

Romans 8:26-28

Sunday 2/22/2009

We have been talking about how when you got saved, you were adopted spiritually into God's family. Then, in the future, when the rapture of the church takes place, we will be adopted physically. We have laid those two things out and showed you in the process an incredible amount of information that helps on different subjects in the Bible.

Last week, we got into Romans chapter 8, verses 26, 27, and 28, which really deals with the aspect of prayer. I want to read that for you. If you want to turn to that, we're going to be jumping around a little bit this morning, but we'll start here. It says this:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Now, Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We ask you today to open up our hearts. We ask you, Lord, first of all, to allow us to cleanse ourselves under the blood of Christ, that nothing would stand in the way today of what you have for us. Lord, we pray that we will look inside our hearts and ask Christ to forgive us and put us under the blood of anything that would keep us from receiving Bible doctrine today. We love you. We thank you for our church. We thank you for the great men and women that you've given us and for the host of ministries that you've provided us to serve you through. We do love you, Lord, and we ask you to take this time and bless us now in Jesus' name, for his sake, we ask it. Amen.

I. Misconceptions About Prayer

I told you last week that we talked about the many misconceptions people have about God and the Word of God. I showed you here that in this particular passage, the greatest thing, or the number one thing, that I personally understand about prayer is that I don't know how to pray. That's the number one problem.

I told you that we have three infirmities listed in the Bible.

1. One of them is the infirmity of our flesh.
2. One is the infirmity of forgetting what God has done in our lives.
3. The third one is the fact that we do not know how to pray.

Those three are listed separately for you, and you're told that those three things are the struggles. Last week, every problem we have as a Christian, every problem we have, every struggle we go through, will be either based on one of those three or a combination of them, and many times all three of them in our lives.

Last week, we looked at some of the misconceptions people have about prayer. I told you last week, and we got most of them out of the way, we'll talk about some as we go through it. But I told you first of all that God does not recognize or hear the prayer of an unsaved man or woman. We talked about why that is, and I went back and showed you how that is laid out in John 8:44 and other places.

Then the second thing I showed you is the reason why God's people, God doesn't hear most of God's people's prayers, is because of the fact that God's people don't understand the theory behind prayer. I explained to you, and I think that was probably for me anyhow, the greatest thing that came out of last week for me personally as I laid it out to you, was the aspect of the theory behind what we believe. It's not enough just to know the Bible. A lot of guys, a lot of young ladies, they want to learn the Bible, but what you've got to begin to do is not only learn the Bible but learn why things work the way they work in the Bible. The cause and the effect. Why something in the Bible is the way that it is and how it affects you in our lives and everything that we do.

We talked about the reason why most of God's people never get their prayers answered and their prayers basically never leave the room where they're in. This is because of an interesting story back in the Old Testament in the study of the tabernacle. We laid it out on a board last week, and I showed you how the tabernacle was a picture in the Old Testament. The tabernacle is a picture of our walk and our relationship with Christ. You have the three courts. In the outer court, there was the brazen altar and the laver of water where the priest washed his feet and the sacrifice was made. But when you went into that inner court, you find three pieces of furniture. I told you that those three pieces of furniture represent what you have in your life that God works through in everything that you do.

We talked about the first one, which was the showbread and the manna, or the showbread and the table that it was on, and how that bread is a picture of the Word of God. The second one was the seven-pronged candlestick, which was facing directly across from the bread. That's a picture of the Holy Spirit of God and how He deals and illuminates the work on the Word of God for us. Then there was the altar of incense. The altar of incense was an altar that they actually burned incense 24/7. Just like the fire on the golden candlestick could never go out, the incense always had to be lit and always had to be burned. It was the priest's job to keep those things going.

You know, you sometimes think, "Well, what did those priests have to do?" Well, they had to do a lot of things. Not only did they have to take care of the sacrifice and deal with the sacrifices, but they actually had to make the oil and make the incense that had to be burned. They had to bake the bread fresh every morning. There are a number of things that they did when you go through the book of Ezekiel. I say again, Larkin's "Dispensational Truth" back there is an incredible book to help you understand how that all transpired back in the Old Testament.

