

I. The Christian as a Lifelong Student

The greatest thing that I have learned in my years of being with God is the fact that God has taught me that as a child of God, I have to be a student of many things. People think that if you just study the Bible, that is really all you have to do, and everything else will take care of itself. If I have learned anything, I have learned that life is a lifelong learning process. I have also learned that the faster you learn and the faster you apply what you learn, the better off you are.

It is not just in the Bible. You have to realize, as I said last week, the lessons of life that God wants to teach you are ongoing. The Bible talks about you and I perfecting ourselves in the Word of God. That perfecting obviously is not sinless perfection. There will be no way that you and I, as long as we are encased in this flesh, will ever be sinlessly perfect. But the concept of perfecting ourselves is for the work of the ministry.

I think in Christianity, the success of that is just like your job. You become a really good employee when you understand your boss's goals, the company's goals, and you understand that they have hired you to help make them successful. In business, even though you may have that, your boss may try to use you or abuse you, and many times that happens. But if you want an understanding of what makes a good employee, a good employee is someone who understands what the company's goals are. Obviously, it is to make money, to be successful.

If you have all the employees that understand that that is the company's goal, and they get on board with that and they realize that if the company becomes successful, most likely they will become successful, then you have a good mindset. Obviously, that mindset today in employees is not around much. There is no work ethic in any young people today for the most part, and everybody just wants all they can get and does not want to give everything back. If you are an employer and you hire people, you know that that is true.

It is that same concept with God. The Christian who is going to get the most done for God is going to be the Christian who understands what God wants done. You understand what God is trying to do. Just like the employee working for the employer, you understand what the company's goals are, what your part in the company is, whether it is sweeping the floor or oiling the machines or driving this or doing this or delivering this. You realize that your component of that business is what is going to make it successful. If you do not hold your end up, or somebody else does not hold their end up, the whole system breaks down. Obviously, at the same time, when everybody else holds their end up and you do not hold your end up, somebody has got to do your job.

Christianity is the same way. The real secret of success for you as a Christian is understanding what God's job is overall, what He is trying to accomplish, what He wants to get done, how you fit into that scenario, and then perfect yourself in your individual job. That is really Christianity in a nutshell.

II. The Personal Wisdom Book

I talked last week about the two most important books that should be in your life. The first one is a given, the Word of God. We will not even have to talk about that. We know. But the second one was a book that you keep, a book that you write that contains all of the things that you have learned that God has shown you that have changed your life. A lot of those things will be things that God shows you individually. A lot of it will be things that maybe you heard somebody say or you read somewhere or in a relationship with somebody, somebody taught you. Maybe I taught you some of them. Maybe you learned some of them from some of the books that you have read.

I do know this: I know that you have to make a record of those things, and it becomes your book of life, so to speak. It becomes the second most important book in your Bible because it becomes your wisdom book. It becomes a record of the things that God has showed you that have changed your outlook on all of your life, and it becomes very important.

Turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 29. I want to start there this morning. I want to give you a verse that probably means more to me on a personal level than any other verse in the Bible. This is not about salvation. This is about after you are saved. This is one of the single most important verses that if you really understand it and you grasp it, it is going to really change your whole perspective of things and certainly your perspective in life. It is one of the greatest promises in the Bible in respect to being God's student.

God wants to teach you some things about what He is doing and what He has done. You hear me say all the time, and it sounds like a very egotistical statement, and I am so used to saying it, I say it without even sometimes thinking about it. But I will say something to you either on a Sunday morning or a Thursday night or maybe on a one-on-one deal, and I will say something like this: "What I just gave you, I guarantee you there are not ten preachers in this city that know what I just gave you." Now, that sounds really egotistical, but the proof of that is this: you take what I say and take it around and shop it for a while, you will find out that is true.

God has some things that He wants you to know. We are in a business today as Christians that we do not want to know anything that God wants to give us. We do not want to take the time to build that personal, intimate relationship that God has to have with you and I before He really teaches you some things. So we go through life oblivious. We go through life and never see, and more important, never learn the lessons that God has for us. So you know what we do? We go through life making the same mistakes many times over, and each time we make a mistake or the same mistake, it compounds greater than it did before.

Deuteronomy 29:29

The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Father, we thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. I ask You to quiet our hearts, to give us our attention, Lord, that we might be able to focus on everything. There will be no distractions today, no hindrances, Lord, that would pull our attention and our hearts and our

thoughts off the central theme here of becoming more like You. We love You. Thank You for this church. Thank You for the men and women that are in it. Bless us now in all that we do and bless today. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

If you have been saved five or ten years, I always give everybody five years just to figure out what is going on. But if you have been saved five years or more, and you have been in any kind of church, you ought to have your own book. That book ought to be the things that God has taught you through His journey.

I told you last week that when you look at the books of Ecclesiastes, the book of Proverbs, the book of Song of Solomon, you have there the lessons that Solomon learned in life that he wrote down. Those are things that God taught him. We look at those books, and if you want to go on, you can take Job and Psalms. Those five books are called the wisdom books in your Bible. Those five books are different than all the other books in your Bible. Collectively, those five books are called what we know as the wisdom books.

Why? I will tell you why, because all of those books are records of the things that God has taught some of the great men in the Bible. The book of Job is a record of what God taught Job. The book of Psalms, David did not write all the Psalms, but the writers of the Psalms, and David wrote most of the Psalms, you are going to find that the book of Psalms is a record of the things that God taught these men.

When you get into Ecclesiastes and Proverbs and Song of Solomon, you find that these books are called the wisdom books because these books were somebody's personal journal. These books were not like Genesis or Deuteronomy or Exodus. They were not written to the masses. It was not a thing where God came down to Solomon and told him to write the book of Proverbs. It was not that way. Solomon, after he experienced everything in a relationship with God, then wrote down what he learned from God. That is what makes those books, as we know it, the wisdom books, and that is what makes those books so absolutely a great model for the books that you ought to be keeping.

You ought to have your own Ecclesiastes. You ought to have your own Proverbs. You ought to have your own Song of Solomon. You ought to have your own book of Job. And you ought to have your own book of Psalms. Each one of them, in particular, deals with a different aspect of your individual life. I have given you those before. We do not really have time to get into it today. But let me tell you, those five books called the wisdom books are the heart and the soul of the Bible. You take your own personal book that you have compiled, the great things that God has shown you, and add that to your own Bible, and you will have a heart and soul of God. That is how you learn to understand what God wants you to do that you can do for God, as a good employee needs to do for his boss.

I said it last week. Men and women who have depth with God. Men and women who have more than the single dimension of Christianity. Men and women who are multi-dimensional in their approach to the things of God. Every one of them, as they get knowledge and wisdom and understanding, and obviously the goal in all of this is getting discernment and discretion, they

will maintain their own book. It just does not happen. It is not something that you just fall into. It comes out of you in your own personal relationship with God, seeing the value of it.

