

I. The Living Sacrifice and Ministry to Others

If you have your Bibles, you should be well aware by now that we are in Romans chapter 12. I told you when we started the book of Romans that chapter 12 was probably a key chapter for your life and my life. It really deals with the aspect of how we are to deal with other people and unsaved people. It does not really deal with how we are to deal with God's people. That comes a little bit later on in chapter 14 and 15.

But chapter 12 starts out by talking about the fact that we need to be a living sacrifice. You remember that I told you a great truth when we looked at that aspect, and it has been several weeks ago. It was not the fact that it was the fact that God does not want your life. God does not want your heart. God does not want anything about you other than your body. When God has your body, then you are going to be a living sacrifice.

Christ's death on the cross would have been absolutely of none effect if He would not have submitted His body to it. He could have prayed all day long in the garden, and He could have talked about how much He loved God and how much He wanted to serve God and God was His Father. He could have gone through all of the rhetoric as we do. But the thing that made it all real was the fact that He put His body on that cross.

For you and for me, a living sacrifice, God has not asked us to die for Him. Now, yet I understand by saying that there are sometimes people will lose their life in the cause of Christ. We certainly know that. But on the whole, God never asked you and me to die for Him. He asked us to live for Him. The truth of the matter is, living for God is a lot harder than dying for God. When we talk about these things today, we want to always keep the context of chapter 12, dealing with other people.

Then he says, and then last week we looked at two aspects of the four aspects of doing God's ministry and the ministry we know as people and growing through the process by grace and faith. We looked last time at learning to wait on ministry. I told you how that whether you are a young man or a young lady, the ministry is the key aspect, and the ministry is people. My goal for every one of you, you may not realize this goal. You may never get to it. But my goal for you is to work with somebody at some point in your life. You will never really understand what ministry is or really never get the benefit of all that God gives you until you sit down with somebody and begin to be responsible for teaching them the Bible and accountable to them and for them and helping them figure it all out.

I told you that that is a process. You have to learn to wait on ministry. You do not just get saved and then six months later, even though there are some things that you can do and there are some things you should be doing as soon as you get saved. But dealing with people comes through the process of time of watching what goes on around here, working with people with somebody else. We do that a lot with our discipleship program and then coming about where you actually take and lay hands on somebody to work with them through the ministry.

Then we looked at the second aspect, and that is to always keep the ministry in a simple form, the simplicity of ministry. We have a tendency as human beings to make everything complicated in life. The Bible, on the other hand, believe it or not, has a tendency to make everything simple. The hardest books in the Bible that man says are hard to understand, take the book of Revelation. Take the book of Hebrews. We know from our past studies that the three books of the Bible where everybody gets messed up on and every heresy in the world comes from is Matthew, Acts, and Hebrews. Yet we know how easy those books are when you just get the basic breakdown. Revelation, the great complex book that people pay great amounts of money to hear somebody lay out. Two keys to Revelation and the whole book just unfolds itself in front of you. The book of Hebrews, same way. The book of Acts, the same way. The book of Matthew, the same way. Of course, we have seen that God's plan with the Bible is to make it easy. Man's plan is to make things harder.

Now today we are going to look at the last two and some of the Christian qualities then we will begin to look at that we develop through this process of growth that are absolutely essential in fulfilling God's plan of ministry in our lives.

Now I want to begin reading in chapter 12, and I want to pick it up in verse 4. We have read some of this before, but let us go on with it as we go through it.

Romans 12:4-16

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Now Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We love You. Thank You for all that You have done for us, for all that You have given us. We pray Father today that You will help us focus today on this great passage. Lord, these are good people here, and they brave the weather and elements to come out today Father to hear Your Word. I pray Father that You will give them all that they need. We thank You for those that are in this room today who are beginning the concept and understanding of ministry. We thank You Father for the people that are willing to share themselves in teaching and working through other people in their lives and help them. Help us today, all of us, to leave today a little smarter and a little closer to You, and we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The Gift of Ruling: Leadership by Example

Now the next gift he mentions here is the gift of ruling. I want to break this down and help you understand it. This would basically be a position of authority in a church. Every church has to operate under an authority. The final authority in any church ought to be the Bible. Under that, then God gives us a pastor. When that pastor follows the Word of God and follows the principles, the patterns, the models in the Bible, it works very well. The pastor's job then is to train up other men and women who understand what he is trying to do, understand what the ministry is, learn the models and the patterns, and then reproduce himself in those people as they grow.

In every church, there has to be leadership. I am a firm believer, and I believe this with all my heart. I have believed it for many years that everything, not just in churches, everything rises and falls on leadership. As far as I am concerned, and we are talking about ministry in churches and that stuff, so I will confine my remarks to that. But I believe that is true in anything. But I especially believe it is true in churches. Leadership is essential. God's people, when God's concept of the church, when God made you and me, He made you and me to be dependent on somebody to follow. Now ultimately it is Himself. But when a concept of the church, and you see that in the Old Testament, and the concept of the church, God has set a structure that is likened to His body, the church. Through that body, there has to be an authority process of leadership that you have to follow.

I believe personally, not only do I believe that everything rises and falls on leadership, but I believe a good leader has to be a good follower. I believe a good leader has to be able to submit himself to the people that he leads in time when he gives them something to do that he does not come back in and try to change the aspect of it, that if he gives something to somebody to do, then that is what that person does.

I know that the Bible is likened to an army. Christianity is likened to soldiers. In the military, that is the routine they follow. Any battalion has a commander, any division has a commander, and everything works down through that, through the chain of authority. You have a combat company, you will have a commanding officer that is probably a captain, you will have four platoons. Over each platoon will be a first or second lieutenant, and then within that, you have the NCOs from the first sergeant right down to the privates. The way you lead in the military is the same way you should lead in Christianity, from the top down. That is the chain of command that you hear so much about. When you get into a tough situation, all the new guys look to the

older guys. The older guys look to the officers and right on down the line. There is a great comfort when you are in a really bad situation that the guys who are in charge have a command about them that seems, even though it may not be always true, that they have control of the situation. That is leading from the top. That is chain of command. That certainly should be true in Christianity. That certainly should be the aspect where the leadership is so in sync that even in bad times there is a confidence.

Now the difference between Uncle Sam's army and God's army is the fact that you can be in a bad situation in an ambush someplace or in a bad thing where you are surrounded, and you can have all the commands and all of the confidence in the world and still get killed at the end of the day. I mean, that is the difference. In God's army, it does not matter if you get killed because all that matters is you get the job done for the Lord. So it is a little different in that, but it is the same concept.

I want to explain from a biblical concept defining this rule by example. Take your Bibles and turn over if you would. Take your Bibles and turn over to 1 Peter chapter 5 and let us look at verses 1 through 4.

1 Peter 5:1-4

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Now this particular aspect here, notice I want you to see that there is a crown associated with this. If you are a child of God and you have been around here any length of time, you will know that the Bible lays out. There are five crowns that we can get as Christians at the judgment seat of Christ. This crown here is for teaching people the Bible. If you are someone in this church and you are actively teaching somebody the Word of God, then you have already got that crown if you are doing it with the right attitude of heart.