But I showed you how the altar of incense is a picture of our prayer life. The problem was that two of Aaron's boys went in to light that incense, and they got, the Bible says, "strange fire." For that strange fire, God killed them. I showed you last week how that strange fire was an incredible picture of why we don't get our prayers answered. You see, the fire for the incense, as the fire

from the candle, had to come from the brazen altar, showing you and me clearly that any prayer and any source point of prayer needs to be the understanding of what Christ did for you on Calvary's cross.

II. The Principle of God's Design

Now there's a reason for that, and we're going to talk about why that is so important. I know many, many people, especially young Christians that don't maybe have a very good handle on the Bible, they look at something like that and they wonder, "Why did God do that?" There's another story in the Bible that I think is an interesting story the same way. It's over there in Samuel when they were bringing the Ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem, and they got it on an ox cart. Remember that story? The Bible says that they carried it on an ox cart, and the ox stumbles, and the Ark begins to fall, and a guy by the name of Uzzah reaches up and keeps that Ark from falling over. For his dedication, for his attention to detail, for him stopping there and keeping that Ark from hitting the ground, he got rewarded, and God killed him.

We read things like that, and we say, "Now, is God having a bad day? Was He just ticked off and wanted to kill somebody, so Uzzah was the guy?" No, no, no. There are principles behind everything like that in the Bible. First of all, that Ark of the Covenant was being carried on an ox cart. That's not the way God designed it to be carried. It was not ever designed to be on an ox cart. It was designed to be carried with staves on the shoulders of the priest. You know why? Because it's a picture; it's a picture of the aspect of Christ and the ministry, and you and I are supposed to bear the burden of that ministry on our shoulders. That's why.

You know what it's a picture of? It's a picture of God setting up Christianity and the Bible the way that He wants it to be run, and then it's a picture of man coming in and saying, "You know what? I think there's a better way to run a church than the old way that they used to do it a long time ago." It was by design the way it was supposed to be carried, and by design, a church is supposed to be what a church is supposed to be. Just like we find new ways to carry the ox cart, we find new ways now to have church. You don't like coming on Sunday morning? Hey, come on on Saturday night. You know what? Stay in and sleep on Saturday morning. We'll do the Catholic route. We'll go ahead and let you come on Sunday so you won't come on Sunday morning. Hey, you know what? It doesn't matter that the Bible says that they met principally on the first day of the week. Forget that. The church has become, in every sense of a bad way, all things to all men.

What we've done in churches today is that we have a book that lays out exactly the way a New Testament church is supposed to be run. But we're not going to put it that way. We're going to come up with a new idea, and we think it's better. Of course, we see that in Uzziah's case, it wasn't better. That's why when Aaron's two boys came in and lit that incense, they didn't get the fire off the altar. They got strange fire, the Bible says, and God killed them for it because there was a principle involved. This is why we, you and me, as God's people, most of the time do not get our prayers answered and then run around wondering why. Because we don't understand the point source of your prayer life, the point source of everything you do and why you do it, and the motive behind why you do it needs to be His death on Calvary's cross right there.

We'll talk about that more, and that's not our message today. We'll move into that next week when we talk about some other things. But personally, last week, I think the greatest aspect that we talked about was the aspect of the theory behind why we do what we do. I don't want to just teach you only what's right in the Bible. That's not my goal. I don't want to just teach you the Bible. I have a goal of doing that. But you know the way I teach on Sunday morning, Thursday night, or you come over one-on-one with me, I'm not interested in just teaching you the Bible. But I am interested in teaching you the Bible and then showing you why the Bible does the things that it does the way that it does. The theory behind the Word of God. The theory behind how it works. Just knowing things about the Bible is not enough. You need to know how these things work.

III. How Does God Answer Prayer?

Now I want to today build on last week's message. We're going to have probably two more sessions after today on this because I want to thoroughly define prayer for you in every aspect. Last week, we saw misconceptions. I showed you the bad ideas that God's people have because we don't have a Bible today anymore. Nobody reads it. Nobody understands it. Nobody studies it for themselves. So I showed you last week how that when you have no truth, you have no doctrine, all the misconceptions come up that people struggle with, and then they wonder why they have some problems. Last week, I took the time, and in our foundational message, I showed you the misconceptions that people have in prayer.

Now today, I want to deal with probably one of the greatest subjects that you're ever going to get into as a child of God. That subject on prayer is basically this: How does God answer your prayer? If you want to have some fun sometime in your life, just ask the average Christian that question. We're going to talk about today, and as we go through this, some more misconceptions, but based on the subject of how God answers our prayers. Again, we see that this is another area that so many Christians haven't got a clue on. There's a theory. There's a method. There's a method behind how God answers your prayers, and you need to know that today.

