

# Ezekiel 47

Sunday 2/1/2009

Well, if you have your Bible this morning, I want you to turn back again to Ezekiel chapter 47. If you were not here last week, one of the things we began to do, I have told everybody that as we were coming through Ezekiel chapter 40 through chapter 48 in the book of Romans, I was talking about and focusing on that great chapter that talked about spiritual growth, how that the river, the water of life, was such an incredible picture of what we are. I told you that, based on where so many of us are, William definitely fits into that category. He's a young man who came into a church along with his brother, and they represent so many of you who have come in and really have gotten into the Bible, and the Bible is really making a difference in your life. To me, to hear that today and to see that and what God has done in his life and Zach's life and so many of your lives is just absolutely incredible.

So we started talking about a great picture of the process of spiritual growth in our lives. I want to be honest with you, most of what I give you is stuff that I have come through myself. I do not like to preach messages that I cannot live. I do not like to preach messages that I do not have experience with. I am not one of these kinds of guys who just listens to somebody else's sermon and then takes that sermon and tries to replicate it in what you do. I think a pastor that is a good preacher has to not only know his material but has to be able to live his material. Obviously, nobody is perfect, and you cannot do everything that way. But I think the consistency is simply that spiritual growth is never easy. It is never easy. All of us that aspire to grow spiritually and to put things in our lives, we have talked about what that means. We have talked about how we get to another level and how at each level we have to deal with issues that maybe we did not deal with on the other level. That is spiritual growth.

I remember years ago, I lived in a house back in Canton that was, all of my life, from the time that I can remember anything, we lived in that house. I lived in that house right up until the time that we moved to Kansas City here in 1975, the end of 1975. All of my life, I lived in that home. All the memories that I have of my childhood, my mom and my dad, my sister, and all the things that we did, all go back and are centered around that home. I remember that one time I had been gone for 10 or 15 years, and we went back to Ohio, and I drove down there in the old neighborhood. My mom still lived down there. She does not live in the same house, but she lives right down the street from it. I saw that the house had some new people living in it, and it had all changed. The block went all the way down to the end of 15 houses. Sometime right after I moved out, they put a freeway in, and the house next to my house and then the freeway is right there, and they cut everything out and took it all away.

I remember I went up and I asked, I went to the door and I asked the person, I felt kind of stupid doing it, but I asked the person, I explained to them who I was, and I explained to them that I grew up in this house. I asked them if I could, I said, "I do not want to be intrusive or anything, but could I just come in and just look around at where I grew up?" They were very kind, very gracious, and allowed me to come in. It is like so many things in your life after years gone by. I remember the house being huge. You know how that goes? But the house was very small when I got back into that. In fact, I wondered how we all lived in that house together. I found a place

where the kitchen was, in the dining room, and I went back to the times that I used to play there, and upstairs, in the bathroom and in the bedroom. It was just a very small little house.

I went into the kitchen, and I had forgotten this. When I went into the kitchen, I looked at the door going down to the basement. Immediately, I was drawn to the thing they put around the door, whatever they are called, the door braces or whatever it is. Right around that, I saw immediately that I remembered those. There was a bunch of notches in that framework. I remembered that that is where my dad, when I was very young, right up to the day, the last time he did it was about the week before I went into the Army. I looked at those notches on that door. Now they had been painted over probably four or five times, and I am surprised they were even still there. But I looked at that, and for a moment, everything in my life came back to perspective because those notches represented my growth in that home. I remember that every notch was a little higher than the next one because it was symbolic of my growth. From the time I first did it when I was five years old to the time when I was 19, when I left for the United States Army, there was every notch down through my life that really spoke of my life. People probably looked at that and that owned the place, "What in the world is this?" But to me, it represented my life and my growth.

I looked at those notches, and sometimes not all those notches were pleasant notches that were put in that door. It was a time in my life when I was a teenager, just like many of you were when you were teenagers, that it was not a pleasant time. I was one of those guys, much like you, that when I was 18 years old or 17 years old or 16 years old, I thought my parents were the dumbest people in the world. Then when I turned 19 and 20, I could not realize how they got so smart between the time I was 17 and the time I turned 19. We change, do we not? Growth is something that is absolutely crucial in our lives. I tell you that story to tell you this: it is not always, sometimes it has to be painful. Sometimes we have to go through things in our lives to grow that we would rather not go through. Ezekiel chapter 47 is a great picture of where our life and how we should grow.

I told you last week when we started that doctrinally, all of chapter 47 is a picture of the millennial reign of Christ, how that the water comes out of a sanctuary, or sometimes it is called the holy oblation, comes down to the Dead Sea and then splits and goes out from the right side of the throne. It is a picture of what is going to take place in the millennial reign of Christ. I told you how important it was to really learn not only this type but all the types in the Bible because types are an incredible way to accelerate your spiritual growth, to accelerate our learning process by the illustration of great truths that are found in a story. I want to begin to read again. I think we need to do that again just to get a context. Turn back to Ezekiel chapter 47. Let me read these nine verses for you, and then we will pick up where we left off last week.

*Ezekiel 47:1-9*

*1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east: and the waters came down from under the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.*

*2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.*

*3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.*

*4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the loins.*

*5 Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.*

*6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.*

*7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.*

*8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.*

*9 And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.*

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Lord, these are good people here today. I believe that the majority of them, if not all of them, really want to do what is right with God. I cannot look into their hearts, but it would be hard for me to believe that they would come back week after week after week and hear some of the things that have to be said from this pulpit that are not always a pleasant thing, but then spiritual growth is not always an easy thing in our lives. Yet they come week after week. Many of them apply the principles, and my week is filled with men and women who come and really want to learn how to take it to the next level in their lives. From Thursday night, when they show up and they ask their questions like they did last Thursday, questions that really we all benefit from, but it exposes how the Holy Spirit of God is working in a person's heart. Lord, I love these people, and Lord, I want to help them get to where God can use them.

My greatest fear in all of my ministry and all of my life as far as my ministry is that someone will stand at the judgment seat of Christ and not have everything that God has for them, and it would be my fault. I cannot be responsible for what they do with the truth that I give them, but Lord, I am responsible for the truth that I do impart to them. Lord, I pray that You keep me honest today, that You help me look at these things and say whatever needs to be said, because Lord, just as when I go back to my home and I look at those notches of my growth physically that my dad cut into the door, I know that in my own life over those years, not every one of those years was pleasant. Not every one of those years was a good year. Certainly, most of those years

had nothing to do with You. But Lord, in the same vein, in the same concept, help us to realize that we must grow spiritually as a church. The leaders must be raised up, leaders must come into view, leaders must take responsibility. Men and women must rise up to the occasion. We cannot all be just spectators in the sport of Christianity. Men and women have to rise to the occasion. But Lord, it has to be done by the book. It has to be done the right way. Training of leaders the wrong way is just as bad as not training up leaders at all. Lord, help us today to look and see as we look at this next section, this next part of this river. Help us to see and understand where we are at and help us to move on to the next level and to deal with things openly and honestly that we need to. We will thank You and praise You for all You do. In Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

## I. Reviewing the Stages of Spiritual Growth

Last week, you should have these down already because I listed them to you as we went through. I talked about some major points that are crucial in understanding this lesson in your own spiritual growth. The first thing we talked about, and your list may not match up with my list, so you can add these to it. It is no problem. Sometimes I am not the most organized person in my delivery. But the first thing we learned and the first great principle you should have down, if you do not already, is that there is a process of spiritual growth in the Bible. God has a definite plan for you and I to grow spiritually. There are models of that in the Bible. Ezekiel chapter 47 is one of those models. Ezekiel chapter 47 ought to be in everybody's Bible and everybody's life. If it is certainly not up to this point in your life, certainly from this point on in your life, it needs to be the crossroads of your life where you really take these things and you really understand that God does have a definite process of spiritual growth in your life. It is not your process, it is not my process, it is His process.

The second thing we talked about is there is also a way to measure your spiritual growth. Everybody ought to have a way to measure your spiritual growth. Today, our message is going to be kind of based on that because giving you all of this without showing you the way to do it is probably not a very good way to do things. You have heard me say many, many times, there is no fast track to building a relationship with God. But you can accelerate it to a degree, and I showed you, we talked about that last week. But the thing that you need to understand is that not only does God have a process, but there is a way for you to measure that process. Getting into the process without honestly and openly being able to evaluate your process is not a good thing.

I showed you how that the type here or the picture here in Ezekiel chapter 47 is a man wading into the wide, deep river. This man has already been told as he begins to walk into this river that he cannot get to the other side. I showed you how that God was telling this guy that you need to get into this river and start wading into this river, but I am telling you right now, there is no way you are going to get to the other side of this river. I showed you how that that was a great picture of where God wants all of us to come to, the place in our lives where we walk by faith and not by sight. The water here, as you well know by now, is a picture of the Holy Spirit of God. You and I wading into that is a picture of our walk with God, how that every day of your life you want to

give up more control of your life and give more control over to Him. That is what this whole story represents.

The next thing you want to get out of this, or you should have down or you need to put down, is the farther this man goes into the river, the deeper it gets. Keep in mind, the farther he goes into this river and the deeper he gets, the less control he has over his own life. You have to see that. That is what this whole story represents.