But more than that, 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 1 through 4 is really the definitive passage on leadership. We get the idea that leadership in many churches, this is true, where the pastor actually keeps absolute control over the people. I know churches in this town where the pastors are really not pastors and the churches are not really churches. They are more like third world countries than the other dictator that runs it. They tell you what to listen to and what not to listen to. I know pastors within a 30-mile radius of what I am talking about that will not allow their people to listen to certain other guys' messages because of the fact they are afraid that you will learn something about the Bible that they do not know.

I told you the story about the pastor that had such control over his people that on Sunday morning after church, everybody is required to go out to eat together at a certain place. Why? Because he wants everybody back that night and to hear him preach again, therefore he has complete control over it because if you say, "Well, I cannot go," then you are suddenly on the outside looking in. I have talked about the fact where there is a control over deacons that they hold over your head the fact that you are a deacon and do not let you do anything other than what is church business or related. It is incredible out there in what takes place. That is not biblical leadership. Much of what you see as leadership in many churches has nothing to do with the Bible.

I told you the story about the same pastor that a guy and a wife were having marital problems. He went to the pastor and talked to the pastor about what was going on. The pastor went into the guy's house and removed his wife from him. It goes on like that all the time. That is just the way that it is. That is not biblical leadership.

In verse 3, you find the key to what he is talking about in the gift of ruling and the gift of being in a position of authority. He says this:

1 Peter 5:3

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Now, that is what a leader is supposed to be. A leader is not the lord over the people and tells them what to do. That is not a position of leadership in the church. What a leader is supposed to do, in this case, it is elders. We do not have any elders in our church yet. You are going to hear the word elder a lot in the next couple of years. But we do not have any bona fide elders in our church at this particular point in time.

An elder is someone the Bible says is an overseer with a pastor. An elder, and there are male elders and female elders in the Bible. Remember, an elder is not an office. It is a position of spiritual maturity. An elder in the Bible is called an overseer. He is someone who over-helps the pastor oversee what is going on with the people. It is probably the only, there is only two levels, only one level above that. An elder in the Bible is someone that has been around, paid their dues, learned ministry, understand the pastor's heart in it, and then come to the place that are overseeing it with him. Of course, the key is not how much you know about the Bible. The key is not how long you have been around or what position you hold in the church. The key is the example you are to the believers of what the Bible says a real Christian ought to be. That is the key to ruling. It is not telling somebody what to do. It is not walking around saying, "I am in charge of this."

Somebody is going to have to be in charge of something every time we do something. It is great to work the thing around where everybody, it is like what we do with the mission. Everybody gets a chance to preach and lay out the Bible. I would love to have a system where in time that you do the same thing with everything we do around here. That is what we do in the nursery as we talked about where everybody gets a shot to take responsibility for what needs to be done in this church. But the single greatest aspect of leadership or the gift of ruling is not to look at it like

you are in some position where you can order people around, but in reality in a position that you lead other people, not by what you know about the Bible, not by how long you have been in some position. You see this all the time in church, but rather by example. People look at you and they say, "Boy, that is what I want to be when I get spiritually mature."

My greatest example of that in my life is my father in the Lord, Mel Shabbat. I remember all of my life watching him. I look back at my life now and all the years I spent with him and all the things I got to see with him. I cannot think. I wish I could say this about myself, but I cannot. But I can say it about him and I am sure I am wrong because I was not with him all the time. But in my personal public time with him, I never saw him come to the point where he ever violated a biblical principle in what he did. Now he may be in his own, I mean, he was not perfect and I am sure, I mean, you get him moved the wrong way and he would give you a four-star cussing like you have never heard since you get out of the Navy. But that is everybody has got their downside. I learned as many good cuss words from him. They are in the back and under a separate cover there.

But anyway, the bottom line is the Bible says the gift of ruling is with diligence. That simply means you take serious what your responsibilities are. Churches get to a point where they, it is exciting for a while and everybody gets into it and everybody is fun with it. After about six or seven years, you know what? The newness wears off and then the drudgery of every day doing the ministry sets in. All my life I have seen God's people come to the point where they learned a lot of Bible, they got a lot of things down and they got to a point in their life where then they just kind of lived off of what they already had and started coasting. That is a bad situation to be in. He says you do it with diligence. The greatest single commodity we have in this church or in any church will be the people that God gives us.

So a leader rules, a leader rules not with the authority of lording over people, but with the authority of the fact that he has a, or she has the principles of the Word of God working in their life. You take those principles and other people see them. He rules, but he does not lord over other people, but he has a set of standards that he or she follows that keeps the thing in the example that it needs to be.

III. The Concept of Blamelessness

Now let me just say this, in leadership nobody is perfect. But he is not talking about being perfect. When you start to talk about leadership in a church or in this case elders or anybody who is overseeing the flock and helping the pastor, you realize that there is a phrase here or a word here that pops up dealing with the pastor and certainly with the elders and really certain for all of God's people, and that is the word blameless.

He says in 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 2 that it is a true saying that if a man desire the office of a bishop he desires the good work. But then he says this in verse 2:

1 Timothy 3:2

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Now this aspect of blamelessness for a child of God starting with the pastor working down through the leadership right on down to anybody who is seeking an aspect of to do the ministry whatever it may be. The concept of blameless is probably one of the most misunderstood aspects you are ever going to find. I know pastors to this day that have made mistakes in their life and have got a divorce maybe 20, 30 years ago in their life. Some of them before they were saved, some of them after they were saved. The brethren have a weird thing about that. They think that the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses us from all sin except the sin of divorce. I do not know how many times I have seen it in the pastor circles around and the fellowships and all that where they look at a brother that is pastoring a church and maybe he got a divorce and a bad time in his life and went through that and lost his family, lost his wife in some case. Sometimes it was his fault, sometimes it was not his fault. It does not seem to matter. The bottom line is they will say that that man cannot pastor because he is not blameless.

Now let me just say something to you in the sight of the principles of the Word of God. There is nobody in this room that is blameless. We like to think, I remember one guy one time that he was talking about the fact that one pastor should not pastor because he was blameless. Come to find out a little bit later on he was being investigated by the FBI because of the fact that he was skimming banks all over town and he was standing up telling somebody else was not blameless when he was not blameless himself. I have seen guys pastors stand up where they talked about this guy was not qualified for the ministry as blameless and in their own personal life. They were abusing their own kids and abusing their own wife and abusing their own family.

Blameless never means the fact that you and I are without blame. I have never understood how a bishop, a pastor is supposed to be blameless when he gets blamed for everything that happens. I have been in a ministry a long time. You know what? Whatever decision you make, if you ever get into leadership, whatever decision you make, somebody is not going to like it. Whatever you decide to do, somebody is not going to be happy with it. There is always going to be the people that look at what you do and think they could do it better or do not like what you do or it rubs them the wrong way and they are going to criticize you for it. If you walked around worrying about everything that everybody thought and said and did, you would never get anything done. So you know what you do? You find a model in the Bible. You stay with that model in the Bible. Make sure what you do and the decisions you make are based on the principles of the Word of God and then you go with it from there.

You know what blameless is? Blameless is the fact that when we make a mistake, and let us face it, most Christians, pastors cannot admit when they make a mistake. I have known pastors that boy, I will tell you what, whatever problem was in the church was always somebody else's problem. That is simply not true. We all make mistakes. I told you last week, a week before last, there is nothing wrong with making mistakes. I mean, we all make them. But do you learn from the mistakes? That is the key. Many people never learn from their mistakes. It is not about blameless is not that you go around without any blame. Blameless is that when you do something wrong or you do something stupid, you make it right, right on the spot and make, take care of it.