III. Solomon's Model of Study

Have you ever taken a breakdown of Solomon's books? He says in Ecclesiastes chapter 7 verse 25, and as far as I am concerned, here is the key to Solomon's wisdom. I wish I could talk about all these guys today, but we do not have time for that. I just have to focus on this because I want to get to the next things I want to give you today.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 7:25:

Ecclesiastes 7:25

I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:

He said, "I looked at this old world. I looked at my relationship with God, and I realized there was a contract, and I wanted to be the very best for God that I could be." So he applied his heart to learn what God wanted him to learn. He said over there in Proverbs 15:28:

Proverbs 15:28

The heart of the righteous studieth to answer:

That was his outlook. He was the wisest man that ever lived, and he got that wisdom because he applied his heart to learn the things that are in this world, relate them back to God, and he studied to answer. Of course, the great verse in Proverbs 14:33 says:

Proverbs 14:33

Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding:

And of course, that is so true. I remember one time as I saw the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and really all of the wisdom books, I remember one time, it has been a number of years ago, I saw how they really impacted me. I saw that they were more than just the wisdom books. They were the books that were individual books that these men recorded down. I took a study one time, took me about eight months to break it all down. I am going to try to do it quicker than that for you this morning.

I looked at that thing and I thought to myself, I want to stop and look what Solomon studied. I wish I could take you through all of it. The Bible says he was studying and he was applying. I want to see what he studied, and then I want to see how he applied it because he wrote a book of the things that God showed him. If I am ever going to write my own book, I have to be able to understand how to study and how to apply. The model is right there in front of me. What did he study? How did he study it? And how did he apply it? And what was the end result?

I began to become overwhelmed with how that book broke down. I began to see that Solomon began to open up every door of every issue of life. I began to see that in 1000 BC, 700 years

before the great minds of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato, the great Greek culture and the great Greek Empire laid the foundation for all of the "ologies" that man was going to come up with that we have today. I found that Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes alone, if you want to discuss philosophy, if you want to discuss religion, if you want to discuss politics, if you want to discuss the issues of life, Solomon had already been there in 1000 BC.

I found over 34 philosophies, the man that formed the basis for every philosophical, political, religious concept that you find in this world outside the Bible. Philosophy is a combination of two Greek words. Philo means "to love." Sophia was the Greek goddess of wisdom. So you find philosophy, which means "to love wisdom." That is how that whole thing started back there with what we call the big three. The big three in philosophy are Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. There was another one who was called Aesop, but his writings are really hard to swallow. And there was another one named Commodius, and I will not tell you what his invention was. But it is where you can put all the writings of the other guys if you think about it.

2600 years before the great, what we call the great European minds, we call them the German rationalists. Of course, there is a whole history behind why Europe went that way. We certainly do not have time to go through that this morning. But 2500 years before guys like Kant, Nietzsche, Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Aquinas, Origen, Augustine, George Berkeley, guys like David Hume and Spinoza, Voltaire, guys like Christian Wolff, before they even had the "serp" taken out of their formula. Long before that, some 2600 years, Solomon had went through and not only dissected and explored and laid out all of the "ologies" that man had, that he had already come to the honest, open, biblical conclusion because he studied these things and he applied his heart.

When it came to philosophy, you can go through the book of Ecclesiastes and you can find:

- Cosmology
- Altruism
- Metaphysics
- Epicureanism
- Stoicism
- Existentialism
- The Inductive Method of Reasoning
- Pragmatism

You want to talk about politics? Solomon went through in the book of Ecclesiastes:

- Fascism
- Capitalism
- Communism
- Socialism

You want to talk about religion? In the book of Ecclesiastes, he went through:

- Theism
- Agnosticism

- Paganism
- Liberalism
- Fundamentalism
- Deism

He went all through it. He laid it out. You talk about the issues of life and the pleasures of life and "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." He went through:

- Hedonism
- Fatalism
- Pessimism
- The Power of Positive Thinking (Long before Robert Schuller ever thought about a Crystal Cathedral)
- Egotism
- Rationalism
- Humanism
- Skepticism

Solomon wrote down in his book of Ecclesiastes everything he learned about life. Yet, when I look at that, if you ever look at the beginning of the book of Ecclesiastes, it says "Ecclesiastes or the preacher." We are a church. The word "church" comes from a word called "ecclesia." Ecclesia comes from Ecclesiastes. He says "Ecclesiastes or the preacher." That is telling me that every church ought to have a preacher that understands what Solomon understood in the book of Ecclesiastes. Because you have got to learn these things. You have got to have somebody that holds you to a higher standard and accountability.

You give me a pastor or a preacher or any Christian who does not know these things, who does not have a book that does not have these things out. I am not talking about you running out and scribbling a few things down. I am talking about bring your book up this morning, lay it down. If you have been saved 5, 10, 15 years, let me see about 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 things in there that God, and document that God gave you and who you got them from. You will never come to the point in your life that you get to the goal, for me anyhow, the goal of Christianity. The goal of Christianity is what I said when I started, to become the best employee that God has. To understand in every facet of what God's church is supposed to be doing, what I am supposed to be doing as a pastor, and what I am supposed to be doing as an individual Christian, and then keep my life between those white lines as best as I can.

Through that you attain, to me anyhow, I cannot speak for you, what is the epitome that a Christian needs to have to accomplish that, that only comes through what I am talking about today, and that is the two things the Bible says knowledge, wisdom and understanding lead to, and that is discretion and discernment. I guarantee you, those are the two most lacking things in most of God's people's lives today: the lack of discretion and the lack of discernment. Those things will mess you up faster than in the book of Ecclesiastes from which the word "church" comes from that is also dubbed "the preacher." We are living in a world where preachers and churches have no idea of even what I am talking about today.

I do not even have the time today to get into the science aspect of it. I do not even have time today to get into the repetitive of history of it. I do not even have time today to go through the cycle of life and match them up to the 28 days of God's count. I do not even have time to get into that today. But he did the exact same thing in Proverbs. I broke this down, I saw this, I thought to myself, I want to find out how he got to be the wisest man that ever lived. Not that I am ever going to be that, but I want to be a student. For me to be an understanding, I am going to have to:

1. Find the wisest man that ever lived.
2. Find out what he studied.
3. Find out how he studied it.

That was my quest. That is still my quest. I certainly do not understand it all today. But I know this, just as the book of Ecclesiastes deals with one aspect of life, the book of Proverbs deals with another aspect. He starts out Proverbs in chapter 4 verse 23 by saying this:

Proverbs 4:23

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

He opens up those issues that you and I are going to have to face, one at a time. He deals with them in the most unique, simplistic, unbelievable, common sense way that you can have. The problem today is, and I have said this before, the problem today with common sense, that common sense is not too common anymore.