Last week, we saw that he started out to the ankles. I showed you that the ankles are the foundation of your Christian life in the Bible. That is what you get. That is where many of you are right now. Our job, people are discipling you, they are working with you, they are bringing things into your life, they are putting things there and helping you through issues in your life. They are helping you get your feet wet. They are helping you do everything in this church we do, from the volleyball that we do on Saturday night to the Bible Institute on the other end of the spectrum, to the bowling activity we had last night, to Thursday night Bible study, to the discipleship. I do not care if it is so stringently Bible-based you cannot miss it, or it is such a good time that you cannot figure out how this connects with the Bible study over here. It is all for the same purpose. There is a well-balanced process that gives you everything that you need to get you a foundation in the Bible. A foundation in the Bible is not only learning good biblical principles but it is finding good biblical friends and learning how to walk.

Then we saw him move up to the knees. I showed you how important this was because I keyed on a little phrase that he brought him through the water to the knees. I asked you the question, "Has God brought you through the process of spiritual growth yet and brought you to your knees?" The knees are very significant because it is the place where we really have a place of commitment. I told you last week it is the place where if anybody is going to bail out of a church, if anybody is going to not continue on, it is going to be when they get to this point right here. You folks look at things differently than I do. From my perspective as a pastor, and some of you guys see it for my wake or you are moving up the thing a little bit, but there is a process to everything. When people come into this church or any church and they begin to, and the honeymoon wears off like we talked about last week, and they begin to have to face the reality in their life, they are going to do one of two things. They are going to meet those challenges and they are going to continue to grow, or they are going to come to the place where they are going to stop growing, and then they are going to find some other reason or excuse not to grow anymore, and the rest is history.

I found people that came in that I began to work with or you began to work with, and when they come in, they love everything. Through the process of working with them, some issues came up that they had to deal with. I remember one particular situation a number of years ago that a guy came in, and immediately I really doubted whether he was ever really saved or not. I know I do not have the right to say somebody is lost or somebody is saved in a sense. That is not my responsibility. As a pastor, when you work with people, if you are saved or you are lost, it depends on two different ways that I deal with you. When I see somebody come in and everything because of the excitement appears to be good, but then when you get down and you start peeling back the levels and you see deep down inside something is missing, and then when

you try to talk to that person about that particular area, it becomes very real that that person does not want to deal with that area. After two or three weeks, maybe a month, maybe a couple of months, it is obvious that that is an issue in their world, and they do not want to cross that for whatever reason. Many times, it is because it is a pride issue. "I have been coming to church now for years, and I have been in the Bible for years, and now for me to actually say that it has all been a sham, it has not really been real."

I have had some that came in that their problem was authority. As long as it is like some of your kids, you get along fine with your kids until you have to correct them. Well, Christians are the same way. You get along fine with them. "Oh, I love Bobby, I love you, oh, we love each other," until you have to deal with an issue in their life, and any mean old nasty old Bob, like mean old nasty old mom and dad, there is really no difference. You will find that everybody is happy until they have to deal with an issue in their life that has to deal with maybe their submission to an authority. Out they go.

Then you have some, and we have all dealt with these, some of you are dealing with some right now like this, and they come to the point where they come in, they get excited, the church is here, they love it, but the problem is that they are just not going to let go of the world. It would be hard to come to this church. I mean, you may have some issues that you can come here and that I do not ever clobber on, but this church has never made any apologies saying that you ought to be separate from the world, and they must be terribly uncomfortable for somebody to sit here week after week after week. I know it is uncomfortable. Sometimes it is uncomfortable for me to preach what I preach week after week after week, to sit here and that you struggle with the world, that you still have one foot in the world, and they hear everything I say or every other thing I say, or the whole point of the message comes down to the fact that you have to be separate from the world. You have seen it, you have dealt with them, and it is just the way that it goes.

Spiritual growth is something that we learned last week. It is not just about learning the Bible. I wish it was. Most of us make that mistake, and we think that we measure our spiritual growth by what we know about the Bible. Let me tell you something, that is a very bad situation to get into because knowing the Bible, I have known many, many preachers in my years in the ministry that knew the Bible, but their own personal lives were an absolute disaster. To me, knowing the Bible is a good thing, and obviously, I teach you the Bible and do what I do so you will learn the Bible, but you have to understand that learning the Bible and knowing the Bible is not a definite in your spiritual growth, but the truth of the matter is as you learn the Bible level by level, facing the issues about us that we have to change, that will continually make us more like Christ.

Finally, we learned, and I call these our six great essentials, finally we learned that we never, as a Christian, we never stand still. Once you get saved, the Holy Spirit of God begins a movement process in your life, and you are either moving ahead or you are regressing. This is what happens. Maybe you can figure this out; it will help you when you are dealing and working with people. This is what happens: a person comes, they get involved, they get into the Bible, they begin growing, but then they are faced with issues deep down inside themselves that they just rather not deal with, and the constant exposure of the Holy Spirit of God saying, "Hey, you have

got to deal with this, you have got to deal with this, you have got to deal with this," wears them out. So they stop growing, and the moment they stop growing, the very second they stop growing, they start moving backwards, and they start allowing things to come into their life, and those things allow them to come in, and pretty soon, no matter who they blame it on or what they blame it on or whatever it takes place, they are out.

## II. The Loins: A Deeper Level of Control

Today, we need to take what we learned last week and add to it to get another piece of this puzzle of our growth process spiritually. You have heard me say many, many times, and I say it over and over again. In fact, we have a lesson, I think it is lesson six in the discipleship, that is geared to this: the great lesson on God's will versus God's plan. Just like most people think that learning the Bible is a mark of your spiritual growth, people think that God's will and God's plan are one and the same. There are a lot of misconceptions in Christianity today. I look at my job as a pastor, and some of you young guys coming up that are going to pastor down the line someplace, let me tell you what your greatest job and task is going to be. It is going to be redefining a Christianity that has the wrong definitions in most things in the world, and the wrong definitions is what got us into the message we are in today in our own personal lives. This message is about defining, in some cases redefining, but it is about you understanding what the real biblical definitions in your life and my life are all about. The context of spiritual growth is that great issue.

We know that God's will for your life is not the same as God's plan for your life. We know that God's plan for your life is what God wants you to do, and I would dare say that we start over here and we go right around here, right through the middle, right over here, that side. I could absolutely safely say this: God's plan for your life is different than the person sitting next to you. God has something that He wants to do in your life. Maybe He will, maybe He will not, but He desires to have you and to do something in your life. That is God's plan. But God's will is never connected with God's plan directly, corrected indirectly, but never directly. God's plan is what God wants you to do and what He has called you to do. God's will represents whether you ever accomplish it in your life or not because God's will is not what you do; God's will is what you become. God's will, ladies and gentlemen, is you becoming more like Christ. Listen to me now, more like Christ, and everything that means, every day of your life. As you work at fulfilling God's will for your life, more like Christ every day, in what you think, what you do, how you respond, how you deal with circumstances, God's plan automatically interacts itself. In the counseling world, we call this attitude and action. Attitude and action is one of the greatest single principles that you will ever learn in dealing with people, but at the same time, one of the greatest principles that you learn about yourself and people in general: attitude versus action. The attitude you form in your life produces the right action or the wrong action, but attitude always produces action. It is like for every outward force, there is a reverse equal force. It is like gravity: what goes up must come down. Everything in life follows that plane, and the bottom line is simply this: attitude and action. You are what you think about, and when you put the principles of the Word of God in your life and you apply those principles in your life, you see it in the visible demonstration of your actions.

Today, in this next section, as I said this already, we are going to look at this section of this mighty river, and we are going to look on not only defining spiritual growth but we are going to look at staying focused on your spiritual growth. We have come through the water to the ankles, kind of got your feet wet, and then we saw a measurement, and then the Bible says that he took us onto the knees, and then he measured again. I want to have you come down and look at verse 4. We are going to focus on the last part of verse 4, but we are going to read all of verse 4.

*Ezekiel 47:4*

*4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the loins.*

Where the ankles represent our building our foundation, and the Bible tells you in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 what that foundation is: gold, silver, precious stones, that we have defined that many, many times. Where the ankles represent you are putting this all together in the aspect of getting the foundation of God in your life, and the knees then represent the place in our submission, in our giving everything over to God, and our commitment, and it shows you the place of what I call the point of no return. I told you last week that once you get to the point past your knees, once you get to the point past your knees, this is where I call the point of no return. This is where I can begin, I should say, this is where you begin to become profitable for me in the ministry. This is where, do not take this wrong, but this is where I begin to see now in you everything that I am looking for that I can basically give you something, whatever that may be, and sleep good at night knowing that you are going to do it as good or maybe in some cases better than I would. Obviously, not many people get to this point, but the knees is the place where our commitment and our submission.