You know, I've been in this business now for over 30 years, and it absolutely amazes me, the absolute fog that most of God's people live in. You know, in Christianity, in most cases, we're all a bunch of little lab rats. You know, we're in this little maze, and this little maze represents life. In a lab rat, there's cheese at the end of that maze, and somebody's standing up and watching how smart that little lab rat is as he sniffs his way through the little obstacle course, you know, and a dead end here and a dead end there, and then he smells this way, and he's smelling the cheese, you see. The scientists are standing there checking it all out, saying, "Alright, he turned to the left, and he bumped his head twice on that one. He's not the smartest lab rat in the world." They watch that thing, and suddenly, after 20, 30, 40 minutes, an hour, in my case, it was four or five days. So he turns the corner, and bang, there's the cheese. That's the way a lot of us go through life. We try to sniff heaven out, and our life is just a little series of little bumps and turns, and we're just like that little lab rat. We get into a dead end, we turn around, and we say, "God, what's going on?" Then we sniff another direction, and we move around, and all of our lives, we just,

and what our hope is, what our real hope is, that someday at the end of our life, we'll turn the corner, and it won't be a big piece of cheese, but it'll be a big heaven.

See, there's really no difference. As God's people, we need to understand every aspect of our Christian life and certainly the aspect of prayer. It's absolutely amazing to me how much of a fog God's people, and I listen to people all the time. You've got to understand, not only my week but my life is filled with people. I've learned more from the people in my life over the years, an equal amount as I have from the Bible, because that's what God does. Some of you that are working with me in ministry, you're understanding what I just said because you know that once you get the Bible in you and then you start working with other people, you learn as much from them as they do from you.

I have a number of you come over every week, and you know my policy: anybody in this church can have an hour a week with me going through the Bible. I know you always say the same thing when you leave. You thank me for how much you learn when you ask me all your little questions, and we have a great time, and it's a great time. I look forward to it. It's a highlight of my week spending time with you and helping you figure out the Bible. But you know what? I learn as much from you as you learn from me. There have been many times on our sessions where you saw something that I didn't see, or you laid something out that was a different angle from what I saw. It's a two-way street. It's a two-way street. But I learn a lot from people. My whole life has been tried to be that I don't try to have all the answers because I know I don't. I know that I'm just like you, and I'm not any better than you; I'm not any worse than you. I know that you have things to teach me just like I have things to teach you. I made it very careful in my ministry that I don't become one of these guys who think that I'm the guru of all the answers or problems in life. I am not. But I know the book that has all the answers in it. I know where to go. I learn as much from you as you learn from me.

We go through this process, and I listen very carefully to what people say to me. When a man or a woman starts to tell me something in their life, I pay attention. I'm not somebody who just hears and moves on or doesn't hear. I listen to what people say because there's value in other people's lives and learning from them. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad, but there's always value. I'm always interested in when somebody begins to talk to me about something, and they say, "Well, you know, God told me this," or "God is leading me to do this," or "God showed me this," or "God has called me." I listen very carefully because the truth of the matter is, and you need to understand this in your own life, the way God calls you and the way you respond to it and the way that you handle it and the way you pray about it and the way that you go through the process of finding out, you're either going to be a little lab rat or you're going to be someone who understands how to work those things through in your life. I always get very interested in that because it always defines us where we're at.

IV. The Story of the Young Man and the House Sale

I've told you this story many, many times. Some of you in here would know this person. If you go back 10 or 15 years, you would know this person if I said it. I never say his name, but I use this story as an example because it's such a great story. It is one of the greatest examples that I've

ever found in my life. Here again, I didn't learn it from the Bible. I learned it from somebody else who was in my ministry, who, and it didn't turn out good for him, but it was a lesson that I learned, and I marked it down.

