me back in 1973. I do not know of anything I have used more, relied on more, taught me more, and I want to give it to you. I have never given anybody this, but it is absolutely necessary for some of you.

He told me years and years ago, "Bob, God has got His hand on your life. I have watched Him grow in your life. He is going to use you, and I have no doubt in my mind, Bob, that God is going to take you from here and use you someplace in people's lives. So I am going to give you this, and I never want you to forget this, son." He says, "The day you forget it is the day you will cease to be an effective minister." He said, "I am going to tell you eight things that you need to be to be a good pastor. I am going to give you eight things that I learned about being a good pastor that if you take them and you learn them and you use them, you will be successful in what you do for God." I have never, never, you know what, and I know you are probably thinking the first thing I thought, "How in the world can you quantify the ministry to eight things?" But he did. To me, I give you young men this right now, every one of you, every one of you who have the ability to someday take over this church, who have the ability to someday to be the leadership of this church, I am telling you right now, you better learn these eight things. These things should grow through you as God, as the Word of God grows in you.

I have a couple of my own observations that go along with this great deal, and I have told you this before. We had a Bible study here a couple of weeks ago, and I made this statement, but every time I make the statement again, about half the crowd looks at me like you do not know what I said. I understand that, but I made this statement. I said this:

- Most good Bible doctrine does not make good preaching.

Remember me saying that, Mary? Then I said:

- Most good preaching does not make good Bible doctrine.

Now that is just one of them truisms. Now I am going to give you another one:

- Most good preachers do not make good pastors.
- Most good pastors are not good preachers.

Now that sounds like it is a tough thing to say, but I want to tell you something, all my life I found pastors who were people who were great preachers, but when it came to pastoring their church, a three-year-old could have done it better. I have seen guys that were great pastors. Dr. Harold Hanninger from Canton Baptist Temple was one of the greatest pastors I have ever met in my life. He could not preach his way out of a wet paper bag. He was so inept at preaching that his secretary would completely write out his sermons verbatim for him, transcribe them, and he would sit up there and read them, and he perfected that art very well. I am not saying he was bad to listen to. I am just saying if you like hearing sermons like you go through a drive-through and say, "I want two big cheeseburgers and a fry and a Coke," then it is fine, no dynamics. It is a true statement. This is another true statement: Very rare, I want to say it, very rare, very, very, very rare to find a man who can do both. You find a young man that can do both, you have got something. You find a young man that has the ability to take and pastor and yet preach and do both well.

I said all that to say this, I am going to give you the secret to it. There are eight things that make that happen. That just does not happen. You are not born with that. You have got it. There are eight things that you have got to work on now, because if you do not do it now, you will not do it later. I am going to give you the greatest thing that anybody ever gave me about ministry, and I hope down the line you can say it is the greatest thing anybody ever gave you, because it is.

He told me, "Bob, for you to be a really good pastor, the first thing you need to do is:"

5. Relate.

Relate to people, relate to circumstances, relate to situations. I found out at some time later the key chapter to this is 2 Corinthians 1, but we do not have time to get into that today. I will just give you that. Proverbs 27:23 says:

Proverbs 27:23

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.

As a pastor, and certainly as a minister, you have to be able to relate to people. I have known pastors who were great in the pulpit who absolutely would never see any of their congregation. You could not get an appointment with him if your life depended on it. You always got a subordinate, and sometimes you got a sub-bub-bub-bub-portnish. I have known pastors that were great preachers that hated people. I have known guys that were great pastors that hated the ministry. If you are going to really be good at pastoring and ministry, you need to learn to relate.

You need to learn how to make good, solid decisions. You need to learn how to grasp, read a situation, understand what you have got to do, and make it happen. You cannot make dumb decisions. You cannot make decisions that everybody around you just rolls their eyes up in the air and says, "Here we go again." You have got to be decisive. You have got to have it backed up

with what you know you are doing. You have got to be able to, you have got to know when you are putting too much on your people. You have got to look at and be diligent to the state of your flocks. You have got to be sensitive to them. You put them and give them a job to do, your job is to make sure you get everything and everybody out of their way that is going to slow them up. I have seen so many churches where they gave somebody something to do, and then he has to fight the red tape and the bureaucracy by himself. Pastor says, "I want to give you this." He goes to do it. Next thing he finds out, he has got to go through 10 head deacons, 14 committees, and three old lady societies. You give somebody to do, you expedite the process by which they get it done. You give them the responsibility, then you give them the authority.