He talks about great lessons on:

- Relationships
- Friends
- Your job
- How to maintain them with people
- How to get along with your relatives
- How to get along with your enemies
- How to deal with depression
- How to deal with bipolar
- How to deal with schizophrenia
- How to deal with all of the problems that man has, your anxieties, your fears, your heartbreaks, all those things that lead to that.

He has got some of the greatest lessons on religion. You like the social drink? Do not go out and get a social drink without seeing what the wisest man that ever lived said about social drink. You do not think he had a statement on it? Oh yeah, he does. He talks about the wise and how they are foolish. He talks about how to attain wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. He has great lessons.

You like to hunt? Nothing wrong with hunting. But I would not venture outside to hunt until I found out what the wisest man in the Bible ever said about hunting. You like to have pets? I love pets. I have three, four dogs. Almost brought another one home yesterday. I love dogs. Some of

you like cats. Some of you like parakeets. Some of you like horses. Some of you like whatever. But do not ever go out and get a pet until you find out what the wisest man in the whole world ever said about being a pet owner. You do not think he covers that? You see, that is the level you need to get on this morning.

He talks about it all. Because the wisest man that ever lived, he studied those things. He studied every aspect of life. He understood that it was a lifelong study. And he wrote down what he learned. Then when he was done with religion, social drinking, deer hunting, pet friends, relationship, job relatives, then he turned his whole attention. He studied:

- Ants
- Lions
- Dogs
- Pigs
- Horse leeches
- Eagles
- Locusts
- Spiders

Long before Paul ever penned Romans chapter 1, Solomon understood that the invisible things from the creation are clearly seen and understood by the things that God made. Long before those other books were written, he knew there was a value in studying the things that God created. So he studied ants. He studied little lions or big lions. He studied dogs.

I went down through life and as I look at that, not only is there a practical side to it, but there is a great prophetic side to it. When he studied the lions, he laid out the Antichrist. When he studied dogs, he laid out people. Sam Jones, one of the greater revivalists, used to say, he wrote a sermon he used to preach on "Some Dogs I Have Known." He was talking about people. His text was Proverbs. He talks about pigs. That is a great practical application of how to pick a wife. You may laugh at that, but it is true. Horse leeches, greatest study in the Bible on the Antichrist is to study the horse leech. But who cares? Who knows? Eagles, second coming of Christ. Locusts, tribulation period. Spiders in the king's palace? I will let you figure that one out for yourself.

Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, they are the things that God taught him and showed him as he walked through life. What he did is he wrote it down in a book that we know as the Wisdom Books. Last week I let you in just a small crack on my world of my Deuteronomy 29:29. I laid some things out for you as I am going to do today and maybe next week too.

Because before we get into the first of the year and start whatever study we are going to take, I want to have some practical time with you. I want to talk to you about things that are going to prepare you for the year of the Bible. Prepare you for our time that we are really going to focus on getting some things done with some of you that want to get it done.

I want you to begin to see in this young life. A lot of you are just within that five-year parameter. Even if you have been saved longer than that, you have never really been plugged in. For you, this is an opportune time to begin your own book. This is a time when you can really find out what your determination level is. Because if you go all gung ho and go out and buy a notebook

and 56 or 70 boxes of pens, you do not want to wear them out, and you go to work and then three weeks, a month from now, you do not even know where it is at. You may not know where it is at, but you now know where you are at. That is not what I am talking about.

Today I want to talk to you, and these are out of my book of probably 400 and so odd things that I have learned over the last 35 years of my life. Some of them I learned before I was saved, some of them I learned after I got saved, some I learned before I got in ministry, a lot of them I learned after I got in ministry. I told you last week, you learn it from different places. Some of these things, and I always mark it down where I learned it. Some of these things I have learned from my own experience, good or bad. Some of these things I have read in books that changed my whole course. I am reading a book right now that is probably one of the single greatest books I have ever read in my life. It has changed my direction in thinking or reaffirmed something. It is just absolutely incredible. Some of this I heard great men preach, and they taught me, and by listening to them preach, some of them I got from my own father in the Lord, Mel Shabbatah, as he laid them out.

IV. Practical Lessons for Ministry: Preparation and Discipline

I have learned this, and this is not one of them, but it is a great truth. You have got to catalog it as one of them. I learned to be a great good minister and a good pastor. Not all of you will pastor, but you all should minister. I learned to be a good pastor and a good minister. It is a lot like being a good hunting guide. For those of you that enjoy this, we have probably one of the greatest fishing guides in the country sitting right here in our church today. Greg, I know you are very humble about it, but you know where the fish are at, do not you? Yes, you do. Everybody goes down there. They caught so many fish. One time they had to go back and get a bigger boat.

His style of fishing, my style of fishing, two different styles. He has got all them locator things, radar, sonar, and all that. My job is just go along and throw out hand grenades, and then when a fish comes up, then just scoop them up. That is the way I get more than he does. But he knows what he does. Fishing is no longer fishing. Long gone are the days of the worm in a tin can with a cane pole. No, no, you want to catch fish now, fish evolved. They have gotten smart. Now down there, you have got to know the, you have got to, I am going to probably say something that is wrong, brother. You will have to help me. But they go with water temperature, do not they? That plays a big part, does it not? And the sunlight or shade plays a big attention, does it not? Depth plays a big thing, right? And obviously, the goofy guy in the boat plays a big part in it, too.

It is the same way with hunting. The goofiest thing in the world that we will ever see is a guy who never went deer hunting before, Jared. You know what I am talking about. He never deer hunted before, goes out and buys a rifle, gets a deer tag, never scouted out the land, John. And he walks out in the field and walks up and down waiting to shoot a deer. Like, the deer is going to come up with a big sign that says, "I am a record buck, shoot me." Better yet, "Let me help you. Give me the barrel of your gun. Pull the trigger." He is going to walk all day. Everybody that

hunts deer in here, you know. You are down south, you know you hunt down. You know what you do? You have got to get in that woods, what, six months before, four months before you start looking where they rub.

How many of you could go into the woods and say, "That is a deer rub"? You have got to read the signs. You have got to read the signs. You will see guys going in the woods with two antlers. And I look at them and I said, "Man, you blew him away, did not you? All you have got to do is have his antlers." No! Oh, quit sneaking over there, Leah. Nobody is as lucky as you to shoot one out of your bedroom window. You know what you do with those antlers? You rattle them together because a buck says, "Well, there is a fight. I want to see what is going on." So you are rattling antlers. They sound like two deer going at it. Sometimes they sell that deer musk. That is a nice word for deer urine. You put it on your body because you want to smell like a deer.