Years ago, I had a man come into my office one Saturday morning, and he asked to see me. This was a good kid. He was married, had a little baby girl, I believe it was, and he came into my office, and he sat down, and he says, "Bob," he says, "I need to talk to you." I said, "Well, fine, go ahead and talk. What can I do for you?" He said, "I want you to know," he says, "I have been offered a position at another city." If I remember right, it was St. Louis. He said, "I've been offered another position in another city." He said, "within my own company." He says that I work for. He says, "It's got more money." He says, "It's a greater, better job." He said, "You know, I really struggled with the decision." He said, "You know what? I prayed about it. Once I prayed about it, and I got the answer," he says, "I wanted to come in and tell you that I was moving."

Now, at this point, I'm enthralled because I already know that I have an infirmity. You know what my infirmity is? I don't know how to pray. Now here's a guy who had a problem. He had, he had probably not a problem. He was getting another job. He was moving to another city. Now he's faced with a decision that's going to alter his life, alter his family's life, certainly all of his income, and for in a better case this way. He had to take that before God. I said, "Can I ask you a personal question?" We'd been around for a while. I said, "Absolutely." He said, I said, "Can I ask you just for my own understanding, how God gave you that answer?"

Now, I want you to know something, folks. I'm interested in how God answers your prayers. You ought to be more interested than me in your own personal life. But do you actually understand, sitting here this morning, if I would call on you and have you stand up, could you tell me how God answers your prayers? Stop and think about that for a moment.

Now here was his answer, a classic answer. I said, "How did God show you what He wanted you to do?" I said, "I've got to know that." He says, "Well," he said, "Here's how I figured it out." He says, "I told God that I was going to put my house up for sale. I really didn't know what He wanted me to do. I said, 'God, here's the deal. I'm going to put my house up for sale. If You sell my house, I know You want me to go. If You don't sell my house, then I know You want me to stay.'" He said, "You know what? In two days, God sold my house, and I got my answer." Now he said that to me like he never understood that the devil also has his realtor's license.

Now, two years later, two years later, he came back to Kansas City. He had lost his wife. He had lost his job. He had lost everything that he had. He came back in to see me. He was actually repentant. He was a good kid. He said to me, he said, "You knew the day I was here that this was going to be a disaster for me, didn't you?" I said, "Yes, I did. That's why I asked you the question because you were making one of the most blunderous mistakes a young Christian could ever make." He said, "Well, why didn't you tell me?" I said, "Because, here's my policy: when you come into my office and you say, 'Pastor, I have a decision to make, and I'm not sure what to do, would you help me show me in the Bible how to make this decision?' I would be on. I would go to the end of the earth to help you. But experience has taught me when you come into my office

and you say, 'Pastor, I've already made a decision. I'm not coming to ask you what to do. I'm telling you what I'm going to do.' I'm out of it."

I used to have a white horse. A beautiful animal. A big, tall, steed of a horse. Make the Clydesdale, Budweiser horses that looked like Shetland ponies. Just a beautiful horse. In mornings when he'd come out on a cold day, he'd blow that snort out of his nose. Smoke would come out. I'd get up on him, and I could, I could, I was so high, I could see all around me. That white horse was what I rode into people's lives to try to save them from making disasters out of their life. I'd see somebody out there who didn't come to me. Never said, "Bob, would you help me? Bob, I don't understand." I'd see them in a need. So what I would do. Saddle up. I'd ride as fast as I could in the middle of their dilemma, and he'd rear back, and I'd hold on, and I'd say, "Stop, stop. Don't make that bad choice." I can't show you many times the gestures I got back. I'm sure you're all familiar with. After a while, I realized, "You know what? Riding into somebody's circumstances and telling them what's right when they don't want to hear what's right is not a good thing to do." I don't have that horse anymore. Shot that sucker. Took him out in the backyard, put a .45 automatic to his head, and sent him to horsey heaven.

That kid said to me, "Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you let me know?" I said, "You know why? Because when you came in, if I would have told you what you didn't want to hear, we'd have just been enemies, and we'd have had an issue over it. I figure this, you know what? It's better that God show you what you've got to learn the hard way because you wouldn't have listened to me anyhow. It wouldn't have to be anyhow." There was a discipline problem here. It's like us. You know, some of us have tremendous financial problems, and really, you know what your secret prayer is? "Win the lottery." You think, "If I just had a million dollars, if I just had half a million dollars, if I just had two million dollars, boy, I would be just fine." The problem is, and you've heard me say this before, the problem in our lives is we don't need more money. The problem is we just need to be more self-disciplined in the money we already have. If God came down, and if, you know what, I heard old Mel Sabaka say one time, he says, "He says, you know why you don't have a million dollars? Because God can't trust you with a million dollars." Now, don't get offended at that. I don't have a million dollars either. He can't trust me with it.