At that point, you are blameless. That is what blameless is. It is not walking around all your life and saying, "Well, I have never done this or I have never done that or I have never been involved in this or I am not going to do that. Therefore, I am blameless." Nobody is blameless. Blameless is that when you make a mistake, you take the blame for it and get it right with whoever, whatever, God, if it needs to be, and at that point, you are blameless. Of course, we have a tough time with that today in churches. We really do.

The rule of leadership in a church is basically staying blameless because of the fact that you are honest enough to know that when you did something you should not have done or something happened that it is on your watch that you should have dealt with, then you deal with it and you take it from there. The rule of leadership in a church, as we have talked about already, is overseeing, helping, but never hurting. The real key to it, and you have heard me say it many, many times, and that is bearing one another's burden. You know, most Christians, most pastors have a terrible time saying they were wrong, much less saying they were wrong and taking the blame when they were right. Many times in the ministry, that is what you have got to do. I have told you before. It is not about who wins the argument. It is not about who is right or who is wrong. Now I understand that there are some scenarios that you have got to deal with, but in most of the stuff that goes on in our lives, you know what? You just deal with it, and if you have to take the blame for it when you did not do it to get the cause of Christ to move on, then that is what you do. Great concept. Great concept. This is why I push biblical principles so much, models, biblical patterns. It comes down to a principled life, because you just simply cannot please everybody. I am not saying you should try to please everybody, but when you follow the models, when you follow the principles, when somebody sits down with you and says, "Why did you do this the way you did it, what are you doing here?" when you can open up the Bible and show them the model and the passage and the pattern? You have something to fall back on. Most Christian leaders, most pastors, they fly by the seat of their pants. They rule by emotion, not by principles. I cannot tell you how important it is to have a principled life. Living your life by the principle. It will never be perfect, but you will have the principles that you have to deal with.

IV. Showing Mercy with Cheerfulness

All right, now the second aspect he talks about is the aspect of showing mercy to others with cheerfulness. Now remember, all of these are based on the first concept that we looked at, that somebody who rules, rules by example. So all of these are based on the fact that you and I do these things based on our example. That is what we are supposed to do.

Now second aspect he says is showing mercy to others with cheerfulness. If I did not know God's people were truly God's people any other way, I would know they were God's people simply by how screwed up they get and how they just absolutely are the strangest birds in the world sometimes. We are cheerful. We are cheerful. We are happy today that God showed us mercy. We are ecstatic today that God showed us mercy and saved us and forgave us of our sins and we are ecstatic about it. The songs we sing, the verses that we read, the greatest sermons you will ever preach that will uplift somebody is to tell them what God has done for them and how God has shown them mercy. We like getting God's mercy. We just have a hard time giving that

mercy to somebody else. That is God's people. That is the way we are. We are cheerful that God showed us mercy.

Well, let me tell you something. It makes others happy when you show them mercy. You know what mercy is in the Bible? Mercy is not getting what you deserve. Mercy is God or somebody taking the sentence away, whatever we did, when God gave me mercy He looked at all of my sins and He took them away. You know what He did? He took them on Himself. You know what else He was? He was happy about it. He was happy about it.

Then you have God's people who say, "Well, you know, they show mercy. They show forgiveness, but all the while they hold a grudge." You cannot show mercy and forgiveness all the while holding a grudge. Is that the way God did it with you and me? Did God save you and then bring it up every day with a rotten scoundrel you were? No, you know what? God saved you and forgot about it and you and I bring it up to Him with a rotten scoundrel. He never does. You see, God has the ability and the capacity to do something that most of us cannot do. God has the ability not only to forgive us our sins, He has the ability to forget the sins that we did. That is a great quality. That is a great quality.

You see, forgiving and showing mercy when you all the time you are holding a grudge deep down inside, that is not mercy. The mark of real spiritual maturity of a child of God is not to just only forgive, but to have grace and mercy to forget. Now, I know what the standard idea is. I have heard people say it. I have heard pastors say it. "Well, you know what? When we get to heaven and we get God's mind and we get God's body, we will not only be able to forgive, but we will be able to forget too." Let me tell you something. If you are saved and you are some kind of a spiritual relationship with God, you ought to get to the place in your life or be at the place in your life where you can forgive somebody and then you can forget what they did because you would have to be in your life at some point because that is a character quality of God. That is not something you have got to wait to get to heaven to get. Somebody says, "Well, when you get God's mind, that is the way it will be." You have got God's mind in the Word of God.

You know how you forget something somebody did to you? You know how you forgive and forget? Do you know how you get to that point in your life? I mean, come on. I mean, the Bible says showing mercy with cheerfulness. Listen, when you forgive somebody, you ought to let them know you are happy about it. What God did, you ought to be able to say to them, "You know what? I am happy. You wronged me. Yeah, you did this, you did that. But what God has done for me, I am going to be able to do for you. And man, I am happy about it." Is not that what God did for me and you? Did not God forgive you? Did not God show you mercy? Then God wrote you a whole book telling you how happy He was what He did. The mark of maturity in your life and in my life and this church as you grow. I know it is a process of growth. I am not saying you ought to get saved on Monday and be able to do all these things on Tuesday, but certainly by Thursday. It is a process.

Two great character qualities of God. The two greatest character qualities in your life and my life as a Christian. That is the ability to show mercy and forgive and be happy about it. You know

how you do it? You absolve others of the deeds that they have done maybe sometimes to you by understanding how God absorbed all the rotten deeds you did against Him.

Bible says in Romans 12:16, "Be not wise in your own conceit." You know what that means? That means I have actually seen God's people. I have, not maybe not in this church, but I have actually seen God's people come to the point where they get so puffed up that God has forgiven them and they take all of God's mercy and all of God's goodness, but all of their lives, they hold grudges against people and they still think that they have some kind of spiritual relationship with God. Let me tell you something. If the greatest quality of God is forgiving and moving on and forgetting and burying things and going with it, let me tell you something. You will never have the relationship with God that you have until you get that quality in your life. It may take a while, but it better get there sooner or later. God give you grace to get through it. God give you grace to work through something. That is what God is all about. But sooner or later, you hit the brick wall. You have got to remember and understand that what God did for you, what God did for me, His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness. I am happy about it today. You do not see me walking around saying, "What is wrong with you today? Oh, God forgave me and gave me His mercy and I am just really upset about it." I am happy about it. Hey, on the worst day of my life, on the worst day of my life when everything falls down around my shoulders, the thing that lifts up my spirit, the fact that God's mercy and God's grace, even though my world may be falling around my shoulders, you know what? If I die today, I am still going to heaven. I got 98% of the world beat right there. I am happy about it. I am happy about it.

V. Essential Qualities for Ministry

Now we come to Romans 12:9-16. Here he starts going through some of the things that are absolutely key for you and me to be used of God in ministry. Remember now, the ministry is people. He laid out two great aspects, the last two of the four. He laid out the things that we looked at today and then he begins to go through from verses 9 through 16, really to the end of the chapter. I am not sure we will get through all of this today, but we will go as far as we can and we will finish it up here probably next week. He starts going through some great concepts, some great principles that are absolutely necessities in your life and my life. If you are going to fancy yourself to work with people, and I hope that you do, if you grow to the point where you can really be valuable to me in this ministry, and my goal is to get you there. You will not get there without letting these aspects be developed in your life. These are areas when I teach you the Bible and I lay out the Word of God and I give you the things that we talk about on Thursday night and Sunday morning and the one-on-one and the problems we go through, these are the areas that God develops in your life as you grow in grace and faith in truth.