When I used to hunt coyotes, I used to love to hunt coyotes. When I used to hunt coyotes, I would buy coyote urine in 20-gallon jugs. Urine will kill the smell of anything. And I would just take a little Q-tip swab and dip it down and out and put it right down on the laces of both of my boots. You could walk anywhere. Well, anywhere but in your house. But you could walk anywhere because it matched the smell. Because they smell great. No, that is not right. They smell very well. They can smell you, sniff you out. You will be out there and a deer will put his head up and he will get a whiff of you and bang, he is gone. You have got to learn those things. You have got to get you a deer stand. You have got to go out and scout where they are at. You do not just walk out and take a rifle and a deer prayed by and you say, "Yes, no, yes, no, yes, no, yes." Bang! It does not work that way.

Turkeys are another one. I went out with a guide one time from down in Warsaw who was a great turkey hunter. I loved hunting turkeys. Turkeys are a real challenge. I think even more so than deer. Though there are so many of them now, you can get them at the Holiday Inn. They just check in there. They are everywhere. But when I started hunting turkeys 25 years ago, they had just opened in Missouri. Because Missouri for years did not have a turkey season. They were an endangered species. And now you kill them on the road.

I never forget, I went out with this guy because I wanted to get a turkey. This guy was great. But we are out there and he would say to me, we were walking through the woods, we are scouting now. And he is showing me, show me how to read the signs. He would say, "That is a turkey scratch." And I said, "Okay." And I said, "Here is another one." He says, "No, that is a squirrel." "Okay." I said, "Now how do you know that is a turkey and that is a squirrel?" He said, "I will show you." He walks over here where the turkey scratch was. Kneels down, pulls this thing out, pulls up a feather. "See that there?" He says, "Squirrels do not have feathers." I know that. "That is a turkey scratch." No feathers in that one. I learned something. Next time I am out there, I see a scratch and I am looking for the feathers.

He told you what time of the day. You know that turkey droppings between a hen and a male turkey, because certain times of the year, you cannot shoot a female, you have got to shoot a male. You know that when you see turkey droppings, you can tell whether they are males or they are females by the droppings. You know that? And I said to him, he says, "Now, well, what he

says," he says, he asked me, he says, "And I am really reading this guy now because he set me up and showed me how stupid I was." And he says to me, he says, "Do you know how to tell the difference between a male turkey drop and a female turkey drop?" And I am thinking, "Oh, yeah, taste it, right?" I know where this is going. You know what they call a male turkey? They call him a Jake. And honest to goodness, when a turkey, male turkey, goes to the restroom in the woods, his droppings will be in his form of a J. Females will just be in the form of M for Mary. No, it is just straight. But am I not telling the truth, guys, or am I telling the truth? That is right. Gary knows that it is in the form of a J. So you are walking through the woods and you see some J-shaped stuff. You know that there are male turkeys there.

When he gets in there on his locator and he gets it all down, he knows where the fish is. When you go out in the woods and you will be able to read the signs of the deer, you get a deer. In the ministry, as being a minister, or some of you in time, being a pastor, you have to learn to read the signs. You have to be able to see what the situation really is, not what it appears. Do not be the bozo with the big Elmer Fudd hat and the big old double-barrel shotgun going out and looking for that wabbit. You will never get anything that way. You have got to understand what you are pursuing. You have got to understand the rules of nature. You have got to understand that every animal is different. And you have got to understand that dealing with situations are just as different in the ministry or being a pastor. You need to learn to read the signs.

I am going to talk to you today about lessons on ministry. We may get done with this today. We may not. I do not really care. We will finish it up next week. But I want to give you some absolute defining things in ministry, because some of you, many of you, male and female, are going to make, and already have made, good ministers. You have all the basic qualifications. Some of you will make good pastors. I want you to understand that these things, whether you minister or whether you pastor, you have to be able to read the signs. You have to be able to see the situation as it is, not as it appears. I want to lay out some things that I have just learned over the years. I have learned them from preachers. I have learned them from my own experience. But they are absolutely true.

The first thing I want to talk to you about is this. I learned this myself over just watching for 30 years in ministry. It simply is this: If you will not do it before, you are not going to do it after. That is a fundamental truth. Let me tell you, and this is something you take all the way across the board. Some of you gals are going to be looking for a husband. Some of you husbands are going to be looking for a wife. I had a gal ask me last week come over to see me. She said, "I want to get married someday." And she says, "What should I be doing? What should I be doing to prepare myself?" She says, "I know there are ministries in the church and there are things in the church." She says, "But if I want to be prepared for the husband that God gives me." And this would go two ways if a husband, same way. I have had a master before. She said, "If I could prepare myself right now to be the wife for the husband of God preparing me, what should I do?" "I have disciplined people. I come to Bible study. I come to Thursday night." She says, "But that is so... To me," she said, "that is such a vague thing. Give me specifics. Give me some goals. Show me exactly what I ought to be doing now as a single person and how I can prepare myself that

when I do get married, I can function the way God wants me to function." One of the greatest, most sincere questions I think I have ever been asked in many, many, many years.

My answer was very simple to her. I said, "What is the job of a Christian wife? Besides nagging and running up the credit cards and just generally causing a... What is the job of a Christian wife?" The job of a Christian wife to a Christian husband is to be a help meet. That is your job. Now, you want to know how to prepare for that? Here is how it is. You are not married yet. You are not married yet, but you are in my ministry. So what you do right now is become a help meet to me in my ministry. You do for me in my ministry right now the job of a help meet. What is a help meet? A help meet is you help me meet the demands of this ministry. You submit yourself to this church and you let yourself be a help meet to this church and to this ministry. As you grow in being a help meet, someplace along the line, God is going to give you a husband. It will be a lot easier to transfer your help meeting to me and this church to him if you are already doing it than to not do it and suddenly try to start doing it after you get married. Because it will not happen.

If you are a young man and you want to ask the same question, my advice to you is this. Do not become a help meet to this ministry, but become a leader in this ministry. Learn how to lead. Learn how to lead right. Learn how to do all the good things of leadership that a good leader needs to be. It will be a lot easier for you to transfer your spiritual leadership to a wife once you get married if you are doing it now, but it will be impossible. Young ladies and young men, do not think this is a great principle. If they do not do it before, they will not do it after. They will not. I have never in all of my life seen it happen. Never. You have got to understand that you have got to do it now. When you do it now, then you do not have to play catch up later to try to put it all together, which sometimes works and sometimes does not. But it is an absolute truth of ministry. Absolute truth of ministry. If you are not willing to do it before, you are not going to do it after. You are not going to suddenly get married and just suddenly now be the help meet to your husband. You are going to have no practice. You are not going to suddenly get married and suddenly going to become the spiritual leader when he was a bozo the day of the wedding. It is not going to happen. If he will not teach you the Bible and respect you and the laws of God in your life now, do not even kid yourself he will after you get married.