You have got to make good decisions. You have got to know when to, who to use, who, where, and when not to use them. You have got to look beyond the situation and see what you really have. That is called discernment and discretion. Over the years, I have looked at some of God's people, and I actually have wondered to myself, I wonder if they ever really think anything through that they do. So many of God's people today just simply fly by the seat of their pants, and you ripped that out a long time ago. Pastors like to have the busyness of ministry, unnecessary meetings, wasting your time so they can have some kind of status symbol, walking around saying, "Look at me, I am the pastor, I am in charge." Let me tell you something, you do not become a leader just because you get a piece of paper that says you are a deacon. You try that thing, brother, and wave it in somebody's face and says, "Well, I have been around here forever, I am this around that, follow me." You are going to fall flat on your face. Leadership comes from you making good decisions. It comes from everybody looking and saying, "Follow him."

I will tell you the next thing he told me. He said, "Bob, if you want to really be a good pastor, you have got to learn to relate." But he says, "The second thing if you are a pastor needs to do to be really good and really well at it, it is not only relate, but it needs to:"

6. Educate.

Years later I was reading Ephesians 4:11 where it talks about the gifts that God gave to the church, and he said, "He gave some pastors, teachers." You know, the thing goes, you know what I saw? There was no comma between pastors and teachers. That is just a little thing, I never saw that before. There was no comma between pastors and teachers. A pastor is to be a teacher.

Now we are very fortunate to have some, what I feel anyhow, some great teachers in our church. I mean, not just because of teachers kids, but I mean in the public school system. I think, I mean from just people that I know, we have got some great, and I am sure they will probably agree with me on this, that there is a difference between being a teacher and being an educator. All good teachers are educators, but it is unfortunately not every teacher knows how to educate. If you learn how that, you know, just teach, you have got to educate. You have got to have the ability not only to teach but to educate, to help them break it down. Your style of teaching needs to be conducive to their learning, not their confusion.

I took a couple of Thursday nights ago, somebody asked a question, and it was about Genesis 3. I even forget who asked it now. I remember the last thing I said, because it was a very controversial subject that, you are really, the last thing I said, and I will say it on these issues, last

thing I said, now you do not want to go out of here and try to impress somebody with what you learned tonight, because you are going to look like an idiot. You have got to know that thing inside out, upside down. I will tell you something, a good, you never have a good teacher until you first have a good student. Good teachers come because they are, we are good students. They learn to teach through their own study habits. They learn what works for them, and then they have the unique ability to transcend into somebody else's world and help them do it. They see what people need even when the people they are teaching do not. That is education. They hear the question but understand what the person is really asking. That is educating. Teaching is getting up on a blackboard and going down through your deal. Education, educator, somebody who educates goes beyond teaching. They have the ability to actually have you remember what they will say. There are certain things to a crowd that if you are smart, if you want to make a point, you will say it in such a way that they will remember that point the rest of their life until the day they die. That is education. Everybody can teach, not everybody can educate.

Then he told me this. He says a good pastor needs to relate, he needs to educate. And a good pastor needs to:

7. Elevate.

A good pastor needs to know how to bring the best out of people. Unfortunately, with most pastors, they are so insecure, they want to beat you down. That is an unfortunate thing. Now I understand there is a process of tearing you down before you build you up. Every pastor, every teacher had to know that. Just stop for a second. Where is that found in the Bible? Oh, wait. Where is the philosophy found in the Bible that really shows you how to build people? There is one passage. Where is it? No, but no, that is fine. But thank you for having enough courage to raise your hand. Anybody else? One place in the Bible, one place in the Bible that, and this is probably maybe a little too tough for, one place in the Bible, one place in the Bible that if you, if you are a pastor and you want a philosophy for building people, elevating people, getting the best out of people.

A good pastor needs to help you see yourself as God sees you. A good pastor needs to help you see how important you are to his ministry. A good pastor does not mistake youthful stupidity and immaturity for character flaws. At the same time, he does not mistake character flaws for stupidity or Christian immaturity. Boy, there is a mouthful to study on that one. A good pastor knows how to read the signs. He knows how to identify the things that you need to work on and I need to work on. He helps build into your life and makes your weaknesses strengths because he sees them before you do. Because he relates, because he educates, he can elevate. He can see in you what nobody else sees. While other people sneer at you and laugh at you and make fun of you, he sees the value in you. While other people want to talk about you, laugh about you, and make fun of you, he sees what God is doing in you.