Working with people is a very humbling experience. Working with people is a situation that always makes you look back and be thankful what God has done in your life. There are some truly terrible situations you are going to have to try to unravel, sort out. My week is filled with people whose lives are absolutely, absolutely just embroiled in problems. Most of them are not even members of this church that they come in from other avenues. I try to sit down and help them work through things and help them deal with things. I have people that deal with

relationship problems, have people that deal with drug problems, people who deal with alcohol problems, people deal with just worldly problems. I am telling you, when you get into those situations, you have to many times see some of the most ugliest things that you have to deal with in people's lives. It is a humbling experience if you approach it from God's aspect.

Now I call passages like Romans 12:9-16, I call them my reality text. If you look in my Bible, you will find that all my reality texts are circled in red. Sometimes they are just a verse, sometimes they are whole passages. When I go through my Bible, and I know you all got your system, some of your Bible look like the rainbow that Dorothy was trying to get to. There was a divorce, you got so many colors in it. You color-coded every day. That is good if it works for you. Me, I am a basic guy. I can only use two colors, yellow and red. I use those. Yellows are things that I want to stand out. The reds are things that I call my reality verses. Because I like reality verses. I love passages like this. Because I am just like anybody else. It is passages like this that always bring me into reality of what a Christian really is and what I am supposed to be.

Very little of our Christian testimony to the world or other Christians is based on what we know about the Bible. I know that we think that. We fall into that trap. We think that the real essence of our being a viable Christian is what we know about the Bible. Sometimes we think that our valuable ability to God is based on how well we can lay out the Bible. Those are subtle traps that we fall into. This is why I like places like this by reality text. Because it shows that those things are what really the key. What really is the key is not based on how well we know the Bible or how well we say it. But it is the areas that we are about to look up that make and breaks us in what follows.

You know human nature is a funny thing. I have studied human nature. I think one of the greatest studies you will ever take is human nature. I love watching people. I love listening to people talk. If I get into a crowd of people I will say very little unless somebody asks me a question. But I will listen to everything that goes on. I can sit in an airport terminal and watch people all day long and never get bored as long as there is a Burger King someplace close.

But human nature is a funny thing. All our lives God's people, you and me, people in general, pretend that reality really is not so. You know what New Year's Eve is all about? I love New Year's Eve. But New Year's Eve for the world and many Christians is a place to go where they can step out of reality. I mean did you read about the plane coming over from landed in Detroit where the guy had a bomb strapped to his waist and the only thing it did would burn him up but the bottom line is it would have just been easy if he could have blew up the plane. You realize there is no safe place in this country today? There is no safe place. You say, "Well, church is a sanctuary." How many churches if somebody walked through the back door and shot 20 people in it? There is no safe place on this planet today. Maybe 50 years ago, 100 years ago you could find a place of sanction. Not today. There is no place you can go. Nothing you can do. I mean the Bible says, everybody says, "Well, you know what the airline security." The airline security? The shoe bomber. How did he get on? This guy. This guy walked on a plane and from two airports. Nobody even stopped to check anything. You know how I would, the first thing I would, but we cannot do this in America. The first thing would have told me that there might have been something wrong was the name Abdu'a lava adaba duba deba. That was the first thing I would

have said, "Look at him." No, no. The old lady going to Disney World gets pulled off the plane. But Abdu'a lava duba deba, he gets on the plane with a bomb. Now this is the same government that is going to take care of your healthcare. What was your last experience at the DMV like? What was your last experience at the post office like?

Reality is a tough thing. There is no safe place today. We like to think they are safe place because we do not want to deal with reality. New Year's Eve is just a little time that the world can step back, throw a party, have fun and step out for a moment of time from all of the heartache, the pain and the agony and all the reality that there is nothing out there that means anything. Then you know what they do the next day? They have to face it and go back through it again. It does not do a thing for them.

I think reality for a child of God is the greatest single thing. I have seen parents justify their kids in whom they marry and then wind up in a shariest state they have ever been in. I have seen people pretend that it was their job or their situation at work that prevented them from winning people to Christ. I have seen people pretend that they were not overweight. When everybody around them knew they were overweight. I see people pretend they are not getting older. They spend millions of dollars with Botec, Botec, all that stuff. I mean liposuction, everything in the world to try to get themselves to think the reality that they are staying off old age. You cannot do it. The fitness center that I go to, there is just one gal there. She has got to be 90. She thinks she is 40. Have you ever seen anything funnier than a 90-year-old woman trying to pretend she is 40? She fell off the bicycle last week. She has, I do not know who her plastic surgeon is, but he has probably made a lot of money off of this gal. Everybody just, I feel sorry for her, but you cannot help but laugh. I mean it is the goofiest thing in the world. I am going to be 60 this year. You think I am liking it? I am dealing with it every day. But I have come to the place, you know what, that is the process of life. Now you are not going to see me go get a vet and go get, you know, Tommy Lama clothes and start wearing around and suddenly think, like I am 30 again. Is that Tommy Lama? Tony Lama. I was his brother Tommy. I know him. Tony, you buy it, you tell me by a Dillard's in those places. Tommy you buy a Walmart. That was his brother.

Hey, you know what? We pretend, do not we? We pretend our life is really great when it is really in a mess. We pretend our kids are okay when they are really not. We pretend we are okay with God when we are deep down inside, we know we are not. When it comes to ministry people, we like to think we are okay but we know that, you know, that what we do, we pretend that it is what I know about the Bible, it is what I, how much I can lay it out or how long I have been here or my position or all the reality, the reality of things like this. These things that I am about to show you that he lays out after he sets down the aspect that were to be examples are really the keys to where we are at. This is the reality. It is not about what I know. It is not about how well I can lay it out. It is about the bottom line is, are these character qualities in my life? I have to look at these just like you do. I am not somebody sitting up here saying I have mastered these and you better look at them. Let me tell you something. These things mean so much to me because they point out my deficiencies of who I am, totally a hundred percent every day of my life.

How many times you heard me say, when you read the Bible, the Bible starts to read you. That is a true statement. I do not know of any other statement about the Bible that is true or not. The

Bible is a living book. When you open up the pages of the Bible and you begin to read the Bible, the Bible begins to read you. But along with that, I am going to tell you something else. This is just as true and you better get it down. Bob and I were talking about this a couple of weeks ago when I was over at his home. But let me tell you this, not only when you read the Bible does the Bible begin to read you, but nothing defines a man or a woman better than the ministry they are in. Nothing. The ministry because of what it requires from you. The ministry because there can be no guile in ministry. You cannot pretend in ministry. When you understand the basic aspects of these principles, you realize that what ministry does, and this is what people look for. When you teach somebody the Bible, when you kind of be a leader, a deacon, a pastor, an elder, whatever the case, when you take that rule of responsibility at that moment, just like when you start reading the Bible, the Bible reads you when you start to stand up in a place of leadership, you begin before everybody that is watching you to define who you really are.