You know what you do with a guy like that? You take him out to Chief Stadium and you drop him through the goal post of life. It is a waste of your time and energy. If you get your emotions involved, you could lose everything you got, the jubilee to Christ for Joe bozo over here. If they are not willing to be to you now, what they need to be, do not think they will once you get married. It is an absolute fundamental principle that never ends. I will tell you as far as ministry and passion concern, if you are not going to minister now and grow up the right way now and work through this thing now, do not you think that someday you are just going to walk in and have part of ministry? It does not happen that way. There is a process to ministry, a process.

Ministry as preaching is something, is not something you do, but it is something that you are. It is not something you just wake up some morning and decide, "I want to preach, I want to be a minister." Go back to our first lesson on Samuel. It is not something you do, it is something you are. Ministry and preaching is an academic discipline. You must be passionate about not only what you do, but who you are doing it for. This is where passion must combine with self-

discipline. If you do not have that, you are not going to go anywhere. You will just be all over the walls and all over the boards and you will just be a mess.

You have to understand that it is all through the Bible. This is why the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:21:

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

When the Bible says in 2 Timothy 4:5:

2 Timothy 4:5

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

Paul told that to Timothy. That is why when Paul was dealing with the church at Corinth, in 2 Corinthians 2:9, and they were all screwed up, he says:

2 Corinthians 2:9

For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

You know why? Because Paul understood a great lesson. You do not do it here, you will never do it out someplace else. You do not learn to be a husband or a wife before you are married, and submit yourself to the church you are in, and be the help meet to the leader there. You will never transfer it into your own marriage. Never happen. Never happen.

A shabby personal lifestyle of undisciplined. Undisciplined in the own things you do. Undisciplined in the Word of God. Undisciplined in your finances. Undisciplined in every facet of your life, your family. Every, your personal life will produce a shabby ministry. It is just that clear. Because ministry is not, you can have a shabby lifestyle, your personal finances can be in disaster, you can have all kinds of loss of control of your kids and your family and everything else, and you can go out here and get a job at Independence Center, get a job at some factory, get a job at some place, and you can do the job pretty good. Because that job does not depend on you being anything, it just depends on you doing something. But not when it comes to the ministry. Your ministry will be nothing more than a continuance of your life, good or bad, where you are at as you go on.

Maybe you do not understand that, I understand that. When I look at you and I see undisciplined, unstructured, dysfunctional, that you cannot even be on time and do this or do that or go here or go there and be this, when I see that, when you cannot even get your own personal life together, you may be a great sweetheart gal, you may be a great guy, but right now, you have no place in ministry until you correct those things. I am doing you the greatest favor of your life, because ministry is not something you do, it is something you are.

My mom told me the next one, boy, my mom had this right. She told me that the best preparation for tomorrow is what you do today. My mom was smart in many things of her life. Of course, we know it as "never put off tomorrow what you can do today," but the way she said it was a great way, because it is so true. The best preparation for tomorrow is what you do today.

I will tell you what, two things that just absolutely drive me nuts. I have got to bite my teeth, because it was instilled in me my whole life, and I know everybody is different, but I will tell you what, these are character flaws in people, and everybody has got their character flaws. But the two things that drive me crazy are procrastination and being late. I know everybody is late, you go to church, and I am not talking about the Chiefs traffic back, I am not talking about that. I mean every place you go, you are the last one in. I mean you could not be on time, even a rapture place, we will be up in heaven, we will have to stop halfway there, we will have to wait for somebody to catch up. I mean you are late always.

I know these standard excuses, "Hey, you do not understand, we got this, we got..." Hey, I got a couple to drive up from Joplin, and here half hour before church starts. So I do not want to hear it. It is a character flaw that carries through in everything you do, and it needs to be changed. It needs to be changed. When you come to the place that you continually run 35, 40 minutes behind everything that goes on in life, there is a problem of self-discipline, self-structure, of organizational skills in your life. You cannot bring that into the ministry.

Then procrastination, "Oh hey, I heard it. Brother Bob, we are going to get into the Bible, I am going to get into the Bible, I guess I am going to have things settle down in life. Two or three months we will get through this time, and we will get things settled down in my life, and right now we got this, we got that, and I got this, or I got that, and I am going to, we are going to do it." 20 years from now, it will still be the same story if different circumstances. You know why? Because you made a fatal mistake. There are no circumstances in life that cause you from learning the Bible, it is your inability to handle the issues of life that cause that. Those are areas in your life that if you are going to pastor or you are going to minister, you better understand and grasp, because those things will put you out before you get in.

One time I saw, this was a number of years ago, I thought it was fascinating, I saw a documentation on the sinking of the Titanic. I know we have all said, "Well, man, we have all seen that," I know, but not like this one. This was one of the most, I wish I would have taped it. It actually went back and showed, after the fact, it showed the iceberg that the Titanic hit, and the iceberg had all the gray paint and red paint off the bottom of the ship, scraped along the side. They actually went back and photographed the iceberg that it hit. Most people think of icebergs. When I saw the picture, I saw it to myself, "How in the world could that iceberg, which probably was not much bigger than this section and that section of room, how in the world could that iceberg destroy that big ship?" And then as it went on, I found out, because they told you then, that with icebergs, only one quarter of the iceberg is above the surface, three quarters of the iceberg is below the surface. They did not hit an iceberg about the size of this room, they hit an iceberg about the size of Missouri.

I am telling you something, the little thing that you see cropping up in your life, I do not know how you deal with them, but let me tell you about somebody who studied life for 20, 30 years and seen every example and every scenario in life. It is only a symptom of the rest of the iceberg that is underneath the surface that nobody sees. You need to be willing to deal with it, if you are ever going to get to the place where God wants you to be. I am here to help you. These are things that I have learned. These are in my book. These are things that I had to put in my own life. I am not just going someplace on the Internet and getting these so I can whack you. These are things that I had to deal with in my life. Are you any better than me? I would not have had to get on the Internet anyhow.

V. Practical Lessons for Ministry: The Voice of the Pulpit

The next thing I heard, came from a guy by the name of Fred Brown in 1973. Fred Brown was an evangelist. I still remember him teaching the book of Romans, one of the greatest Bible expositors I have ever met in my life. He said one time, he was talking to pastors at a pastor's conference. He said, "You know what, pastors?" He says, "A voice that a congregation hears in the pulpit must be a voice that God has already heard in private." What a statement. What a statement. The ministry and preaching is only an outward quantity of an inward quality. That is all it is. Your ministry and some of you guys that preach, your preaching, your ministry is only an outward quantity of the inward quality that is already in you. You learn to minister and learn to preach not by getting up and preaching sermons. You learn by studying preachers and you learn by getting on your knees before God and committing what you are about to preach.