My job is to bring out the very best in you. My job is to take you and draw out of you the things that God sees in you. That is my job. My job is to look past your stupidity. My job is to look past your goofiness. My job is to look past your immaturity as a young Christian. My job is to look past all of those things. My job is to look past the dumb things you do and maybe the dumb

things you say and the way you do it in your infancy of Christianity, and look for the things that are in there that I can help take your weaknesses and make them strengths. I do not do you any favors by belittling you. I do not do you any favors by talking about how dumb you are or this or that. I do you favors by looking beyond. We all have our stupidity. Hang around with me for a day. You have to be able to elevate.

Now I will tell you the next thing he told me. He says a good pastor not only needs to elevate, but a good pastor needs to know how to:

8. Motivate.

You see, teaching is edification, but preaching is motivation. Motivation is the key leadership quality. Now motivation, and the key to motivation, and you are going to get some good stuff here because this is so true, the key to motivation and you being a motivator is you being self-motivated. If I am not excited about the Word of God, you are not going to be excited about it. If I come up here on Thursday night, Sunday morning, I just give you the lame old way of saying things that you detect in me that this is just my job, I am going to get you motivated about anything. Motivation comes from self-motivation.

Most pastors want to motivate by intimidation. They fall into what I call the "big me, little you" syndrome. They swagger around as being a leader in the church or pastor in the church or even a deacon in the church, and they want everybody to toe the line and know that they are in it. Let me tell you something, that is not biblical leadership. That is not motivation. That is intimidation. You lead by motivation. You motivate by inspiration. You inspire people to do better.

I have some of you young gals right now working with some younger gals in the elementary. You know why I did that? You know why I did not give somebody in their 40s or their 50s or their 30s that maybe know more about raising kids than you do? You know why I gave you? Because I look at your life right now and where you are at and your young tender age, and I see you exactly what they need. You see, they do not need my wife. They do not need a mother figure sitting down. They do not need somebody sitting down with them and being playing the mother. They do not need you to sit down and love them to be a mother. What they need is a role model of a younger, an older sister. They need somebody four or five years older than them, somebody that they can relate to, somebody they can look at and you say in their hearts, "I want to be like that girl." That is what motivation is. It is inspiring people.

Let me ask you a question, you want to know what your leadership skill is? Be honest with yourself this morning. You want to know what your leadership skills are? It is real simple. How many people in this church do you think inspire to be like you? How many people dream every night and say, "I want to be Bob Alexander"? I remember now, "I want to be Brad Pitt." Got to go get me some more of them smart pills. But that is the real test. You are in charge of something, how many people look at your life and say, "Boy, when I become a real spiritual person, I want to be just like him. I want to be just like her." Or is it, "Oh, here we go again, Mr. Big You, Little Me."

You see that is, and I will tell you something, pastors, someday when you pastor, I am going to tell you something, and I had to learn these things. I am going to tell you something about leadership: Everything, everything, everything around the world, but forget the world, in Christian, everything rises and falls on leadership. Everything in leadership rises on you being able to motivate. Everything in motivation leadership rises on you being motivated first, doing it right. You do not say one thing, do one thing, get up and preach, get up and do this, preach great sermons, and when you look at your own personal life, it is a disaster. You have got to motivate. To motivate, you have got to inspire. You do that by example.

A good pastor needs to motivate. Then I will tell you something else, and he told me this fifth thing: A good pastor not only needs to know how to educate, relate, elevate, motivate, but a good pastor needs to know how to:

9. Accelerate.

I have one goal for each of you. Most of you do not even know it. I have one goal for each and every one of you, and that is, and the tragedy is that most of you will never reach it. But I have one goal for you, and my goal is to make you better than me in ministry and pastoring.

I want to say something to you young guys, and we have got a host of young guys here that God has broken. But I want to talk to you, and I want to get real specific. Danny, my Kyles, my Joes, David, Dan, and Ray, we put you on a list. You have been around so long, you probably know better than I do anyhow. So what about Steve, my Johns? I have got more Johns around here tonight. My Union worksite John, my Jasons, my Brians, my Justins, my Mikes, Marions, my Joshs, my Jareds, my Robs, my Seans, my Harrys. I am going to tell you all something, and you better get this. I am telling you, I am just, you can do what you want to do with it, but I am telling you, 10 to 15 years from this day, if Jesus does not come, 10 to 15 years from this day right now, I will say 15 to give you a break, it really ought to be 10. 10 to 15 years at this point, boys, I am going to be very honest with you, if you do not know the Bible better than I do in 10 to 15 years, there is either something wrong with you or there is something wrong with me, and I am going to tell you right now, without even thinking about it, there is nothing wrong with me. I know how to accelerate you with the Bible. That is my job.