Now the loins here in verse 4 also represent a great picture in our spiritual growth, and again, it represents the next level. Loins in your Bible represent the strength of a man. Remember Thursday night on New Year's Eve when we went through the Song of Solomon, and we talked about the Lord Jesus Christ, and we talked about how that the bride was laying it all out to Him in chapter 5, and I think it was down in verse 15 where it talked about His legs, and it talked about that His legs were like marble. Now there is a reason for that. Somebody asked me this week, "How in the world, I would have never got what you got out of Ezekiel chapter 47 last week." I think sometimes you look at me like I am some spiritual guru that has some incredible insight into the Bible that the average common man does not have. That is simply not true. I just follow the basic format of basic Bible understanding that you can follow.

For instance, I know you have a picture here that I know is the millennium, and what do you have? You have the throne of God, and you have water coming out of that throne. My first clue is the fact that the water in the Bible is a picture of two things: the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God. Remember the woman at the well over there in John, I think it was John 6, when she came to Him, and she, and what did He say to her? Now she was going to a literal well, and she was going to a literal well bringing a literal pot, and she was filling up her pot with water. Jesus met her at the well, and He said, "I have water. If you drink My water, you will never thirst

again." That is a picture of you and me trying everything in life to satisfy our thirst. Did you ever not notice that you can drink whatever you want to drink? You can drink a Coke, you can drink lemonade, you can drink beer if you want, you can drink all kinds of your power drinks, you can drink whatever you want to drink in life, and some of it is good, some of it is bad, but the truth of the matter is there is only one thing that really quenches your thirst and satisfies you when nothing else will. At the end of the day, it is water. Water. You know why it is a picture? Because you can try everything else out there in this world, but I am telling you that woman had come to that well, and she had gotten water all of her life, and she had all kinds of issues and all kinds of problems in her life. The moment Jesus came up and said to her, "Hey, if you drink the water I have, you will spring into rivers of everlasting life." He just gave you every key what water is in the Bible.

So when I come over to Ezekiel chapter 47 and I see water coming out of the right side of the throne, coming down, and everywhere it goes, things get life. You see how easy it is? Now you know how I know that woman got saved back there in John chapter 6? I will tell you how I know. It never says she got saved, but you know how I know she got saved? Because if you read the story very carefully, when she left, she left the pot there. That is very symbolic. She left the water pot there when she went out to tell everybody. You know why? Because she never, never, never needed to come back to that well again. She finally found the water that was going to give her and quench her thirst.

Now when I see that, when I come to Ezekiel chapter 47 and I see this water moving down through here, and I know water is a type of the Holy Spirit, you could find what I just gave you out by a Strong's Concordance if you want to spend the time to do it. I see this guy walking into the water, coming to the ankles, coming to the knees, coming to the loins, and he is told that you cannot pass over this water. This is a suicide mission. I see the more he goes into the water, the less control he has of himself. Well, it does not take a math scientist or a rocket professor, I think I said those things backwards, to figure that out. Loins in the Bible represent a man's strength, and the Bible says in the Song of Solomon chapter 5, verse 15 that the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we are supposed to be more like every day in our process, His legs are like marble. His legs are like marble.

Now, it not only represents the strength that we have because in all sports, I do not care what you do, in all sports, the real key is your legs. You watch a really good running back; they may tackle him at the top, but his legs keep pumping. If you are a weightlifter, you do not lift with your back, you do not lift with your arms, you lift with your legs. Your legs, your thighs, your loins, they represent the strength. Not only that, but they not only represent the strength, but when you come into that thing that they are pillars of marble, they represent your stand. That is the problem with most of God's people today. We do not stand for anything. We live in a world that does not stand for anything. Most churches do not stand for anything. It is hard to find a group of Christians who really take a stand because your stand is dependent on getting those legs of marble. You know what they use, and I told you this on Thursday night, New Year's Eve, you know what they use marble for? They use it for tombstones. You know why? Because they want it to last four or five hundred years. It is the hardest metal rock that you ever find. It is almost

like metal. It is incredible. And of course, it represents not only your strength but where you stand.

Now if I wanted to find out, and somebody would say to me, "Now, Bob, how did you get loins, the truth?" Well, here is what you do, and it is real easy. Get yourself one of those Strong's Concordances. There are 63 references in the Bible in the New Testament to the word loins. In the Old Testament, 63. 63 of them. When you go through 61 of them, you are going to find that every one of them deal with loins from somebody having children, phrasing the Bible, children out of his loins, children of his loins, children from his loins, and all of that. There are only two references in all of the Bible out of the 63 that make a spiritual application and the contrast of it. I mean, if you just went down and looked at it, somebody in the sixth grade would say, "Whoa, there are two that stick out from the rest." There is your answer. Sometimes you have to do more than just come on Sunday. Sometimes you have to get some things and go after it yourself. The only two places in the Bible that relate loins in some kind of spiritual fashion to you and me, and lo and behold, they are the exact two that fit right in here.

The first one is in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 14, when he talks about the armor of God.

*Ephesians 6:14*

*14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

This man's strength is in his truth. But that is not enough because we have attitude and action. We have to work in here. So the next place you find it, the other one is in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 13.

*1 Peter 1:13*

*13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

So now we have it. See, now we understand what this truth of your loins really is. It just is not about knowing the Bible. It just is not about how good you preach or how well you know it or how well or the stand you take or the fact that you walk around life with a 25-pound King James Bible. It is about, "Do you have it up here?" Here is what you have up here translating down to here. That is the key. Most Christians never get here, and I feel bad about that. I have told you last week, this is my goal. My goal is to get every one of you to the point.

I told you last week about the seven stages of spiritual growth, and I talked about how that young Christians in the Bible or baby Christians in the Bible, people who just get saved, they are like babes, and then you move up to little children, and then up to a child, and then young men. The last three are the most important, and it is the last three that my goal is to get everybody in this room. Will I? Absolutely not. Do I want to? Absolutely yes. I want to get you to the place where you are profitable to this church in ministry, and you are only profitable to God in ministry and what God has called us to do when you get into one of these last three areas of this spiritual growth process that will be fathers, elders, and the aged. From this place on, from the loins on

through here, this is where we represent the fathers, the elders, and the aged. This is the defining point in your life. Most people when they get to the knees, they bail out. I told you last week, once you get past the knees, you are on your way. Once you get past your knees, you are going to be okay. I guarantee you.

I do not think in all of my life, in all the years that I have done, and I do not, I never say this, and I am not bragging about it, but the bottom line is in my life, I have probably put 500 to 600 young men and young ladies in the ministry. I have had some great people, and I have had some great duds. I have had some ones that were stellar in their relationship with Christ and did it, and I had some that were flame-outs at 30,000 feet, total process. But through that process, I can say this, and through my experience in dealing with them, and I have told you this before, God has called me to do one thing. God would call it one thing. I am a pastor, but I only, I am masking behind the role of a pastor. I am not a very good administrative person. I learned a long time ago to know where my limitations are, and when I do not do things well, I give them to somebody else to do. That is a good sign of leadership. Do not try to do everything yourself, and that is just the way I work. That is just the way I am. I know that there are some things that I am lousy at, and I will not even attempt to do it, and I will tell you, it is just the way that it is. God gave this church Chris Fender. I do not know where Chris is now; he is probably caught in the offer. But I would not have his job running the world, and I do not ever want Chris to get mad at me. You know why? Because the day he leaves, I am out of here because I am not running his place financially. He is somebody that I absolutely know, he takes this thing, and he does this thing, and nobody says anything to him. Nobody says thank you. How would you thank your guy you are giving your money to? He ought to thank you.

But anyway, I look at that scenario, and I think to myself, there is where God gave me a guy that I absolutely total 100%, 1000% confidence in. Never in one second do I worry about the welfare of this church, and he has areas that if he does not stay up on his, we can get hurt on ours. There comes a point in a person's life when you get past the point, and you get to that level, and you get into that situation where you have major, major responsibilities. Now he deals with the aspect of finances, and he has disciplined people and worked with me with people, but the bottom line is many of you do not work in that out of it, but you deal with something that in my mind is a thousand times more crucial, and that is people's lives. He can screw up and make the books, he can screw up in the books, put a decimal point in the wrong place, hopefully it will be worth more than it was, not less. He can make those kind of mistakes; we all survive. You screw up in dealing with somebody's life, it may send them to hell for all of eternity.

Most Christians never get here. It is my goal to get all of you here. It is my goal to have every one of you at some point in your life move into one of those last three stages because this is where, honest to God, this is where the real work of the ministry gets done, not by what you do, but by the principles by which you do them. I cannot stress it to you enough.

Now there are some very important things here today, things that we need to see. When I talk about what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 7, walking by faith and not by sight, this is what I am talking about. I am talking about when you get to the ankles. Now you are wading into this water. When you get to the ankles, you are still in control. Who could not wade

in the water up to your ankles and just say to yourself, "Well, I am going to do this now, I am going to do this, and I am going to splash it out, and I am going to go back, I am going to go forward"? You are in control, and you do not have much to worry about. I do not think any shark attack ever took place in ankle-deep water. Now I know people drown in the bathtub, but that is me. But six inches to your ankles, that would be tough. You pretty much have control of everything in your life when you are into your ankles. You can decide where you are going, how much you want to go, "splish splash, I was taking a bath." You are going to do all those things.