There are some things you cannot fake in life. You can fake you are happy with your wife when you are not. Wives can fake they are happy with their husbands when they are not. Not too often, but many times they can. You may want to go out to eat some night with your wife, and you may have this place in your mind that you just cannot live without, and your wife says she wants to go this place, and you are smart enough to know that you better just cancel your plans, and you can fake with her that you are really excited about going this place, but all the time you are there, you are wishing you were someplace else. You can fake to your friends you are happy when you are not. You can put on a smiley face, but you know what you cannot fake? You cannot fake true spirituality with God in ministry because ministry defines you. See, this is why some people do not want to get into ministry, because ministry, you can come to a church and sit there and go through all emotions just fine. You can fake that, but when you start to take responsibility, and you start to put on the name tag of somebody who is going to now be a leader in the sense of what we are talking about, a position of authority, boy, it defines you just like that. People see through it.

VI. Love Without Dissimulation

Now the first thing he says here, Romans 12:9, he says, "Let love be without dissimulation." You know, the word dissimulation has two meanings in it. The first meaning means with partiality. That would be not loving everybody the same. That would be having favorites. That would be love that is not unconditional. That would be love that is partial to some people. As I said before, the ministry is filled with unlovable people. I mean, that is just the bottom line, but that does not require you or me to love them anyhow. So the first aspect of dissimulation is to be partial in your love. He says, "Let love be without dissimulation." You cannot love some people and not love others. You just cannot. It just does not work that way.

A lady said to me one time, she says, "I want to divorce my husband." She said, and I said, "Why is that?" She says, "You hate him." I said, "Ma'am, you cannot hate him." She says, "I hate him." I said, "You have got to love your husband." She says, "I am loving him with my husband. I hate him with my husband." I said, "Then you have got to, then if you cannot love him as your husband, then you have got to love him as your neighbor." She says, "I do not want him as my

neighbor and I do not love him as my neighbor." I said, "Okay, then you have got to love him as your enemy, but you have got to love him." It is just that simple. You cannot decide who you are going to love and who you are not. It just does not work that way.

Then the second definition is with hypocrisy. Dissimulation will be love with hypocrisy. That means not really loving, but pretending we do. That is another aspect of it. You know, there are some priorities in love. The old saying is God first, other second, and me last. That is a pretty good priority.

You know, William Booth, I never get to Christmas time, but I do not think of William Booth. William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. He died back in the early 1900s, maybe the latter part of the 1800s. Originally the Salvation Army was a great organization of winning people to Christ. It is pretty much a social system now. When William Booth founded it, he was a Civil War general and he was a great soul winner. When he founded the Salvation Army, it was simply that, an army of people seeking salvation for souls. He was a great man. He had been dead now over a hundred and some years. He walked through the first Salvation Army building. Then he would have a heart attack where he got past the first ashtray. But back then he was a great guy. The Salvation Army was a great organization. He died on Christmas Eve. He died on Christmas Eve, 1899, 1898. I forget the exact date. Every Christmas he would come to the radio and he would address all of his people. They would all across the country, all across the world, they would crowd around the radio and they would listen to his Christmas address to them, to challenge them for the next year. He had been very sick and was very weak. They did not know how long he was going to live. Many of them were heartbroken that they would not get to hear a final Christmas message from General Booth. He mustered up enough courage and they fixed it all up around his bed that he could give some kind of message to them of Christmas. All around the world, followers and men who were part of the Salvation Army and men of other Christians gathered around that radio to hear his great Christmas message. He was weak. He was almost dead. He was just about ready to die. That night on Christmas Eve when the whole world was tuned in with the Salvation Army to hear this great soul winner talk about and give his Christmas message, his message was one word. Just one word. The word was others. Others. His whole life was about others. His whole world was about other people. His whole life was loving them unconditionally. His whole life was built without hypocrisy, without partiality. His whole life was built on understanding what God had done for him. He dealt with the dredges of society. He dealt with the people that were down and out. Down and out back in that day was nothing like the down and out today. It was a terrible scenario. He dealt with that crowd all of his life. He always loved them without assimilation. He always loved them without partiality. He always loved them without hypocrisy. On his death bed, the last thing he said before he went home to be with the Lord was the number one thing in his heart that he had that carried him through life. Others. Others. Others.

You see, true biblical love will always be through Christ love for you, unconditional. The Bible says, "Love your enemies." How do you do that? You love them through Christ. You do the same thing. But most people think, and you hear this all the time, you hear people tell you all the time that, you know, God loves the sinner, but He hates the sin. You know, that is not true. You hear

that. I have heard preachers say that. I have heard preachers get up and say, "Well, you know what? God loves the sinner, but He hates the sin." We quote that like it is in the Bible someplace, or Jesus said that. Muhammad Gandhi said that. That was one of his little sayings, that God loved the sinner, but hated the sin. That is not true.

The Bible teaches that if an unsaved man or woman, that the wrath of God abides on them already. When God sees an unsaved man or a woman, they are as good as in hell right now with the door locked and the key lost and the wash, rocked it up, rusted up, and nobody can get out. If you are saved today, God looks at you, you are receded, and have any places with Christ Jesus. But there is no love of God shed upon unsaved men and women. The wrath of God is already on them. They are not part of God's family. God does not love them. God cannot love them. He is holy. They are wicked. He cannot love them. He cannot love them. He does not hear their prayers, and He looks at them as absolutely the opposite end of the universe from where He is at.

Then how does a man ever get saved? How does God, how does God who is so holy reach out to you and to me before we are saved when we are so unholy? This is the great, this is the great doctrine of propitiation in the Bible. This is the great doctrine of the advocacy of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He died for every man and every woman. When God looks at an unsaved man, the only way He can love them, the only way He can reach out to them, the only way He can reach down and a holy God touch an unholy thing as He looks at them through the death of His Son. He looks at you and me before we were saved through the death of His Son on the cross, and that is the only way that God can love us. Without the death of Christ on the cross, He cannot love us. We are aliens to God, illegal ones. We are aliens to God. We have absolutely nothing in common. The Bible says in Romans that we are enmity against God before we were saved. The only way God can see us, reach out to us and love us is through His Christ, His Son's death on the cross. He sees us when we are unsaved through the blood. When a man moves toward that cross and come to God, God accepts him through that cross. That blood that was shed gets applied to his sin, then he comes through it on the other side and he is spotless and he is clean. But He cannot just look down and say, "I love all of the world." For God to love the world, yes, but through His Son. He loves them through the death of His Son and sees us before we are saved through the death of Christ. That is how He does it.

You know how you love somebody that is unlovable? You see them the same way. Take the same aspect that God uses and use it in your life. You look at the unlovable as Christ. Look, you know the first thing you get in your mind? You got some people who are very unlovable in the ministry. You got people who are very unlovable in the world. You know how you love them in spite of who they are? You realize first of all that you did not look too hot the first time God put His eyeballs on you. Yet in spite of that, God through His death of His Son on the cross saw you and me and loved me. That is how you do it. You absolve them in the cross of Calvary just like God absolved you in the cross of Calvary. That is how you love. That is how you love the unlovable. You realize how unlovable you and I were before we were saved and understand God loved us when we were unlovable. That is how. That is how.

Lots of unlovable people in the ministry. Sometimes God's people do dastardly things. Sometimes the world does dastardly things. Sometimes they do it by accident. Sometimes they

just mean it, every mean bit of it. So what? For you and I were saved, there were things that you and I did that were stupid and then there were things that you and I did that we knew was against God's law that we just simply did not care. What did God do? God loved us unconditionally through the death of His Son on the cross. That is how you do it.