Now I am not pretending for a second that I know all of the Bible, but I will tell you this, it took me about 20 years to get that Bible down. I am in a constant state of learning. I am in a constant state that I never, never, never, never, never, never, I am always learning. But I am just saying in a quantified way, it probably took me 20 years to get that book down, that I know that book, when I say that, within the limitations. You know what I am talking about. If it took me 20, it is my job to find how to get it to you, to you, to have it in 10. I am going to give you five more years just because of my inability, it is not yours. But I want to tell you guys something, and I called your names out, if I missed anybody, I am sorry, but you were the guys that I am working with basically one-on-one. I am going to tell you something, I am going to tell you something, in 10 to 15 years, if you do not know that book better than me, there is something wrong with you. You have missed something someplace along the way. Something else has gotten in. Something

else has robbed you of what God wants to do for you. My job as pastor is to find out how many of you and get you the Bible faster than I got it, to accelerate you, to help you redeem the time.

Most pastors want to keep you back. They want to get the Greek and the Hebrew and dangle it over your nose, and they want to, they want to keep you from the place of ever getting there. Let me tell you something, in 10 or 15 years, you had better pass me up. David said in Psalm 119:99:

Psalms 119:99

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

Including me. I have one job, and that is to look, evaluate, understand what it took me to do, and then take the young men and the young ladies that are willing to take it, and to find a way to get it to you faster than it took me to get it. My job is to accelerate you. My job is to take it, refashion it, take the 20 years that it took for me to get it, the laborious hours of laying this out and getting this, tweaking this, studying this, and to put it into a concise package that you can get it quicker, grab it quicker. My job, that is the job of every good pastor, every good pastor. But you have got to know it first yourself.

Now this one is very important. Five, six, and the next one, seven down here, and eight all go together. Because a good pastor, the next thing needs to do is:

10. Delegate.

Philippians 4:13 says:

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

It is God's, the thing that you do for God that strengthens you. And yet at the same time, the Bible says in 2 Timothy 4:5 that you are to:

2 Timothy 4:5

But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

There are things that I look for in you. I have a whole sub-level of things that God has taught me out of that Bible over the years that define a man's character or a woman's. There are things that you see in somebody's life that you simply say, "He has got it." There are a number of things that I look for that I never tell you about. I will probably never tell you. At some point down the line, maybe a handful of you, as I pass off the scene and you have got to take the thing over, I will let out the secrets, but it will be akin to the Raiders of the Lost Ark, you know, it will be like National Treasure. There are things that God showed me that are infallible about judging a character of a young man. All of them are found in the Bible. I will give you a break. You tell me, you tell me, Mr. Pastor, you tell me, Mr. Deacon, you tell me. There is a water test in the Bible that is the absolute test of character of what a young man or a young lady is going to do with the Word of God. Where is it? I use it every day. Every day. Absolutely defines the men

from the boys. Tells me as a pastor, "He has got it, he does not." Where? Nope, nope. Well, enough of that.

He has to delegate. He has to be able to, he has to be able to deal and bring a person along and give him things to do. As far as I am concerned, there are two problems in the church today. Not this church, church overall. There are two problems. The first one is an absolute, an absolute breakdown of leadership. Nobody is willing to lead. The second problem is nobody knows how to train leaders to lead. And there is the problem. There is the problem. We have got to get men and women in this church that understand how to train leaders, not be intimidated by them. We have got to have men and women in this church who raise themselves up to understand that your job and my job is to, is to come to the point where we delegate.

I will tell you why that is, because the most important job that goes along with delegation is the next one, number seven. And that is because of the pastor, as a good pastor, if you are ever, listen to me, if you are ever going to be a good pastor, if you are ever going to be a good minister, you need to understand that a good pastor not only has to have the ability to relate, educate, elevate, motivate, accelerate, and all of those things, but he has to be able to:

11. Duplicate.

A pastor, a leader, has to look beyond to the next generation. He cannot be one-dimensional. He has to continually look around, look behind, look ahead. Somebody says, "Hey, I had a, I had a couple last week come over and see me a week before that, and he said, 'We want to help you. How can we help you in this church?'" The answer is simple: "Help me build the next generation of leaders." That is how we do it. Help me form and develop the next pastor of this church. Quit looking around and everybody is a threat. We had our shot. Now it is theirs.