I added some things to old Fred Brown over the years, and I am the kind of guy that I will take something that is really good and I will cut it down and make it to me and make it a bit toward me. I studied that thing out in my own personal life. I have four things that I follow in my preaching and my ministry. I am going to give them to you based on what Fred gave to me. "A voice that a congregation hears in the pulpit must be a voice that God hears already, has already heard in private." In other words, your prayer life. You are taking what you do before God.

You know why some of you do not get anything out of the Bible? Because you spend no time studying and asking God in prayer before you read your Bible. You spend no time at all. Let us face it, you only got 15 minutes to give God anyhow, you do not want to waste two or three minutes of it praying. That kind of foolish thinking gets you absolutely nothing from God. It is the same way in your preaching. When you get up, and I know that you are nervous and I know that this and that, but let me tell you something, there are certain qualities that you look for in a guy when he is preaching that sometimes I walk away and I just scratch my head and I said, "What planet was he from tonight?"

The first thing here is you must:

4. Prepare prayerfully. There is no power of God in your life outwardly until you have the character of God in your life inwardly. So you have to prepare prayerfully. You have to have a constant running conversation with God.

5. Prepare purposely. You have to have a reason for what you are doing. You have to read the signs. Know your crowd. You would not go to a funeral and preach a message you would preach at a wedding, would you? You have to understand that every crowd is different. The message, getting the right purpose behind the message will deal with the purpose of your prayerfully laying out before God.
6. Prepare positively. Never tear somebody down in preaching without lifting them back up before you are done. That is a hard one because we think preaching is getting in a pulpit and just yelling and screaming and mimicking somebody that you have seen or even me and getting up and just, you watch my preaching and listening to my preaching, I will never, never drop the A-bomb without sending in a radiation crew to clean up the mess afterwards.
7. Prepare precisely. You have to know and understand what you are saying. I told you Thursday night at the end of our great Bible study, do not go out and try to do this. Do not go out and try to take what I just gave you tonight and try to give it to somebody else. You know why? Because it will only reveal, one, how little you really know about the Bible, how stupid you really are to try it, and how foolish you are to everybody going to walk away and you are going to do much more damage than you do good. Why? Because you are not particular about what you do. You are not preparing particularly. You are not looking at the details. You just want a broad concept so you can go out and hit somebody with a club. You know what a rifle with a telescopic sight, you want a shotgun where you can just go in and blast everybody in a room. Oh, you are great at telling everybody what you think you know, but put down on the spot, you look like an idiot.

How many times do I see that so many times? Because you do not prepare. You do not prepare prayerfully. You have not prayed over your Bible and God. You do not prepare purposely. You do not prepare positively. And you do not prepare precisely. That is your problem. You are not precise. You learn that Bible precise. Know what you believe. Understand it. Read the signs. It is a lifelong process. But you have got to start keeping a record. This is about the Bible. It is about the Bible and learning what you learn, putting it down in a book so you can relate the two back and forth. That is the key. Those are great things.

VI. Practical Lessons for Ministry: Breaking Down Truth

Then a guy in 1972, and he was one of my favorite preachers, he is long dead now. His name was R.G. Lee. R.G. Lee was a great guy and I really enjoyed him. He was one of the guys that I thought was just an incredible, incredible, incredible preacher. He was from the south out of the Bible Belt, one of the last of the great Philadelphian preachers. He was an incredible guy. He could turn it on and turn it off just like nobody ever saw. He was the perfect son. Kind of looked like Colonel Sanders. He always wore the white suit with a little string tie. He is from the south down there. He had white hair. I will tell you what, on one hand he could be the most perfect, shuddering gentleman you ever saw in life. And on the other hand he could be like a fire axe coming after you, cutting off every leg and arm you got. Incredible guy. I have heard him preach probably eight or nine times in my life, and it was not a time that I did not learn something from him and I did not write it down. This is one of probably 20 or 30 things I got.

He said one time, and it is really, when I was a young man, I struggled with what God wanted me to do. I told you that when we came through Samuel. I struggled with that. I really looked at what God wanted me to do because I was right where many of you were at. It was guys like this and the things that they said that, because I doubted my own abilities, I did not have what I thought was a good preaching voice. And I was not eloquent like I saw many of these guys be. He said something one time that just really changed my whole outlook. In 1972, he said, "A trumpet does not need to be made of silver to sound an alarm. Any old ram's horn will do." Then he went back to the book of Judges and he showed that how, that when God called the nation of Israel together, when God called the nation of Israel to war, when God in the book of Judges wanted to destroy the enemies, he did not call on silver trumpets. He got a bunch of guys with old ram horns. Those old ram horns sounded about as out of tune and sounded about as ungodly as anything you heard in your life. But everybody understood the sound. And everybody knew when the old ram's horn blew, brother, that there was an alarm to go to war.

If God has called you to preach and put down in your heart that He wants to use you, let me tell you something. You do not need all of this flowery stuff that everybody says you have got to have today. You do not need that stuff. We talked about it the other night when we got into 2 Corinthians 11 and Genesis 3 and Genesis 4. I told you that this whole concept today of Christianity, the whole concept today of Christianity is built around the God of education. The whole concept is not about who you know but what you know. The whole concept is that getting higher education will always be what you need. And yet, to this the reverse.

The other night on the Republican debates, Marion called me and said, "You have got to see this." They had in the Republican debates, they had a deal where they had people that they had flew in and they actually brought them on the screen and they got to ask the question. They were asking about everything. The one kid they brought on the screen, I missed it, Mikey found it on the internet and I listened to it there, but he opened up and he said, he said, "I want to ask you gentlemen a question." He says, "This is a defining question." He says, "What is your opinion of this book?" And then he said, but before he answered that, he says, "I am talking about this book." And he had a King James 1611 there. Right on national TV. The next day and all that night, they played those guys, there were like 20 of them, they played them over and over and analyzed them. It was on abortion, it was on this, it was on the war, it was on everything in the world. They played those guys for the next day and the rest of that night, they played it over and over and over and over, every one of them except the guy with the King James Bible. Every one of those guys and one of them being boasted, he had a degree in theology. Every one of them said, "Well, I believe the Bible is the word of God in part. Yeah, I believe it is absolute truth in part. But I leave a lot of parts in there that we get to make up for ourselves what we want to do." Allegorical is the word they use. Allegorical means they do not mean nothing, make it whatever you want to make it. Every one of them, you know why? Because that is what education does for you.