VII. Abhor Evil, Cleave to Good

Let love be without dissimulation. Then he says this, and this is the last part of this verse, I think this is great, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Now the word abhor means totally hate. You have heard me say this many, many times before, this is not new to you. It simply means here that you and I as a child of God need to grow to the place in our lives where we hate the things that God hates and we love the things that He loves. That is your process and my process. That is what it is all about. Simply abhorring the things that God hates and then beginning to love the things that God loves.

He says abhor that which is evil. As you grow in your walk with God, I have told you before, I tell everybody that is dealing with an issue. I do not care what your problem is that you are struggling with. You will never overcome that problem until you fully understand and see that problem and see how much God hates what you are doing. The more you hate it, the more you see how God hates it, the closer you get to God, the more you are going to hate it.

I talked to a guy this week that just got saved a couple of months ago. I love when God puts a thing guy through this. He is not here today so I can say this. I love this guy. This guy is one of the neatest guys I have ever been around in my life. He absolutely wants to do right with God so bad. It is refreshing to me when in a world where Christianity do not want to do what is right that some guy can get saved and just simply try to dump everything he is doing wrong. You know what? That is not a reality. He has got a problem with cigarettes. About three weeks after he got saved, he called me on the phone just down in the dumps. I thought something bad happened, you know, because I thought his wife left him or dog died or he lost his job or some terrible thing befell him. He was all down in the dumps. He said, "I have got to talk to you." I said, "Well, sure, what is the problem?" I come to find out and I keep coming to find out that his problem was that he cannot quit smoking. Now he has been saved for at this point about three weeks. He thinks he ought to be able to kick everything he has got in life. I just kind of chuckle within myself and I say, "You know what, buddy? I said, it is those things are just have to come in time." I said, "The thing you do not want to do," I said, "You do not want to beat yourself up so bad that you just come to the place where you defeat yourself because you are in a situation where you just have to have to get through this thing in a process." I told him this. I said, "You know what? Truth of the matter is this. You will never kick cigarettes until you hate cigarettes as much as God does. And now you have only been saved for four weeks. You cannot hate it as much as God does."

Well, last week, but now been three months he has been saved. He came over to see me. Really down the dumps. I said, "What is the matter?" He said, "I am so mad at myself." I said, "What do you matter so far?" He said, "Oh, I am embarrassed to tell." I said, "You can tell me anything." He said, "You know what?" He says, "I have spent three hundred dollars on cigarettes this week." I said, "Well, why are you buying so many?" I am thinking, you know, carton of cigarettes is fifty

dollars, I guess, you know. I mean, fifty dollars for carton of cigarettes. Woo. Man, that would be enough for me to quit smoking. He said, "I spent three hundred dollars on cigarettes and ashtrays this week." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "I went through my house last week, threw every ashtray away. Went through everything that could be even used for an ashtray, threw every cigarette away." Then I finished the story and I said, "And then two days later he went out and bought new ashtrays and more cigarettes." "Is that right?" He said, "Yeah, yeah." He said, "It is not the worst of us." "What was that?" He said, "I threw those away yesterday." I said, "And then you went out and bought some more today." "Yeah, yeah, yeah." But you see, that is a good thing. Now you know why I know that guy will quit cigarettes in time? You know how I know he will? Because it is beginning to drive him nuts. Because he knows every time he does, it controls him more than God does. This particular young man, he wants nothing in his life. At this time, anyhow, he wants nothing to control him more than God. Well, that is a good thing for a young Christian. You know what? He will probably wind up spending, in my estimation, dealing with people 35 plus years, he will probably spend, oh, I do not know, \$100,000 before he kicks it by today's standards. But he hates it. You know why he hates it? He does not hate it because of the fact that it makes his breath smell bad or makes his teeth yellow or it makes his fingers smell like smoke or gets in his clothes. He hates it because it is something that he looks, and he said this. His was his problem. He said, "I think my problem right now that I cannot kick this has come between me and God." I spent the next 45 minutes saying, "You know what? It has not come between you and God. You know when it comes between you and God? When you do it and do not care about it." That is when it comes between you and God. God is sitting up there just like me, arms folded, looking at you with a big smile on His face, saying, "That is good. Good. That is probably \$400. Once you get the purple ashtrays, they go with your carpet a lot better than the other ones. And they match the trash bags, but you do throw them out." That is a process. He will kick it because he is learning to hate it. He will kick it because he is learning to see that it is something and in his mind keeps him from what he wants to do with God. He will kick it. He will kick it. He will kick it. Absolutely he will kick it. It may cost him a lot of money. It may cost him, there may be no more ashtrays left at the Dollar General store. But the bottom line is this. He will kick it.

He says, "Abhor that which is evil." You will never get with anything in your life until you hate it as much as God does. That is true of people that you run around with too. That is true of anything in your life.

Then my next part of the verse, boy, I love this. Oh, this is one of these jewels in the Bible. "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Now I love the word cleave there. Because in Genesis chapter 2 verse 24, when God brought Adam his wife, the Bible says that the two cleave together. Cleave in Ephesians chapter 5 is the other word for joined. Cleaving is meaning the two become one. You know why he used the word cleave here? You know why he said, "Abhor that which is evil, but cleave to that which is good?" Because I will tell you what, you want to overcome things in your life and get to the point of life where you can really be what God wants you to be, getting married to good. Marry goodness. Become one with it. Do not just talk about it. Become one with it. Cleave to it. When you got married, you know what? You are all husband and wives here. You are sitting separately. Or some of you sitting together and you

are two people. You got a man and a woman, but the bottom line is the day you got married, you become one in God's sight. How did that happen? How did that happen? How come you are still sitting side by side or one is up here, one is in the back when you are really one because it is a spiritual union. Just like you got spiritually married to your husband or your wife, you get spiritually married to good and you cleave to it. It becomes, you become one with it. That is how you do it. Great word. Great word.

VIII. Brotherly Love and Preferring One Another

Then he says in Romans 12:10, and now remember these are the principles. Then he says in verse 10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Now that is a great one. This one is real easy, or at least appears to be easy. You know, churches are families. Paul talks about it all the time. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. You know, the tragedy of a dysfunctional family is the same tragedy in a dysfunctional church.

I grew up with a sister. I know some of you grew up with brothers and sisters that I had, but just me and my sister, but I know this. I know that my sister and I fought all the time. The older I got, she got, you know, and mom was working and dad was working and she was left in charge. She would tell me what to do. I did not want to do it. I used to fight with her like cats and dogs. We would go around and around and around. I would call her names. She would call me names. It was a thing where just the way it was. You know what happened one night? We went down to an appliance store down in downtown Canton. I was about 16 or 17 at the time. My sister then was about 20. Now the riff was really there now, see. Because I am 16. I know everything there is, knowing life. She is 20 and she is still in charge when mom and dad are working. But all four of us, mom and dad and me and my sister, her name is Sharon, went down to this appliance store. We were going to buy a washing machine or a dryer. I forget what it was. But anyway, we came out and my sister, as always, would be very bored with things and she would go get in the car, wait in the car. That was her deal. She was that at age where, you know, she had to do her own thing. So she is in the car. So we are walking out there. As we come out of the door, there are two guys. Got the back door open. One of them is, grabbed my sister around her neck. The other one was trying to take her purse. Now I never thought about the nasty thing she said to me that day. I did not stand back and say, "Hey, I give it to her. We have both of you. Kick her down. Knock her down." No. No. I never thought of the, one time, I never thought of the differences that we had. All I saw was two guys pulling my sister out of the car. I did not think to myself, "Take her and I will be now in charge." No. My dad was probably in his late, early 50s, something like that, maybe late 40s. You know, I grabbed the one guy, threw him over this side. My dad grabbed him and I grabbed the guy and got him down on the ground. Unfortunately, the one guy turned around and knocked my dad, broke his glasses, hit him right in the face, knocked him up against the wall. I had the other guy down on the ground and the guy swung around, kicked me right in the side of the face, knocked me out cold. We went to the hospital. My face was like a watermelon. My dad's glasses were broken. It was a whole big thing. We did not get a very good washer out of it either. It lasted about a week. But anyway, it was a bad day.