Now when you get to the knees, you are deeper, but you can still see the bottom. I mean, the knees is only to here. You can look down in there and say, "Oh, I can still walk along. I see the bottom. There is the bottom. I have seen, there is the bottom." You still pretty much have control. The more you move out into it, the deeper you go, and by this time, you are in the knees. You are 2,000 cubits in, but you are still pretty much in control. You can still see the bottom. You still can decide what you are going to do. But, my dear friend, when you get to the loins, you now count the measurements: 3,000 cubits. That is almost a mile, depending how, 3,000 feet, 3,000 cubits, almost a mile into this river, and this river is a fast-moving river. You are now 3,000 cubits into this, and you cannot see anymore. You cannot see the bottom. At any point, you can hit a drop-off and drown. At any moment, that swift current could lift you off your feet and carry you out, carry you down. At this point, it all changes, and this is why most people never get here. At your ankles, you are still in control. You can still see the bottom. At the knees, you can still be controlling, see the bottom. But when you get to the loins, at this point and from this point on, you have no control over yourself. From this point on, as the phrase is, you go with the flow. The river picks you up and takes you where it wants to take you, not where you want to go. Are you getting this? This is some of the most unbelievable, fantastic spiritual growth material you will ever get in your life.

Did you ever notice this? You know what you need in this thing? If you are really smart, you need a rod. What you do is you walk out, "Whoa, do not want to go there. Whoa, do not want to go there." You need a rod. You need a rod to test the water. Then what you should do, if you are really smart, if you are going to wade that far, tie a lifeline on you. Tie, if you do not have somebody back there, tie it on the tree, tie it to some fixed point that if you go off a deep end, you can grab that rope and pull yourself back up. Did you notice this guy going through the water who went to the ankles, to the knees, now the loins? You realize the guy that has got the safety stuff that he needs is the man measuring him. He has got the line, there is your rope, and he has got a reed, there is the measuring stick. You think God does not want you to test the waters when you walk for Him? God does not want you to tie on a lifeline so if you go off a deep end, you can pull yourself back up? No, no. This is why most people do not make it. This is why when you get to this point, you are basically, when you do get to this point, you are not going back. You are not going back. When you get to this point, you are not going back; you are going forward. But also, this is a place where most people never get to this point. It is just too, and I do not even want to use the word scary. It is scary, but that is not the reason why we do not get there. The reason why we do not get there is we do not want to give up control. That is the reason. We do not want to get to the place that we cannot see the bottom. We do not want to get to the place that we cannot, we cannot, we cannot have to give up complete control of our lives.

Now I want to give you young Christians very good practical advice. This is from my own personal life, and this is from the Bible and the Bible principles that God has shown me. I do not know if you know it or not, or even ask yourself the question, "Who is this man that is doing the measuring?" I mean, we know the guy wading is Ezekiel, but who is this guy who is doing the measuring with a line in his hand and a measuring reed? Who is he? Well, he is not just in this chapter. If you want to find out who he is, you have to go all the way back to the beginning of the chapter of chapter 40, the beginning of our story. In chapter 40, verses 2 and 3, we find out who this man with a measuring stick is in his hand.

*Ezekiel 40:2-3*

*2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.*

*3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.*

There he is. That is our first mention of this guy. There was a man. Let us see who he is, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand. Flax makes, that is a rope. They used to take flax, put it together to make a rope, and a measuring reed. There is your rod. You see the two things you need to stay safe. He has got it. It is tough wading into the water when God just stands there saying, "Come on, come on." "But it is deep." "I know it is deep, come on." "But what about the drop-off?" "Come on, come on, come on, come on." "But I do not have a rope, I do not have anything to measure with." "Do not worry about it."

The key here is this man is the Lord Jesus Christ. By the way, you have not figured it out yet. This man is Christ. This man is Christ. He is doing here not only in this chapter but through the whole eight chapters, He is showing Ezekiel every aspect of the detail of what is going on here. Christ wants to show you and me every detail of His book. He will go with you and I every inch of the way. But the thing that I want you to see here is that the man's attention, and this is Ezekiel's attention, and this is where you and I have got to be. Ezekiel, you do not hear one time Ezekiel complaining about anything. Ezekiel never asked when, "How far are we going to go? How deep are you going to get?" He never, he does not say one thing. You know why? Because he has got himself fixed, focused, fixed on the man who is doing the measuring.

Remember in Matthew, great story, chapter 14, verse 28. Most of you know the story. All the disciples are in a little boat on the ocean, and what happens? Jesus comes walking to them on the water, great miracle. What happens? Peter. Now I have got to say this, of all you in the disciples, I told you before how they all represent different aspects of Christianity, and each one of them represent in my mind over the years that I have dealt with people, you can almost put people that you meet in certain categories that match up to the disciples. That is so true. Remember Thomas? What do we know Thomas for? Doubting Thomas. That is right. Thomas, he did not believe. He had a tough time. He had been with the Lord for three and a half years, and he just could not get it. There are people like that in this church, every other church. Then you have guys like Peter. Peter is always, I love Peter because of the fact that he has got such a zeal, and he really wants to

serve God. He just has not got a clue how to do it. When God is saying one thing, Peter is always doing the other. Peter represents for me exactly like so many of God's people that you find in dealing with people. The ultimate goal is John. The ultimate goal is John represented in the Song of Solomon, represented as in the book of Revelation, represented in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John as the greatest type of a child of God anywhere in the New Testament. But unfortunately, Peter is the guy that we have here.

Peter says to Jesus, he says, "Lord, I mean, I have got to admit, Peter is the only one in the boat that had enough faith." He said, "Lord, I want to come out there on the water with You." The Lord said, "Well, come on out." So what did he do? Steps out on the deal. Who is walking on the water too? He is walking on the water, and he is saying, "Whoa, yeah, this is good. Look at me. Hey, Jesus says, 'Come on now, be like Me. Come on, be like Me.'" Let me ask you a question, when did Peter start to sink? Say what? All together in unison, one, two, three. Got his eyes off the one that was measuring him. He looked at the water around him. He suddenly, he is out there, and he is saying, "Oh, look at me, boy. Hey, look at me. Hey, guys, look at this. I am like Him." And then suddenly he said, "Whoa, this place is deep." When he got his eyes off of the one that told him to come and walk like He is, that is when he began to sink. You have got to keep your eyes, you have got to keep the eyes on the one who is measuring you.

My point is this: you cannot ever stop growing spiritually, and the way that we do stop growing spiritually is getting our eyes off who is measuring us. Ladies and gentlemen, if you are ever going to get to the point where you are profitable in the ministry and you become like Christ in everything that you do, you need to understand that you have got to get to the point in your life where you honestly, openly, every day of your life, evaluate where your spiritual growth is at. You need to have some notches on your spiritual door. You need to have some places that you can look at and very definitely tell where you are at.

I have got to tell you, I have dealt with people a long time. I am just absolutely amazed at the absolute incredible ideas about everything in the Bible that people have today that claim to be Christian. But I am telling you, I have never seen it in more areas, and we are all guilty of this, about our honesty with our own spiritual growth. Gentlemen, I am going to tell you this, and ladies, it is true for you, but I will talk to the guys here for a minute. We all have one basic fundamental flaw, and I do not care how saved you are. I do not mean you can get saved, I mean how far along you are. I do not care how spiritual we all are. I do not care in here. That issue is pride. I do not care whatever level you have. You think that if a man would lose everything that he had, lose his wife, lose his family, lose his job, lose his car, lose everything, he would come around. You think someplace along the line he would come to the place where he would say, "There must be something wrong here."

If you ever talked to those guys down at the mission, one of the most incredible revelations I ever had in my life about human nature was a conversation I had with three guys down at the mission about seven or eight years ago. I was talking to these guys, and I was talking to him about the Lord. They did not want to talk about the Lord because they wanted to justify themselves in where they were at. I learned a great lesson that night. I learned that guys on the high end that have everything in the world, they have pride about all that they have. But the thing

that runs through every one of us is that line of pride. Here were three guys, and they were bragging about. You see, most of you, and people who have a lot of things, we brag about what we have. I have met people who brag about what they know. I have met people who brag about who they know. I have talked to people who brag about everything that they have got. I have never seen a man in my life, hardly ever, that he did not brag about himself on something. I was talking to these three guys down here, and it just hit me like a ton of bricks. Here they are, they have no house, they have no wives, they have no kids, they have no car, they have no job, they have no money, they have nothing. I am sitting there talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, the one that can give them everything, and I am hearing one guy brag about the fact that he does not have a home to live in, but he can find a place to sleep every night. Another guy was talking about the fact that, "Yeah, he was an alcoholic, but he buys his own drinks." I was waiting for somebody to say, "Yeah, I am an out-and-out drunk, and I get slobber drunk and throw up and throw up in a thing, but I do not ever roll over in it more than twice a night." No matter where they were at the bottom, they still had their own pride. It might have been the fact that, "Well, I buy my own drink, but I am an alcoholic." It may have been, "I am homeless, but I can always find a place to sleep." You know why they will never get out of that scenario? Because they are not willing to come to the end of self. They are not willing to get rid of whatever they have got to get rid of to show them, "Hey, I have got no farther to go."