If Jesus does not come in the next 25 years, what, we are not going to build anything. We are not going to look ahead. You know why the Japanese own everything in this city, in this country? You know why they own everything in America and buy it up faster than that? Because they had the ability to look behind, look around, look ahead. What America businessmen were looking at the next quarter in their business financials, the Japanese were next to look at the next quarter century. They look beyond what they had. This church has a future if Jesus does not come. I am not going to be here forever. Many of you guys are around my age. What, when I die at 75, you are going to become the pastor at 70? Come on. We have an obligation to little kids down there. We have an obligation to this church. The first job, listen to me, the first job of a good pastor, the first job of a good leader, the first thing he should do is start to build his replacement, looking to the next generation.

Most of God's people cannot see past their own insecurities. That is why I did marriage enrichment. That is why I did child training. I did child training, and some of the parents came up to me and said, "Well, you know," and some of the kids came up and said, "Well, you know, what are you going to do this all summer because I am only 17 or I am only this or I am only that, and I do not know how, I do not have any kids, I am not going to have any kids." You know what? Those very kids are now working with me with children down there who have no moms, who have no dads, who have nothing. The very information they learned is what they did. I took, you

do not have any young people in here for the most part. You know why? When they are in split two groups, they are down there doing the elementary. A while back when we turned this thing over, I said, "Take the young people in this church and give them down there now." Oh, you would have thought I divided the virgin birth. No, I had parents calling me on the phone, parents talking to me and say, "Well, I want my kid to be insured." Oh, that is real, that is real nearsighted.

Let me tell you something, you know how you become a good leader, Justin? You know how you are going to become a good leader, Beth? How are you going to become a good leader? I will tell you how you do it. You do every dirty job in this place and learn their ministry from the inside out. You start at the bottom. You get some poopy diapers on your fingers. You do, you get in there, you do the ministry from the bottom up. That is how you train leaders. You have got to look beyond. You have got to see the future. You have got to take you young men and young ladies. We have got the Bubba types, the Danny types, the Joe types. They were right in there in the midline, the Johns. Then we have got the younger guys, they are below them. Someday it is going to be on your shoulders, guys. Someday they are going to bury me, they are going to bury John Hill, they are going to bury Jimmy Snivets, they are going to bury Phil. Who then? Somebody has to stand up. We as leaders have to mold the next pastor fast, the next leadership. We are the ones. My job is to take men and women who will meet with me one-on-one, come Thursday, come Sunday, pour myself into them, get them to catch the vision, accelerate them, motivate them, duplicate them.

And then the last thing, and then I am done. A good pastor needs to relate, educate, elevate, motivate, accelerate, duplicate, and he needs to:

12. Placate.

Placate means to appease people. Now I will tell you something, this is the only job in ministry that is impossible to do: try to make everybody happy. I told Phil, we get into the new church building, what I want is, I want four or five big thermostats on the wall, and I want signs over every one of them, "Set the temperature to whatever you feel comfortable." Then I told Steve, "I do not want any of them hooked up."

Let me tell you something, guys, Romans 15:1 says:

Romans 15:1

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

We are not in this to please. I am not in this to please me. I am not in this to get anything. I am in this to give. This church pays my salary. It pays my medical expenses. You know my Blue Cross, Blue Shield, and Barb said we are going to drop her because she has got so many medical problems. You do not pay for my car, you do not pay for my house, you do not pay for my vacations. I do not have a book fund that I work out of. You do not pay for anything. You know why? Because my job is to never put myself in a position where I take from you. My job is to always be in a position to give to you, never take from you. Never take from you. I am no different than you. I have, we have been in our same house for 18 years. We will stay there. I

cannot see buying a house that we cannot afford just for the fact that we can keep up with all the other pastors in town who I do not like anyhow.

A pastor has to be many things in this regard, folks. A pastor has to be a referee. Sometimes a pastor has to be a business consultant. Sometimes he has to be a financial adviser. Sometimes they have to be an arbitrator. Sometimes they even have to be a judge. Unfortunately, sometimes he has to be the jury. Sometimes he even has to be the executor. Sometimes he has to be the counselor. Sometimes I have to be the father. Sometimes I have to be the mother. Sometimes I have to be the friend. And sometimes you have to be a nursery worker. I had a lady say to me one time, and some of you have said that, I think it is funny. This is, I think it is cute. Lady came up, she says, "When do you get to take your turn in the nursery?" Talk to me. I wanted to say, "Lady, if you think in this room here, there is not a nursery," I said, "You think you dig out a load back there when you change diapers? You ought to see some of the loads I dig out of here of somebody who has got diapers 50, 60 years old. You just roll it up and throw it in the trash can. I have got to get a bulldozer to dig some of this stuff out." Do not ever think I will trade nursery spots with you anytime, anytime. But that is the job. You see, that is the job. My job is to help young Christians, God's people in general, whoever, I do not care.