The bottom line is this. You know what? I never stopped to think that my sister needed help. You know why? Because at the end of the day, she was family. She was my flesh and blood. You know what? At the end of the day, we are family, flesh and blood. You can have your disagreements. You can disagree with this, disagree with that, whatever. But at the end of the day, when push comes to shove, it is a family.

You know what people say about this church many times you do not hear? It is one of the most amazing, and I love it. We were at some place, one someplace, all here all the time. When people come who are not part of our church and they come to an activity or you have a dinner at some place or they go here, they come to something that we do, and sometimes even church services, but whatever. They will always say this. When I talk to them afterwards, they will say, they will always sustain. They say, "You know what? I just felt like you guys are one big family." I say we are. It takes us 30 minutes to say goodbye to each other. I mean, you know, we have a, I preach an hour and 15 minutes. We have a song service at 20 and it takes 30 minutes to say goodbye. I mean, you say goodbye to each other 10 times before you leave. Then you stand on the steps and wave. Then you get in your car and you honk as you drive out of the parking lot. That is the greatest asset I think this church has among all the other things in the Bible is the fact that there is a family unity. That does not mean you do not have spits and spats. Everybody does. Me and my sister did, but at the end of the day, your family, your family. We are a family and the family always has issue, but like I said, they are still family. They are God's family.

Just like in an earthly family, if you have the right dad and the right mom, there should not be, you know, they should not be. I watched Jamie and Danny with, with Maddie and Kenzie. They will talk about two kids that fight. I mean, one gets it wrong. One thing for this and somebody has it. Somebody else wants it. Or I have even seen them fight for the same spot in the couch. I have seen them fought over the last french fry, but I win that battle because I am bigger. I have watched them sit down and make them apologize to your. And they do not want to. They do not want to. They look down. They look down, look around. They do not want to. They make them go to the other one and say, "Now tell them you are sorry. Give them a hug." You can tell many times it is it is because, you know, I am being forced to do this. But the bottom line is that is what it has to be. There should be no problem that in a family that a mom and a dad who were on top of things cannot solve. But in God's family, come on. What issue should come up in God's family that we cannot solve?

You know, that is why he says over there in 1 Corinthians, he gets on them about going to court. They had issues in the church where somebody defrauded somebody or did something. So they took him to a court. You know what Paul says? "What are you doing?" He said, "Why are you taking a brother or sister to law? Do not you know that someday you are going to judge angels at the great white throne judgment? If you are going to be able to judge angels, then why cannot you solve these pale little problem now?" Where it is, we are family.

Now, you know what the key to this is? Here is the key to this. It is the last part of this verse. He says, "Kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." That is the key. In honor, preferring one another. Now what does he mean by that? What is he saying? Here is what he is saying. You honor a brother or sister in Christ. This is the way I

should deal with you. You should deal this with me. You should deal with this with each other. What he is saying is this, that a brother or a sister in Christ is given honor by you giving them preference over yourself.

Nothing works. Husbands and wives. Once you get married, instead of singing, "Oh, to joy," a more apt song would be, "The fight is on." No marriage is problem free. You are going to have disagreements. But may I give you a great key in your marriage to keep the problems to a minimum? Look at Joe, he is going to put this right in his Bible there right there. He has got that down there. You have got to be careful with her because she can probably shoot as good as you can and she probably still got her phaser gun someplace under the bed there. But you know how the bottom line is? Prefer one over another. You know what you had to fight about with your wife or your husband? You have got to fight about who is wrong. You know what most of our fights are about? Who is right? You have got to fight about who was wrong. Something happens and the husband ought to have enough spiritual insight to say, "Oh, honey, that was my fault. I should not have done that." The wife ought to have spiritual insight enough to say, "No, no, no, that was my fault. I am sorry, honey, I did not tell you." "No, darling, no, no, no, no, no, it was my fault. It was not your fault." "No, honey, it really was my fault." "Shut up, you jerk! It was my fault!" No, but you take it, you see. You fight about who was wrong, not about who was right. In Christianity, that is the way it ought to be. You know what that is called? Preferring one above another. It is honoring the other person by putting yourself under them, not over them.

Now, I know that in every scenario you have to deal hardline with things. I am not talking about that. You know, you know, there are people that come in and actually try to cause – I am not talking about – I am talking about in every day. The Bible says every day he talks about the fact that we are to love one another. Affection, affection, affection. Affection is something that you show. It is something that you display. It is kindly affection one to another with brotherly love in honor of preferring one another. When you give me a husband and wife who will argue about who is wrong instead of who is right, I will show you two people who do not have many problems to deal with. You show me somebody who takes Romans 15:1 or that great verse that "ye that are strong out the barely infirmities of the weak and not to please himself." William preached on that just last night at Louis de Mission. Very good job, William. I learned a lot of things that night. Very good job. That is as good as I have ever heard. By the way, let me just say this. Your style, 1,000 percent. Last time – this is not a criticism, but it is, but it is a good – last time you get up there, you basically read everything off that. I could not believe it. You stood there. You closed. You were controlled. I do not think you looked at your note one time. You had a tie on. That looked good. I even brought – I brought mine today. I have not wore it yet, but I got it in my bag back there. I was impressed. Very good job. You know what it shows me? It shows me you are growing exactly the way to God once you see. I cannot teach you those things. I give you the principles. I keep you accountable. I give you the truth, but you take those things and you do something with them. I watched you. I stood back there. In fact, I stand back there with Bob. I said, "Wow, so that is really good." I mean, you had a pose. You were confident. You talked. You really had something to say. That is what I am talking about, you see. Your passage was right on text. Not to please ourselves. Not to please ourselves. I do not do this – I do not do this for my pleasure. The ministry, first of all, is to be pleasing to God, but then second of all, is

to respect you to the place and honor you that it is here to please you in the sense that you and I are part of the family. That is the key to a marriage, to absolve each other. That is the key to Christianity, to absolve each other of the petty little issues. I mean, there is going to be things that you have to deal with. There is going to be things that maybe you have to get a third party to work through. There is going to be things that you have to sit down and deal with. I am not talking about that. Ninety-five percent of the problems in any church are petty things that could be covered if you just followed some of these principles.