Bob Jones used to sing, he used to say, and this is not one of them, but it is a good one. He used to say, "Education without salvation is damnation." And boy, that is a truth. That is a truth. You need to understand that when God, I mean, you need to understand that, and this is something

that you, this next statement, you just get this and do not get nothing else I said today, you are going to go out of here a lot richer. Because listen to me, ministry and preaching is not based on your IQ, it is not based on your degree, it is not based on higher education, it is not based on your Greek and your Hebrew knowledge, it is not based on the original languages, it is not based on what group you are hanging out with. Ministry and preaching is simply a supernatural transition where the Word of God and the vessel of God become one. And there is not any education in the world that can help you with that. That is based on what you have got in here, what you have got in here. I said it last week, it is the ability of God to speak to you while He is speaking through you. You just do not find that today.

I heard another message one time, I think Bob Jones Sr. preached it, and he talked about the story of the burning bush. I heard preachers use this all down my life, and it goes right along with this. He said, "Do you ever wonder that in Exodus when Moses meets the burning bush that God never told you what kind of bush it was? Do you ever wonder why that is? Do you ever wonder why God in all the details that He gives you and everything in the Bible when Moses, I mean you think that is a pretty important event. Do you ever wonder why when you go to the Bible that He is, I mean Moses feasts of that burning bush that God in the detail and the chronology and the commentary, He never tells you what that bush is?" You know why that is? I will tell you why that is because any old bush will do, as long as it will burn. God did not care what kind of bush you are. God is interested in will you get on fire for Him and say what He wants you to say? That is the key. That is the key. R.G. Lee was something, boy. He was something.

I am going to give you one more, and then we are going to hold up today, and I have got a whole list of them here, but that will give us something to do tomorrow. This next thing is going to take me a while on this one. I learned this from two guys. When I just got saved and I was growing up, my first place I preached was a place called the Brown Street Mission on Brown Street in Canton, Ohio. Brown Street Mission was run by two guys. One of them was a guy by the name of Tommy Thomas, and another one was a guy by the name of Phil Ward. They were the superintendents of the Brown Street Mission. This is back when missions were missions and they really preached the Word of God. What these guys taught me at that early life was, because in a mission scenario, you have got to get things really basic. As I say it all the time, and it was really a catalyst that really helped me in my own life of understanding the Bible, because they taught me that when it comes to any, with these guys here we are working with, he said, "What you have got to be able to do, and this is where I first preached," and he told me, he said, "What you have got to be able to do is you have got to break whatever you are saying down to the lowest bottom common denominator." He said, "What works back at Canton Baptist Temple will not work down here." He says, "You have got to read the signs, you have got to be able to take whatever you want to say, and you have got to have the ability to break it down to the lowest common denominator."

That not only worked for me in that particular scenario, but I took that lesson that I learned, and I used that in my own personal life in everything I do. Last Thursday night, that is probably one of the most complicated, one of the hardest questions, one of the most detailed questions that would naturally take me on a regular basis to take three or four hours to lay that thing out the way that I

need to do it. But it was not because that I have this great ability to teach. It is not because that I have got so much knowledge of the Bible that I can just spew this stuff out. No, no, no, no. It was based on the fact that in my own personal life, I have done the whole Bible that way. For me, and as dumb as I am, and as unretaining as I am, and how it is hard for me to grasp great concepts and understand them, I have to, I took what old Phil Ward and Tommy Thomas gave me, and I took it beyond that mission, and I took it to the Bible, and I had to learn how to break everything down into that Bible to its lowest common denominator that I could explain it to myself like I would explain it to a four-year-old.

The end result of what happened last Thursday night when we laid that systematic study out that you could not miss it if your life depended on it, unless you were just blind, and the IQ below sub-plant life was based on what God had taught me from that thing right there. That is to understand that whenever it comes to Bible, whenever it comes to the things, I have to break it down. I really believe my ability to communicate it to you goes right back to there, because before I can make you understand it, I have to understand it, and I am a blockhead man. I have got to break those things down where it is simply, it is not paragraphs, it is not even sentences. In some cases, it is not even words. I am dealing with ABCs. That is what I have got to do, but that has given me from when I learned that, it gave me the ability, and I will never forget.

I heard Tommy Thomas preach about two weeks before I preached, and it really sealed what he told me. I heard him preach a message, and it was a message that, and this gives an illustration, it was a message that really takes the complication of an unsaved man, or an unsaved woman. It breaks it down, because that is a complicated thing. You start to deal with somebody that is unsaved, you can go on for endless hours. But it began to basically, for me, show me the great lesson, no matter how complicated the thing is, break it down to its lowest common denominator. You know what a lowest common denominator is, do not you? You cannot divide it down anymore. You have hit bottom line.

I will never forget the example he gave me, he did not even know he was doing it, but I was smart enough to listen. He was preaching on that night, and he was preaching to the people in the mission. What he did in that sermon, I do not even think he knew he did it, it just came natural to him, did not come natural to me. He defined for me and gave me an example by what he preached that night of how in the lowest common denominator to break down an unsaved man. When I walked away that night, I said, "Whoa, that was it."

I hear some of you guys preach down to the mission and watch you go through those things, some of you get it, some of you do not. Some of you are so complicated, I do not even know where you are at sometimes. But a few of you, a few of you take it so simple and so basic that anybody could walk it through. You start with a point and you have to, I look at it as you have to do that for you too. So this will be a great value to me. But I will never forget that night. I cannot imitate him, but I will never forget, it was a stellar moment in my life.

I remember, and by the way, Tommy Thomas was the guy that God used to call me into the ministry because about a year later when I was struggling everything, Tommy Thomas preached in the college and career class of the Canton Baptist Temple where I was sitting that morning and

Tommy Thomas got up to preach on the second coming of Christ. Tommy Thomas had a heart attack in the pulpit and died and went home to be with the Lord right in the pulpit that morning. I will never forget it as long as I live. It was probably the last lesson that I learned from Tommy, but it was the greatest lesson. He got up there and he was going to preach on the second coming of Christ. I had been struggling with the ministry. I had been struggling with some old things in my own life. Old Tommy Thomas got up there and I was sitting in the back, I will never forget it. Mel introduced him and Tommy Thomas came up and he was probably 70 or 75 or 78 years old, kind of hunched over, kind of a short guy, but he was powerful. He walked up there and I will never forget. He walked up, he put his glasses on, he opened his Bible and he said, "I want to preach to you this morning on the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." And he said, "I got a question I want to ask you." And he said, "The question I want to ask you is a question that you need to answer this morning." And he said, "The question I want to ask you is this before I ever preach and I want you to think about this question before I ask it." And he walked over here and he said, "The question I want to ask you," just like I did with my voice, just says, "Are," and he really strengthened out to get it out. He said, "Are you ready?" And when he went over that, he reached over and grabbed his heart. And as he sat down that pulpit, he looked across and he said, "Are you ready?" And the last time he said he was down on one knee and he pointed his finger out. As far as I am concerned, there were 300 people in that room that day. He was pointing at me and he said the last time, it is loud like the blast of the trumpet of the archangel. He says, "Are you ready?" And he keeled over and died right in the spot. That was all I needed. As far as I was concerned, God had just told me, "You are taking Tommy's spot."