I told you this Thursday night, most Christians do not have the ability to judge themselves in their own spiritual relationship with God. Some of you, bless your hearts, that are young Christians, you are too hard on yourself. You give yourself a negative factor when you really do not deserve a negative factor. Then you have people on the other hand who give themselves a plus factor when they do not have a plus factor in their column. We are either too hard or we are not hard enough. Last week, I talked about the seven stages of spiritual growth, and I am sure as I was going through that, and I told you before, I really kind of dropped the bomb, and many times I will do this. I talked about the fact that now everybody here can probably find yourself in one of these seven stages. I guarantee you, I guarantee you, I guarantee you as I am standing here, and you do not have to come up and tell me afterward, I just guarantee you because of human nature and a crowd this size, some of you down there, you said to yourself, "Oh boy, I am just a baby. Oh, I am so stupid. Oh, I will just never get this thing down." If you were to come up to me and you said, "Well, I am just a baby," and I say, "No, you are not. You are up here, man. You are farther along than that." I am sure at the same time there were some of you sitting in this crowd that were here last week that were talking about the back, "Oh yeah, I am a father. Oh yeah, I am an elder. Oh yeah, I am an aged." How much of a reality was it when I came back and said in our church, from my perspective as a pastor, we have a handful of fathers, zero elders, and zero aged? The difference is between your assessment of yourself and my assessment of the situation. We have two different standards we judge it by. That is the bottom line. We have two different standards.

I had to follow last week, and I love it, Governor Blagojevich, the guy from Illinois. I love this guy. I tell you what, if he, he is out of governor now. I tell you what, he can get a job doing with that haircut he has got. He can be a Baptist preacher. He has got it, man, he has got it. I do not, I do not know what he is going through and all he deals with. You realize that his hair is always

perfect? There is not a hair out of place. I will bet you could take a hammer and ting, ting, ting for that sucker. I listened to him last week, and almost everything he said, I got enthralled in it because I thought to myself, I thought to myself, "Now here is a guy." Now you know how I know he is wrong? He is guilty of sin. The first key thing is he is a politician. I do not have to know any more about it than that. They got him. The FBI got him. I mean, when it all comes out, he is probably going to go to prison. That is a terrible tragedy, but what are you going to do? But I thought to myself as I watched him, "You know what, all my life in the ministry, I have watched Christians do the exact same thing." I have done the same thing.

The Bible is a looking glass.

*James 1:23-24*

*23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:*

*24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

See there, thing: attitude and action. Hearer of the Word forms your attitude. Doer of the Word forms your action. Here is somebody who is a hearer but not a doer. He is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholding himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. The Bible is our looking glass. "Oh yes, oh yes, yes, yes, oh mirror, mirror on the wall, ain't I more spiritual than them all?" Oh yes, yes. That is what we do to ourselves. We look into that mirror, and we see the things that we say to ourselves, "My, my, my, oh look at me. Well, I do not do this, and I do not do that, and I do not do this, and I do that."

This is why people stop reading the Bible. That Bible shows you, it says it shows beholding your, here it comes, natural face. You know what the natural face is? That is the reality of who we really are. You women all look beautiful today. No, you do. I marvel at some of you as you come in here, and you are just strikingly beautiful. You are. I mean, it, you really are. I mean, I look at you, and I think to myself, "Whoa, she is really a beautiful woman. She is really beautiful." But if I was there in the morning when you first rolled out of bed, I would say, "Honey, you could be a stand-in for the Creature from the Black Lagoon if you ever need it." No, do not take that wrong. You know how you are like, you are mad at me, some of you right now, and you are in some of your laughing, and you are masking your anger with laughter. But you know how that is not true? Because you will not show up without fixing yourself up.

I went to a woman's house one time, and I visited a couple, and the lady, it was kind of early in the morning, it was on a Saturday morning, and I went to the door, and the guy came and said, "Hi." He said, "Hey, Bob, come on in." Well, his wife was still in her bathrobe, and all those things. Back then, they took the pop cans and rolled them in your hair. I mean, I guess that would be for TV, you could use them for a radio set if you ever want to. And she runs up the thing, and I said, "It is okay," because I do not care. She said, "No, no, no, no, I do not have my face on." I said, "Well, now that is a bad deal. I mean, you have no face on. I do not want to talk to you." I

thought to myself, "I wonder if she has got zippers or she has got the little snaps." Let us be honest, we are all the bride of Christ. That makes us female. We are the weaker vessel because we are the bride, and the similarities do not stop there. We all like to put our "go to church" face on before we come. Most of us do not like to come into a situation like this wearing the face of who you really are. Human nature does not make you a bad person; it just makes you look like that woman I saw back there a long time ago.

The Bible is our looking glass. People think that you come to church, we have been at a church for 20 or 30 years, that makes you spiritual, makes you a leader. People say, "Well, I know the Bible, so therefore I am spiritual." Somebody says, "Well, I can preach, I am spiritual." This man's strength is in truth, and I want to tell you this man's strength is in his truth, and most of us like to have truth. Most of us are getting truth, but the problem is how we use that truth. Most of us like the truth to be able to understand people. Most of us want truth to be to understand the world around us or the circumstances in people's lives that we deal with. But this man's strength is not only in the truth about people in the world in circumstances; this man's truth is also the truth about who he really is. If you never, you never come to the point in your life where you see yourself the way you really are, I have met people all my life that use the Bible to justify their lack of spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is a process. It is a process that you go through.

### III. Three Infallible Measuring Tools for Spiritual Growth

This message today is about one thing, being picked up on it already, and it is about your ability to absolutely be able to measure yourself, which we do not like to do. I have found in my own life and coming through the Bible and dealing with people and down through the Word of God, there are three absolute measuring tools that God has put in our lives. These three things, ladies and gentlemen, write the book on us, and therefore they are the three things that we really want nothing to do with. These are the three things that men and women will hide, they will mask, they will camouflage, they will paint, they will do everything in the world, but these are the bottom line. You want to get honest with yourself? You want to have a gauge by which you can judge your spiritual growth? These three things spotlight you. You cannot blame these three on anybody else. These three things in your life make you center stage.

The single greatest aspect in our lives, and I want to speak to you guys here for just a second, then we will come back and talk to everybody. But the single greatest aspect in our lives to keep that God gave us to keep us on about our spiritual growth is probably the simple one and the easiest and the greatest one we have. You know what it is? If you are married, it is your wife. Amen. Amen. Now ladies, after I am done, are there any gift cards that you would want to send my way? Make them the generic ones.

Let me tell you something, guys, our wives have more insight into you and me better than anybody else on this planet outside of God. I know I can say this from my own life, and I am sure if you think about it long enough, you probably say it in your life. There are many screw-ups in my life. There are many bad decisions I made in life. There are many things in life that caused me a lot of grief, but if I were to listen to my wife, I would not have had the heartache and go through the issues that I had to go through. They have an insight into some things

sometime that you and I do not have. Why do you think God called them your help meet? He did not call her your helpmate; He called her your help meet. Do you make yourself accountable to her in your spiritual growth? You see, we can get all kinds of ideas about ourselves and who we are, but there is one living in your home who knows you better than anybody else outside of God, better than me. You see, you can pretend one thing here, but you are what you are at home. She is your greatest accountability factor that you could ever have in your life. If you want an honest, understandable opinion of where you are at spiritually, you know why we do not ask her? Because we do not want to hear what she has to say.

I have been in situations where a person has come to the point where they lay it out to me, and they talk about it with me, and I try to help them as best I can, but the bottom line is she has, she understands you in areas. She sees you at your best, and she sees you at your worst. She sees you in every aspect of your life. She sees you on your good side and on your downside. Now, guys, can I just give you a little bit of advice? I am going to give you a little bit of advice in dealing with your wife in issues: drop the submissive card out of your deck. All my life, I have had to sit in my office, and the guy says, "Well, she will not follow me. She will not follow me." And I am thinking to myself, "I would not either." Please, you want some good advice today that will make your life, if you want to be happy for the rest of your life, buy an ugly woman for your wife. I am telling you, you want to be happy, here it is, here it is: drop that card. Drop that card. Do not play that card. You have overplayed that card. Do not play that card. You will swear why in a minute. Remember now, ladies, I am helping you out with this. You help me out, generic gift cards.

That aspect of submission is kind of a straw horse. You realize, and I know where they always go with it over there in Ephesians, where it talks about in verse 22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." But let out that all you are not very submissive. Did you read the verse before that where it says you are to submit yourself to each other in the Lord? Let me ask you a question, how do you submit yourself to your wife? Does your wife have any, do you have any accountability to her? You see, if you do not know this or not, and most women do not know this, but ladies, and I am going to get to you, "Say, well, I am not married." I am coming your way in just a second here. The bottom line is this: her rewards at the judgment seat of Christ depend largely upon you.