IX. Not Slothful in Business

Now the next one, Romans 12:11. "Not slothful in business." Now for Christians, this is probably the greatest concept you are never going to fully understand. I mean, God's people just never seem to see this. I have talked to people that, you know, you all work someplace and some of you have your own businesses. I have talked, I have seen people all my life who they work for somebody and they did not do a very good job and they were Christians. They thought that the job was their place of witness and so they would steal money, steal time from the boss, witnessing to somebody else in violation of the company policy and then feel good about that. Then when the boss had a problem with it or they got fired, they would actually think of themselves as somehow I have been persecuted because of my Christian faith. No, you lost your job because you are an idiot and you stole from your boss time, which he is there to make money. If he would have hired you to be the spiritual leader and counselor of the business, it would have been one thing. He did not. He hired you to crunch numbers, do this, do that. You took from that and you did something else with it. It is just that simple.

Then you have people who have their own businesses. You know what? We think, and again, we make the mistake of thinking that it is what we know about the Bible, how well we teach it, that that is what people look to. That is not true. People look at the way we live our lives and then evaluate what we say based on what they see us do in our lives. I am just telling you. If I was a businessman, I have a favorite saying with my kids, my little grandkids, I will be downstairs working on something and I will hear a little pitter-patter, little feet come in and they will get up there. It is a little game we play. They know that grandpa is not always up there, but he comes up pretty quickly. I just give them a little time to get settled. I will go up and they will all be sitting there and I will do stupid things. They will be watching the Disney Channel and I will ask them if we can watch a war movie. They will say, "No, no, no, no, no." I will sit over there and I will be sitting there and I will be rocking in a rocking chair watching them. They are watching television. Then sooner or later one of them will look at me and I have this little saying and they always giggle. I say, "What are you looking at me for? I do not owe you any money." They will get a laugh every time, every time, every time, every time.

You know what? If I was the businessman and you came to me and I was a pastor too, maybe a little pastor, a part-time job, you know, and I was a businessman and I hosed you in business. You know, I took advantage of you and you came to church on Sunday morning and you were upset with, because deep down inside you, you know, you know, I took advantage of you and I am teaching the Bible to you. Would you hear my sermon? They would not hear my sermon.

Whatever I said, no matter how good it was, no matter how great it was, I could have honored the greatest truth in the world. You are going to sit there that morning and look at me, not in the light of what I am trying to give you, but in the light of the fact that I hosed you. Everything I say, you are going to say, "You ripped me off. You hosed me good." "Not slothful in business," you see. It is not about what I know about the Bible. It is not about how well I do this or how well I do that. People will look at you and they will look at me and they will come to the point that they will judge whatever I say, whatever I do based on how I have conducted my business, my life. I said, you know what, right or wrong, that is the way the people are. I am not saying that that is the right thing for them to do, but that is the way they will do it.

The right thing. I never lend money to anybody that I do not think to myself I will never get it back. I do not set myself up for that. I have had people come to me and say, "You know what, could you help me out?" and I say, "Sure." When I give it to them, they will say, "Well, I am going to pay it back to you. As soon as I get this or that," I say, "Sure." You know what, I do not even hear that. You know why? Because I have learned over the years not to set myself up for it. I learned over the years that nine times out of ten they are not going to pay it back. I already conditioned my mind under condition and I give it to them that I do not have a problem with it later. It is when I do not condition it that way and I really believe what they say and then it does not happen that I could have a problem. But if I set myself up to say to myself, "You know what, if you are going to do this, Bob, if you are going to do this, just do not be upset if you do not get it back because this is what you are dealing with." Then I do not have a problem with it. But if I did not, I would say, you know, I tell people all the time. You know, we do not put any locks and keys on a bookstore back there. You can come here and steal whatever you want. I have situations where I tell people, "You know what, you know what, I will just trust you, go do this, go do that." Then I will put the little joke. Somebody said, "Well, what if I rip you off? What if I come back here?" "Well, when I get to heaven, I will know it and I will be looking at you real funny over there, you know."

Bottom line is this. People do not go with what they hear us say. They go with how we react and how we do. The Bible says not be slothful in business. You know what, the things that ruin people's lives, the big things that we think of, there is booze, drugs, women, the world. Let me tell you something that is worse than all of those, being slothful in business.

A couple of years, many years ago, they came out with a new phone book that only had Christians in it. The church I was at, they brought in a big box, a hundred of them. They were about this size and they were the Christian businessmen's yellow pages. Every business in it was Christian. There was a charismatic group that was doing it. Their mindset was, you know what, we had to support each other as Christians. Well, I was on duty that day, so to speak, and they brought them in there. I said, I said, "We do not, I said, I do not want these." You could not understand it. You could not understand why I did not want these Christian deals. First of all, if you only deal with Christians, how are you ever going to win people to Christ? That was my first thing. It was not really my first one, but I was trying to be spiritual leading up to the second one. The second one was I told the guy, "You know what, I do not want these because the biggest hosings I ever got in my life, I got some Christians. The unsaved world has treated me a lot fairer

than God's people have." That is a terrible thing to say. But you know what, it is true. The principle is true. We have a responsibility of who we work for. We have a responsibility that we have our own business. It is one of those things that people do not listen to what you say. They watch what you do. They watch what I do. I mean, you sit there and think the whole message, how you got taken advantage of by me, right or wrong. That is what human nature does.

So he lays these great things out. These are incredible things. I am telling you, these are these are things. These are things that you just cannot get past. I mean, they are incredible. He talks about, first of all, that we are to be cheerful in our forgiveness. He talks about the fact that you and I are to come to the point where we love without assimilation. We come to the fact that we are kindly affectionate toward another, not slothful in business. That we think these things and we put them in our life because these are the things that are the key, the key to our success in dealing with people. See, this is the reality of it. This takes away all the smoke and the screen and the mirrors of who I think I am and what I do. The bottom line is, nobody sees that. These are the things they see. These things come because of the example that we have with Christ.

Well, we are going to hold up there and we will finish this up next week because it is almost 12:30 and I have got a funeral. I have got to do it an hour. But let me just say this. I am going to ask you to come Thursday night praying. I am asking you to come with an open heart. I am going to show you some things that you have forgotten. But I am also going to show you some things that are about our future. Things are never always what they appear, are they? I want to take the time to walk this through this, show you this thing and I want you to come. I want you to come on holy ground. We are going to meet upstairs, as I said, exactly at 7 o'clock and we are going to have our dinner up there. Then we will move down to here. We will have the kids taken care of. We will meet right here where we are seated now and we will talk about everything we are going to go through and then we will have a great time. We will have dessert. We are going to have plenty of coffee and plenty of things that be a good time. Please be here at 7 o'clock and I am going to say this. If you have somebody who is looking for a church, if you have somebody that is unsaved, believe it or not, this will be a great night to bring them. One, if they are looking for a church, they will get an understanding of what a real New Testament church is supposed to be doing and what it looks like and it will make their decision a lot easier if they are lost. The Holy Spirit of God will take those things that we are going to talk about because they will be the object of our love and the object of our ministry. The Holy Spirit of God will work down through those things. So bottom line is if you have somebody in that shape, you bring them. Do not think, "Well, it is just a meeting so therefore it will not work." No, it is not just a meeting. It is a bona fide Bible study but it is a bona fide Bible study of where we have got to go based on the Bible from this point on. We have the hard decisions we have to make that night and it will be good. It will be good for you, be good for them. Make sure you sign up today if you have not signed up. Like I said, today will be the last day you can sign up and then we will be here 7 o'clock sharp and we will go from there. So let us pray. Father, thank you for these great truths.