About four weeks before that, I heard him preach and he showed me how to define things. He put an example, and I know he did not know what he was doing. God knew what he was doing. He got up there and he gave me the greatest example of breaking it down by taking a complicated subject. He got up there and he said that night, he says, "Now I want to talk to you just," place was packed. 200, 300 transients. And he said, "Now I want to talk to you men tonight about something and I want you to listen to me." They did not allow anybody to sleep during it or anybody, everybody was listening. And he said, "I want to ask you a question." He said, "Do you know and understand that God does not want you in this place tonight?" He says, "Have you realized that God does not want you here tonight? This is not God's perfect will for your life to be here tonight. You are here because of a problem in your life."

"Now, I know some of you think that that is drugs. Some of you think that is alcohol. Some of you think that is gambling." He says, "I want to take just a few minutes tonight and I want to define who you are and why you are here. God built this place, allowed us to run this ministry so you right on the edge of hell, as you spew over the catechist of hell, could hear one more chance to find out what is wrong with you." He says, "My sermon is simple tonight." He says, "An unsaved man, you men here tonight are simply four things. We are not going to be complicated. We are not going to be intellectual. We are going to bring it right down where every street bum who wrote over in your puke last night can grasp it this morning." He was vivid. He says, "Let me tell you, let me tell you why you are here."

8. The first reason why you are here is because you, as an unsaved man, are without strength. It is not your booze. It is not your drugs. It is not your addiction to heroin. Or your addiction to whatever. It is the fact that you, as an unsaved man, have no strength to break the chains of what has got you. It is not about what it is. It would not make any difference what it was. You do not have the strength to break it because as an unsaved man, you are without strength.
Wow.
9. Do you know why you are without strength? You are without strength because you are without God. Your strength to get off your drugs, your alcohol, or whatever your addiction is, will not lie within yourself. It lies in the finished work of Christ on Calvary's cross. You are without strength. You cannot break this chain, and you are sitting in this little mission which is right on the brink of the cascade of the waterfall of fire that is going to send you to hell. You cannot break it because you are not only without strength, you are without God. That is your problem. Get off the idea that it is your bringing up, or your drugs, or your cigarettes, or your booze. It is because no matter what you have, if you were addicted to ice cream, you could not break it because you are without strength. And strength only comes from God, and you are without God.
10. He says, "You know why you are here? Have you figured it out yet, man? Yes, you are here because you are without strength. You are here because you are without strength, and now we know you are without God. You know why you are really here? You are here because without strength, and without God, you are here because you are without hope." And he preached on Christ being the only hope. He defined the fact that it is not, "I hope I am saved" in the Bible. It is that Christ is your only hope. He used the example that I have used a hundred thousand times. If you are on a sinking ship, and you cannot swim, and you are drowning, and you cry out for help, and somebody throws you a life preserver, or a life ring. He says, "You look at that life ring, and you do not say to yourself, 'I am going to grab that life ring. I hope it saves me.' You say to yourself, 'That drowning, that life ring is my only hope.'" He says, "You are drowning without strength, without God, without hope. And Christ, it is, and I hope He will save you. It is, He is your only hope." Wow, he preached it.
11. Then he came down to the last point. I said, "That is it." He just took what is studying topology. He just took what eschatology. He just took what the great theological would spend two years going through and condense that down that anybody on planet earth could get it and understand it and come to Christ and get saved. He took the greatest, he took the greatest study of anthropology and brought it right down to the level that you could just grasp it and define it and took it to the lowest common denominator. That is what I want to do. He walked up and down that thing and paced like a caged lion. He says, "Now gentlemen, before we eat, let me give you the last point. You now know that God does not want you here. He does not want you in this condition. He does not want you peeing your pants. He does not want you rolling over in your puke and freezing at night. He does not want you blubbery and bleary-eyed in the morning. He does not want you here. He had something else for you, but you are here because you have no strength. And gentlemen, we know now that you have no strength to break what you are in because you have no God. And we know now, gentlemen, that because you have no strength and you have no God, now that you have no hope. Well, gentlemen, let me just tell you this, and I am going to close with this, gentlemen. One, you

have no strength. Two, you have no God. Three, you have no hope. And now, after hearing this message, you have no excuse.

See what he did? He did exactly what he read the signs. He broke that thing down. I have heard men go through getting somebody saved. It got me so confused, I could not figure it out. He did not deal with that. He did exactly what you always want to do. And what I gave you a good example of last Thursday night, he broke that thing down systematically where everybody in the world could get it. He basically took that great study of man, and he brought him down and he showed those men why they were without strength. They could not get out of their habit if they wanted to because they were without God. And without God, you are without hope. And then he showed them that because of all that they had heard today, they were without excuse. I watched the men flood down that morning to get saved, or that night to get saved, and I thought to myself, "That is it, Lord. That is it. You just showed me the greatest lesson in my life, and that is, break that book down to the lowest bottom common denominator." He did not give any poems. He did not give any illustrations. Not that they are wrong, but in this crowd it did not work. He just brought them right to the four points that they needed and walked them right into the gates of heaven.

VII. Call to Salvation and Conclusion

There are some great lessons. There is a lot more we have got on ministry we are going to get in next week, but let me ask you this. Let me talk to you for just a second. I do not know who you all are today. It is a great crowd today. But maybe you are here this morning and you do not know for sure if you died right now that you would go to heaven. Maybe you have been coming to church for a while or maybe this is your first or second time, and maybe in your life, everything went wrong good till today. And now just like those men some, what, 35, 36 years ago, you have come to a realization through a simple, basic little concept outline that you are without strength. You are without God. And you are without hope. And the Bible says when we stand as unsaved people, the unsaved people stand before God, the great white throne, they are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

I wonder today in your own heart right now, as we are closing this thing up, let me ask you, where are you at? Stop and just think for a moment. Man, life lies bad so far. You have got so many things going on. Salvation is something that you just, we always just want to put back and not think about it and just kind of put it back in the back. But you have got to be at the forefront of everything you do.

I like every head bowed and every eye closed. I am going to pray in a moment and then we are going to be all done today. We are just going to go about our way and take what God has given us this morning, next week. I still got the things I learned about the kind of people that make up a

church. I got the eight things that a pastor needs to do really well to be a successful minister and pastor and a bunch of other stuff. We will get into that next week. Let me ask you a question. With every head bowed and every eye closed. It is a simple question. It is just like the message that old Tommy Thomas preached so many years ago. If you died right now, do you know for sure you would go to heaven?