I have had some great, and I always cannot talk about these, but this week as I was putting this all together, I wish at some point in my life I would like to write one last book, and it would be a book about the world, and I think that is a great book to write. I think I would like to write one last book, and it would be a book about the people that have had the victory in my ministry. I cannot ever talk about them because they are personal things, and I would never say anything publicly to embarrass anybody, even though it would be a great thing. Sometimes I would love to shout out and talk about what God is doing behind the scene, but you cannot because of people's circumstances. You have got to be sensitive to all those things. But I want you to know, and I guess every pastor has these, and if you ever pastor, these are the things you have got to focus on instead of all the bad things all the time. But I watched some great victories in this church. I watched some men and women do the right thing when they did not have to. I watched couples come in who had problems in their marriage and situations where, and they were not bad people,

they are just people that do not know how to do the right things when they need to do them. But even in that, they can choose not to, and I have had people come to the point where they have responded, they have done what needs to be done, and I think to myself, those kind of people, those kind of people, they have a place in my life that I will never forget. When a time that you had a chance to do wrong, you broke it all down and did right. Incredible. I carried those things with me for a long way.

I had a pastor friend of mine years ago, and we would spend a lot of time together, and one time we were together, something was different about it, and I got him alone, and I said, "You know, there is something, something different here than all the other time." I said, "Well, what is the, what happened? What is the difference? I mean, we are buddies, you can tell me." And he said, "I will tell you." He says, "You know what?" He says, "I have changed my whole aspect of ministry." And I said, "Why is that?" He says, "Because one day I came home," and he said, "I had a conversation with my wife, and things did not look like it was the way it was supposed to be, and I asked her, I said, 'What is the matter?'" And she looked at me and she said, "You know what the matter is, Pastor? I do not love you anymore." And he said, "My first inkling was, 'How could you not love me? Well, I am Pastor So-and-So. I teach people Bible everywhere. Why, look at this church, look at the salary I make. You have everything you want, you have everything you got. What would ever bring you to the place that you would not love me?'" And she says, "You know what? I will tell you why. Because the bottom line is you are pastoring to everybody else except me. You have got time for everybody else except me." Now this is the hard message for me to preach because whether you know it or not, I am believing myself wide open, and I am sure she is not taking notes back there. She is making a list. She is going, "Oh, I have got to hurry up and get through this section." Scott, can you block this off the tape? Just put a little thing there.

Have you ever asked her how you are doing? Now she may not tell you because in many times it happens this, I have watched the husband beat up their wife so bad that she says, "What is good?" Let me tell you something, guys, and I talked about this in marriage, there is a time in her life when she flips the switch, and when that switch gets flipped, when that is when it gets flipped, it does not get flipped back. It is done. It is done. And you will come into me, and you will whine and cry, and my answer to you will be, "No way, Jose." I will go to her, and I will say, "Will you fix this out?" And she will look at me and she will say, "No, Slack Zach." I will say, "Come on, let us do this." She says, "No deal, Neil." I will say, "Come on, he really wants to change." "No chance, Lance."

Now why is this so important? I will tell you why. Because the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." You know why this is such an indicator in your spiritual growth? Because if you are getting more like Christ every day of your life, then you ought to look at her as your first church, not this one. If you are, see how this thing is infallible? You cannot hide behind this one. "Hi, honey, good to see you." You know why this is infallible? This thing, you cannot get around this. If you are supposed to be more like Christ, and that is what God's will is for your life, that is true, God's plan, then that is your first church. That is your first ministry. The Bible principle tells you that. How would you like it if Christ treated you like you?

I ask people all the time, this is my test, and I even asked you this many, many times, I said, "How would you like to be the pastor of this church and have a church full of people that were parishioners like you?" That is a sobering thought when you think about it. My question to you is, how would you like it if Christ treated you, that is His bride, like you treat her? Did you ever see the characteristics between the two? Is He ever too busy for you? Does He ever come to the place where He shuts you down and belittles you? Now I have got to say, there are times that He should, but He never does. Are you Christ-like? See how the real test of your spiritual growth has nothing to do with your ability to know the Bible, preach the Bible, teach the Bible, work with people. Have you ever asked her how she, how you are doing? Do you listen to her? Do you allow her to point of, of, of when a decision is made?

I might as well tell you right now, and let me give you a truth. Do you know in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, this thing about, "Well, you know what, my wife needs to be a better follower"? Maybe you need to be a better leader. Do you realize that in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, when Christ was here the first time, you realized the great truth, Bible buddy, you realized the great truth that not one woman in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John or anywhere in the New Testament ever rejected Him? Did you ever catch that on one of your late night visuals? You realize in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there was never one woman anywhere in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John at the first coming of Christ right up to all through the New Testament, there was never one woman that rejected Him. The Sadducees rejected Him, the Pharisees rejected Him, the scribes rejected Him, the rich young ruler rejected Him, the rich man of Luke chapter 16 rejected Him. I mean, the young lawyer rejected Him. You find all kinds of men, but you will never find one woman in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John that ever said no to Him. Do you know why? Because He embodied, He, Christ, the one you are supposed to be like, embodied in Him everything a woman looked for in a man. You want to follow? You start putting those character qualities in the relationship. Sell your Bozo the Clown outfit.

Now there is an absolute rule in ministry, an absolute rule. It is the number one fundamental rule in ministry for me. It knows no friendship. It knows no loyalty. It knows no halfway measures. I have learned this through bitter experiences. I have learned this through broken relationships. I have learned this through every aspect in the last 35 years of my life, and it is a rule that is rule number one that I do not even have to think about this in every thought I have when it deals with ministry. You know what it is? If you are not willing to do it in your own personal life first, you will never do it for me in ministry here. I will say it again: if you are not willing to do it in your own personal life first, and you are not willing to put the principles in play for your first ministry, what in the world are you going to do for me except cause me headaches? There are some basic fundamental growth processes that have to be enacted in your life, and if you, I have people all the time who say, "Well, I want to be a missionary. I want to be in the ministry." Let me tell you something, and then they never get involved in anything here. I have people coming all the time, "Well, I want to really be involved in what you do." Where are you at on Thursday night? Where are you at on Sunday morning? You have something more important to do? How are you going to get involved if I ran my ministry and only showed up two Sundays out of the month? What would you get on Sunday? What are we going to do, play a tape? The days I am not here, you do not do it here, you are not going to do it somewhere else. That is rule number one in the ministry,

barring any friendship, any relationship, any loyalties. You cannot get it down in your own personal life, what are you going to do for me?

Now you say, "Well, I am not even married." Good. Okay, here is what you do. If you are single and you have no significant other, nobody in your life that you are hanging out with or you are engaged to or whatever, then for your spiritual growth, fall back on your father. You say, "My father is not saved." Then fall back on your spiritual father. Follow down the line to the next place of where it falls in the Bible. Now if you are engaged and you are going to be married to somebody, and I have got to say this, I am so pleased with so many of you young couples who are or were thinking about getting married. I, and maybe not today, maybe not next week, maybe two years from now, whatever the case may be, you are in a committed relationship, maybe you have got some issues to work out, that is great, that is what it is all about. But I am absolutely so thoroughly throttling and in the fact that so many of you are coming in with me, and we are, you are growing together, you are learning together, you are learning together. But you can apply the same rule, ladies, if he does not be your spiritual leader before you get married, he will not be the one after you are married. You can take it to the bank. You can take it to the bank.

That is your first one. That is infallible. You cannot hide in that one. Every Christian had to read the book, probably read it in high school, probably got it in your basement somewhere. I do not remember who the author was, but I remember the title, The Emperor's New Clothes. How many ever read that book? Well, you need to spend more time in the library. You know how the story goes? There was this king, that would be me, and he paraded around all his kingdom, and somebody came in who was a shyster and said to the king, "I am going to make you a beautiful set of clothes only worthy of a king." And the king was all puffed up in his pomp and circumstance because the king thought to himself, "Whoa, I am the king. It is nice to be the king," and the king deserved nice clothes. So he commissioned this guy. Well, the guy took his money but did not make any clothes. In fact, when he brought him in, he had the king stripped down naked to put on his clothes, and the king put on, the guy put on invisible clothes. The king, he is told how beautiful it looked. The king strutted around naked as a jaybird. He strutted around, and the guy said, "My, Your Majesty, you are magnificent. The clothes that you have on are only worthy of a king of such stature." His pride was so lifted up because he was the king, he could not deal with the reality of the fact. He looked in the mirror, "I am naked." No. So he brought in some people, people in his kingdom. You are always going to find people in your world that will tell you what you want to hear instead of the truth. You need to read this book. So he brings in people from his court, and he walks out, and he says, "How do you like my new kingly clothes?" And everybody went, "Oh, they are wonderful." He was naked. You know who finally got his head on straight? He was a little kid. Somebody who represents for us the purity of a little child. Somebody for us who Jesus said, "Except you come to Me as a little child, you have no part of Me." And there is everybody in his world from the tailor who chisted him to the king himself whose pride said, "Look at me," to all the people in his kingdom and said, "Wow, what nice clothes you have on today." And one little kid, one little snotty-nosed kid stood in the middle of the crowd and said, "Hey, you are naked! Look at you!" Oh yeah, naked. The reality. And in a spiritual sense, my friend, do not wait till the judgment seat of Christ to find out you have been naked all along.

Now the second thing, it only gets worse or better. Now the first thing, it is an absolute deal. It tells about you, who you are, and writes the book, is your relationship with your wife. The second thing is your personal accountability in your own personal life in your finances. Now somebody is going to say, "Now how in the world do you apply that?" It is called stewardship. It is called stewardship. I love Clint Eastwood movies. My favorite one is when Clint tells the guy, I forget who it is, when he says, "You are a legend in your own mind." We say a legend in your own time. Clint said a legend in your own mind. You know why I like that? Because that is true of us. We are, as Christians, we are legends in our own mind. Sure we are. Sure we are. Remember rule number one.