I have said a lot to the young guys today, because this is where we are at, and I told you we were going to take this time. This is where I am at. I am giving you, I am giving it to you the same way they gave it to me. What are you looking at me like somebody hurt your feelings this morning? Take it, man. Learn from it. Use it. Put it in your book. I am not saying I am the best pastor. I am not even saying I am a good pastor, but I will say this, I would not be whatever pastor I am, I would not be without the men who were willing to tell me what I needed to do. You know why some people do not like you telling them what to do? Because they have no intention of doing it. That is why.

I want so bad to tell you my grandpa's, my grandma's line. My grandma, you never have it said, "Go ahead, do it, Bobby, go ahead and do it." A couple of nights ago, had a young lady that came to Bible study who kind of got upset. Some of you were there that night, and it was kind of a situation where, you know, she, she got a little antagonistic back to me, and I could see some of your bristles stiffening on the back of your neck, and even afterward, I got about 20 phone calls throughout the whole week. But you know what? My job is to bear the infirmities of people who are weak. There is an old verse in Proverbs, it is a great verse, Proverbs 26:4-5. One of them says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." You know what the other part of the verse says? "Answer not a fool according to his folly." There are some people you slam the door on, and there are some people you do not.

I never want to get so insensitive and take anything so personal that I cannot allow somebody to attack me without attacking them back. You have got to understand that. You have got to read between the lines. I do not even look at, she was attacked. I mean, I look at it as just frustration on her part. But how many pastors would have seen that and thought a minute, "Oh, you are questioning my pastorship? I am going to stomp you like a bug." That is not what you needed. You see, we have got to bear the infirmities. We have got to come to the place where you, you help placate people. You deal with them. You understand that some of the things that God's

people get upset about are stupid stuff. Could I spend my time better? Absolutely. But you know what? Welcome to the ministry, boys. Their little stupid stuff is just as important to them as the big real stuff is important to them. I do not have the right to say, "That is not worth it," and "This is." I do not have that right as a pastor, nor do you. I do not have the right to say, "Well, you have got a real issue here, yours is dumb." Now I have said to older Christians, "That is dumb," but not a young Christian.

I have sat down and listened to people tell me their troubles and their problems when I thought to myself, "You know what? We just had a 40-minute conversation. We could have had in 10 seconds." But you know what? That is the job. Pay attention, be concerned. I may sit there in my mind and saying, "I know how to solve this a lot." It is a thing where I sit there and say, "Boy, you are so stupid, lady, for doing it." No, here is what I am thinking, "You know what? I know how to fix this a lot faster, and we do not need to have this conversation, because I could fix this a lot quicker if you just would quit talking." But you know what? That is not where you are at yet. So just talk on, sweetheart. I am here for you if that is what you need. Like I told a guy one time who just ripped me up one side and down the other. He said, "Now, what do you think of that?" I said, "You know what? I think if that is what you needed, I am here for you." That is my job. You want to get it off your chest, come to me. I will not take it personally, hold it against you.

The tragedy is, the tragedy is in every church, this is true, and this is a dying truth, most of the problems and most of the babies in the nursery come from Christians who should know better. Really. In every church I have been associated with or any pastor ever talked to, that is just the way that it is. The ones that ought to be helping solving the problems usually are the ones who caused the problems. You know what? This church is not different in that. But I am just telling you, that is the way it is. Welcome to the ministry.

A good pastor, a good leader, you have got to be able to relate. You have got to be able to educate. You have got to be able to elevate, motivate, accelerate. You have got to be able to delegate. You need to be able to duplicate. And at the end of the day, dealing with all kinds of people, you need to understand how to placate. Honestly, openly loving them, you being strong, bearing the infirmities of the weak, not to please yourself. I am not in this thing to please you or to please myself. I am in it to please God.

By the way, one last thing, and then we are done. In Romans 15, there are seven things you need to do in ministry to people. I will not embarrass you by asking again, but there are seven things. The greatest chapter in the Bible in dealing with people is the greatest book in the Bible in Christian doctrine, and in Romans 15, there are seven things that you have to be in ministry when you are dealing with people.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for all.