*1 Corinthians 4:1-2*

*1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*

*2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

You know what he is saying there? Paul is saying to the church of Corinth, "As a minister, you need to be held accountable for your stewardship." That is what he is saying. I would like to take that verse out of there just like everybody else would. You know what he is saying? "You need to be held as a minister accountable for your stewardship." There are seven stewardships that we are accountable for in the Word of God in the New Testament. Seven of them. Seven things that you and I as leaders, you and I as men of God, you and I as men and women who represent this church and are supposed to have a portion of leadership in this church, there are seven things we are required to be stewards of. And Paul said that a church at Corinth, "You need to give an account of these things as stewards." And then he said in verse 2, "Moreover," if that was not enough, "it is required in stewardship." I wish he would have said it was required of stewardship. I wish he would have said it was required around stewardship. Why did he have to use the word "in stewardship"? Because in the growth process of your life and my life, we come into the place where we mean something for God, we are in stewardship. We need to be found faithful. You see, personal stewardship is no different from stewardship of the ministry.

I have got several of you here today that were part of a church that we were associated with for a short time, so you know this story is true. There was an older pastor there that was a decent guy, and I love his sermons. His favorite sermon was, "Know his wife." When they moved, me beyond belief, I never forgot as long as I live. But anyway, he retired from this church, and I have got one of his deacons, his former deacons, in my church this morning, so he knows I am telling the truth. And he left the church, he left it in financial pretty good shape, did he not? A couple hundred thousand dollars if I remember. I went something like that, a couple hundred. You were the secretary, Betsy, remember? You went traveling on the plane sitting next to guys who thought you were the person to sit next to. It was a lot of money. Left him in good shape. Then we got a new pastor. You know what he did? In a year, he blew every bit of that money. Blew every bit of it. I never trusted a guy from the beginning. He had, I used to call him Mr. Plastic Head. He had no, he had his hair, I think he rode motorcycles, and he had his helmet done, looked like hair, so he never had to take it off. You never shoot him in the head and assassinate him. It was bulletproof. I mean, it was sculpture. I am always worried with guys who

sculpture their hair. Kind of like you, Jan, I worry about you. Not enough. That is true. I am with you. They used to charge me for cutting it. Now they charge me for looking for it.

I knew a pastor who went to a big church up north, big church. When he went to that church, his pastor, they had two million dollars they had saved up. The pastor before him had done it, saved two million dollars in that church. By the end of the next year, that pastor had spent every part of that two million dollars and put him in debt. Stewardship, stewardship, stewardship. He is going to tell me that you and I, you know what somebody is going to say, "Well, when I really get into it, I will do it right." No, no. Rule number one: if you do not do it right now, you will not do it right there. Let me just tell you something, it is not about more money. I hear it all the time, "Well, if I just had a better job, I would make more money." Hey, you cannot take care of what you have now. More money would buy you more things, give you more problems, give you more headaches. It is not about more money; it is about stewardship of what you have right now. Personal stewardship requires all the ingredients that it is to take to run a ministry. You have to have discipline, you have to have discernment, you have to have discretion, you have to have self-control, you have to have temperance, you have to have moderation, you have the right value system, you have to be able to stick to a budget, and you have the ability to live your life without credit cards and debt.

Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, do not tell me, do not tell me, Clint, "Well, I could do a church, I just cannot do my own." If you do not do it here first, you will never do it someplace else. When we started our church, you know what the standard pastor does? He goes out and he puts the church into debt. He thinks that if we build a big beautiful edifice that people will come, and so he goes out and he puts the church in debt. That is exactly what the new guy did when he came to that church. They had a great facility, had a great church. The first thing he did, he went out and sold the church on spending millions of dollars on a piece of property out there that was just way over the top. But you know why he did that? Because they are taught in school to tie the people in by putting a project in their world and then dogging them to that project. He asked every family to commit a thousand dollars, and then he did, it is called pressure. Let me tell you what it is in wrestling, it is called this pressure. I love your aftershave. It is called pressure. He put a list in the bulletin. Am I telling the truth? He put a list, "What are you shaking your head for back there? You were not even in the church." You have been in other churches. You know what it is like. All right, I am with you, you are mine, you are my buddy. He put a list of people's names in the bulletin that gave a thousand dollars. Now you know what that does, do you not? Your name is in the list, your name is not. I read the list, I see Brian. I read the list, I do not see you. That is called pressure. Then he did in the Sunday school, big deal on Sunday morning, had all the little kids come up, bring their pennies from home, put their pennies in a big deal for the new church building.

My philosophy is this: he gave us something down there that was just fine. When it was not fine anymore, he would give us something up here. Do you see me running out and penning three million dollars, four million dollars, ten million dollars, and building a building so people will come? I do not care if you come or you do not come. I do not even have a sign. Do not want a sign. Somebody after the other week, "When are you going to put up a sign?" I said, "I am not."

"Why not?" "Well, the last time we had all, we had with people running up and down the street looking for church to go, ask for money." A sign keeps out the riff-raff. I have quality people here. You know what is so quality about you? Because if you got here this morning, you did not know where we were. The greatest thing about you being here today is that you got here through somebody else or God's Holy Spirit directly or working through somebody else that puts you here today. I like that. I am tired in a Christianity where everything has to be orchestrated, everything has to be about money, everything has to be pressure. The only pressure I ever want you to feel is the pressure of the Holy Spirit of God to do what is right in your life.

This church is just a big family. You have to have a budget in your family. We have to have a budget here. Can you go out and buy whatever you want whenever you want to buy it? And you obviously can, but is it a good idea? No. Why? Because at the end of the month, the charge cards come in. I have lived by a simple rule in my life, all of my life: if I do not have the money to buy it, I do not buy it. I do not owe any credit card debt. I do not owe for my house. I mean, I pay for my utilities unless I can get the neighbor across the street to pay for him. I do not have any outstanding debt because I believe what the Bible said when it said, "Owe no man anything." Now I cannot live totally by that where I would be living in a cardboard box. There are some things you have got to do, but you have got to have discernment in what to do and what not to do. I have to run this church just like I have to run my own finances, and if you are not disciplining your own, please do not tell me you are going to be disciplined in God's. I do not believe it. We spent 40,000 to do this place, maybe a little bit more than that. First thing I told Chris is, "You know what, we do not do any major spending, do we? Put that money back. I do not want to go crazy." I am not going to. I gave everybody else what they needed. I would have liked to have a baptistry in here. I would like to have all kinds of other stuff in here, but you know what, it will come in time because I realized that there are things that we need to have right now, and there are things that we do not need to have right now. All I wanted was that chart. That is all I wanted. And this here, if I got this free for Sergeant, these are indisputable. When you grow spiritually, you learn responsibility, and that responsibility is called stewardship. With your wife, it is called accountability. Somebody in your world that you are accountable to that says, "Hey, how am I doing? What could I change?"

The third thing, and I have got to move through here, and these are, you cannot get around these. The second one is how he controls his kids. You want to find out a Christian value system? Watch how they deal with their children. Now I want to say this going into it, there is no perfect child, and I do not ever hold anybody to that standard. I mean, we are all in a world, and it is, but the bottom line is this: the question is, how do you deal with it when it happens? I have seen parents that when their kid does something, they just gloss it over, just brush it under. It is not about having a perfect kid, but I am telling you what, how you deal with it writes your biography because this is, it is something that now please, Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, Clint, please do not tell me, please do not tell me that all these young men I have in here and young ladies, please do not tell me you are going to hold them accountable, you are going to be held them responsible, you are going to teach them to do what is right when you cannot even do it in your own family. I am sorry, Clint, I just cannot go there. It is a good thing you got killed in your last movie because I am done with you.

You remember I said fathers, fathers, aged, elders. A father takes responsibility. Now he has children, and part of that children, I probability is training those children right. Did he always do? Did he always do what is right? No. But what happened? How long do you wait, or do you ever not drop the hammer on him? You have got to deal with it. Not always pretty, but it needs to be done. And do not kid me, you are not going to, you are not going to teach these young men truth. You are not going to teach them responsibility. You are going to teach them accountability when you cannot even, come on, Clint. Now see, this is what we do not like, and I do not like it any better than you because this leaves us no place to hide. This strips us right back to the bare metal, and this is the standard by which we have to judge our spiritual growth because they are the same three things you have got in ministry. You notice I have not mentioned how good the Bible is yet. I have not even mentioned of all what you know about it. That Bible says in Ezekiel chapter 47, this guy went through the ankles, he went through the knees, and now he is to the loins, and it is the absolute surety of your spiritual growth process. Absolutely.

#### IV. The Necessity of Being Broken by God

God's process in your life, there are three things. We like two of them. We do not like the third one. The first thing, God takes a man. We like that. God reaches down and will speak into your heart, speak into your life. You will come along so far, and God will say, "I am going to take you. I am going to call you." We all like the fact that God takes us, and the process after God takes us, it is really fun. God makes us. God teaches us His Word. God puts us in ministry. God brings us to the place where we are leaders. God brings us here. God does all this. Oh, God takes you, and then God makes you. But you miss the second one. God takes a man and God makes a man only after God breaks a man.

You know the greatest story of that in the Bible? Genesis chapter 32. You do not have to turn back to it. I have a little title over Genesis chapter 32 of my Bible. It simply says, "The Day God Gets You Alone." You know what that story is back there? It is Jacob wrestling with the Angel of the Lord. Now this is where he gets his name changed. You know what the name Jacob means? It means schemer. It means supplanter. It means deceiver. You know what the name Israel means? It means the blessings of God. It was the establishment of God's plan, much like the difference between who you and I really think we are and who we really are to what God wants us to be. You see, Jacob, the name Jacob was when God took him, and God, Israel, represent God making him. But the process in between in Genesis chapter 32 is God breaking him. You study Jacob's life after this point. Everything he is involved in, he is playing both ends against the middle. So Jacob comes out on top. He is scheming. He schemed to get the birthright. He schemed to get the blessing. He schemed to get the cattle. He schemed to get the wife, then the second wife. He schemed in everything in his life. Here is a picture of a man that God wanted to use. Here is a picture of a man that God, God, God took him, and God says, "Jacob, I want to make you, but I cannot make you the way you are, so I have got to break you."

Jacob plays the game all the way down through chapter 20, 21, 22, 23. Oh, but when it comes to chapter 32, you know what you have got? Jacob had went as far as he was going to go being Jacob. This is the defining point in his life. God said that Jacob in chapter 32, "You are not going

any farther till you fix about you what needs to be fixed." And they wrestle. They wrestle. Most dumb preachers talk about the fact, "Well, did they really wrestle on the ground? Did they really roll around?" How in the world do you wrestle around on the ground with God? You dingbat, go to Hosea chapter 12, verse 4.

*Hosea 12:4*

*4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us;*

It was not a literal wrestling match. Maybe you want it to be one so you can get out from under your own conviction. It was a wrestling match between God's will for Jacob and Jacob's will for Jacob. Boy, I look at that, and I see myself. I look at that, and I see every man that ever got saved and every woman that ever got saved, and I look at that thing, I see that just where you and I are at. We think spiritual growth has to do with our great knowledge of the Bible, of my this or my that, when the truth of the matter is your spiritual growth has to do with becoming more like Christ in your life, and there are three absolute things I gave you.

Jacob comes to the point in his life where Jacob is saying down in verse 26, "Bless me." He said, "I am not going to let you go till you bless me." There have been in that situation when deep down inside you know what the problem is, but you do not want to deal with it. So you play a little game like I play with my kids, my grandkids. They will come over and they will say, "Grandpa, let us play that game." I will say, "Okay, the game is this: you pick something in this room, do not tell me what it is, and then I will guess by how close you get of how hot you are what it is." Now I am smarter than they are, so I listen to them talk, and I know what it is because they have not learned old enough. You have to be deceptive. They are getting there, but not in this level. So I know now it is going to be the lamp. So they walk around, and they will do it together. They will walk over here and get that little grin on their face, and I will say, "Oh, am I getting warm?" And he will say, "No, no, you are still cold, Grandpa." And then I will walk back here, and I will say, "Am I getting hotter?" And I will say, "Well, a little bit, Grandpa." And they will walk over here, and they will say, "Am I getting warmer?" "No, now you are getting cold." And finally, finally, they will get over to where the lamp is, and we will both agree that that is the hot point. We do the same thing with God. We played a game with God. God says, "You are moving around a lot. Am I getting warmer to what your problem is? You are awful fidgety. You are not saying, you have not got that joy, joy, joy down in your heart like you used to. You are not saying, 'Praise Hallelujah.' Am I getting warm? Am I getting cold? Am I getting warm?" And you are saying, "Well, you are getting cold, God," or "You are getting warm, now you are getting cold." God knows where it is at all the time. It is the game we play.

That was Jacob. I love it. Jacob says, "Bless me. I am not letting you go till you bless me." That sounds so spiritual. That sounds like I want blessings of God more than anything in our life. But God never bought into that hook. He never bit that level. He came back and He said, "Yeah, I will bless you. By the way, what is your name?" And I guarantee you, I was not there, it does not say it in the Bible, I guarantee you at that moment, because I know how God does it with me, at that exact moment when God says, "What is your name?" Jacob did in a flashback, he went back

when he was standing before his father and deceiving him by putting on the robe of Esau, and when he smelled like Esau, but it was really Jacob. He went up to his old blind father, and the father said, "What is your name? Why, you feel like Esau, but you sound like Jacob. What is your name?" And he had to look at his daddy and said, "Oh, Daddy, I am Esau." When it comes, you can tell your daddy you are Esau, but it will never work with God. He wants to know who you really are, and he was not going to go any farther till he admitted he was Jacob. He was schemer. He was manipulator. He was the one who worked it out for his glory and gave God the credit for it when God wanted nothing to do with it.

Then in verse 25, God touched the hollow of his thigh. Nothing more painful than getting a bone out of joint. When God reached down and touched the hollow of the thigh, that is what it took in Jacob's life for Jacob to come to the place where he quit being the schemer, and he started to be honest with who he was to God. It was that point. It was that point. It was that point. But the problem with that is, ladies and gentlemen, that the Bible says down there in verse 34 that old Jacob limped the rest of his life. This is a monumental point in Jacob's life. It is the point where God changes his name from Jacob to Israel, and it represents the place in your life, in my life, where we quit playing the games with God, that we start using God's absolute standard for our spiritual growth instead of pretending we are something that we are not. Get out of the Clint Eastwood movies. Get out of being a legend in your own mind. Getting back to the defining things in your life and my life that make us everything that we need to be by keeping us honest.

## V. Conclusion: Facing Reality and Growing Spiritually

The question you have to leave with on your heart today is one question only, one question, and I cannot answer it for you. I cannot answer it, none of my business. I preach this message to me as much as it did to you. I have got that outline in Genesis chapter 32, and I have got a scar on my forehead that reminds me every day of my limp process back in Canton, Ohio, when I had an issue with God. And God had to slam me in the back of a tractor-trailer truck loaded with 18 tons of steel and almost take my head off that I survived. In my mind, what God wanted me to do there. There is not a time that I do not look in the mirror. There is not a time that somebody does not say, "What happened to your head?" I do not think back of that day when God got me alone.

The only question you have got to answer today and leave it here today and going out and enjoy the rest of your day is one question. It is between you and God: who are you really today? Who are you really today? Are you going to continue the facade, or are you going to deal with reality of where you are at in your life and begin to measure your spiritual growth the right way? Your yardstick has got too many inches on it. Your tape measure is in Arabic. You need to get back to an absolute system that will not allow you and me to be dishonest with our spiritual growth and face up to it and deal with it. That is why nobody ever gets to this point. That is why most of God's people will never get to this place in their life where they ever become effective in the ministry. Some of you are great people, and I love you to death, but you will just be a somebody on the sidelines all of your Christian life, and that is a tragedy. That is an absolute tragedy. It is not about your abilities. It is not about the fact that God cannot use you. It is not a fact that you do not have the ability to be used. It is the fact that you are going to stay on this level right here,

and you are not going to fix in your life what needs to be fixed. You are not going to put that system in your world that makes you face who you really are and change about you what needs to be changed.

I will tell you someday along the line, I do not know when it will be. Maybe you will leave here. Maybe you will get mad and leave. Maybe you will get mad over something sooner or later and leave. Maybe you go out, go someplace else. In all this world, you can run from me. You can run from this message. You can run from everything that I have ever told you. But someday God will get you alone, and when He does, He will put you in a position that you cannot run anymore. You may have to lose everything you have. You may have to lose your wife. You may have to lose your kid. You may have to lose your family. You may have to lose a baby. You may have to lose something in your life that God can ring your bell and get your attention. But the bottom line is you can push me off, I am nothing. You can put this message off, it is nothing. But you will not push God off. At some place along the line, at some point in your life, if you are saved, God is going to have a come-to-Jesus meeting with you, and it will be the day He gets you alone. I just do not hope the limp after that is not too bad for the rest of your life.

Nobody forced you to get saved. Nobody put a hammerlock on you to make you trust Christ. When you got saved, you said to God in essence, "I am giving my life to You. I am going to give my life to You the rest of my life, and I am going to do whatever You want to do." And I appreciate that. But the second thing you have got to come to the conclusion to, you cannot do that your way. You have to do it His way. Next week, we will get into the last and final phase. Now we are up to the loins. Now you have an infallible system by which you can judge your spiritual growth. Nobody can argue with it. Next thing I want you to do between now and next week is buy the book *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Read about a man that thought he was clothed when all the time everybody else knew he was naked. He is walking around, strutting around like he was everybody, that he was the king, and everybody behind the scenes were laughing at him because he was naked. The stupidity of trying to pretend we are spiritual when we are really not. It just does not work. You better come to the place where Jacob did. You let God change your name. I will tell you last time when I am done. God will take a man, and God will make a man, but God has to break a man. That is what has to happen in our lives, every one of us.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.