The problem is doing something, doing something without understanding how it works, is a disaster. I'm telling you, I'm telling you. The devil is the greatest imitator of Christ you have ever seen in your life. Let me ask you a question. You think the devil can't, can't, can't sell your house? You think the devil can't take care of you and give you what you think God is giving you? Why, if the Bible says he's manifesting himself as an angel of light and his churches down here that imitate him, what makes you think there's a limit to his imitating Christ? Hey, I say it again. How does God answer your prayers? That's the question today. That's the question.

Let me ask you a question. Suppose you have an issue in your life that you can't solve. A major decision that you've got to make. Something that is going to affect not just you, but your life, your family, your wife. Maybe you're, maybe you, maybe you've got a situation where you're going through a bad marriage, or maybe your issue is you have a problem with your kids. Maybe your issue is in the economy we have today, you've lost your job. Maybe your situation, particularly the issues you face, is you're married to an unsaved spouse. You know, somebody

that you just, you know, that you got married before you got in church, and now you find yourself in that situation. Some of you, maybe you have a substance abuse problem. Maybe you're an alcoholic. Maybe you have a drug problem. Maybe you're depressed. Maybe that's your issue. Maybe you just found out you've got some incurable disease. Maybe you struggle every day of your life with your eternal security and wonder if you're still saved. Maybe you're like this guy a number of years ago that you're faced with a job location. Somebody's come to you and said, "Hey, you know what? We'll give you a better job over here. Oh, you've got to move."

You see, this kid, he never went through the process. We didn't do a lot of things, but I'll tell you what he didn't do. He never stopped and asked the question one time, "I wonder if there's a church over there that's going to minister to me spiritually." You know why? Because to him, getting a promotion and making more money was important, not that church. So when he got over there and made the switch, no church. So now he's got a great job. He's making more money, but he has no spiritual foundation for his family. No, he tried for six, seven, eight months and finally wound up at some goofy church that had nothing to do with anything. Then he wondered why later he, he, he loses everything that he has. There's a theory behind how God answers our prayers. In our second session today on, on how you need to know this.

Now, what would you do in these scenarios? Well, let me tell you what, what we do. I'm not saying you versus me, because I already told you, I know my infirmity is, I don't know how to pray. I still, I mean, I've been in this business a long time, and I still screw it up. But let's, I'll tell you what we do. We're faced with an issue now. We're faced with an issue. As a good Christian, we're going to pray. So we go to God, and we pray, and you say, "Lord," I say, "Lord, help me. I'm faced with this scenario. Show me what I need to do." Now, how many times have we all been in that scenario? I'd like to ask this morning. I won't do it, but I'd like to ask this morning. I would just like to know, is there anybody that has never been in that scenario? We all have. That's the question. How will God answer you in your particular scenario? There's a theory behind it that you need to understand how it works.

Now you go on, you pray, and in time, you get no answer. So you and me, being a good Christian, and we read in a Bible someplace about fasting. You heard a sermon on it. You heard somebody say it somewhere, or you read a book, or you talk to some other Christian, but I think maybe, you know, when you really get into a tough situation, God won't answer your prayer until you start fasting. So as a good Christian, you fast. Now let me just say this. We could all use a little fasting every week, which has nothing to do with prayer. But as a good Christian, you fast, you fast the first day. You fast the second day. "That's it. I'm eating nothing."

You know, I have a message that I'd love to preach to you today, and we don't have time to it, and we talk, but I would call it "The Fallacy of Fasting," "The Fallacy of Fasting." People read the Bible about prayer and fasting, and they automatically think if we fast, that that will make God give me my answer. So that's how we do it. Here's how it works, and I know how, I've been there too. I know how it works. Okay. He hasn't, here's how it works. "If I don't eat, if I punish myself, God will see how sincere I am. He'll feel sorry for me. He'll see me down here. My stomach growling, headache. Like Esau, I'm going to die. I missed one meal. God, you're going to let me die? Answer my prayer. I got the shakes. I got a headache. My legs are weak. Now I'm getting

sick to my stomach, and I haven't even eaten. God, can't you see? Will you answer my prayer so I can go get a Big Mac? Don't you see how sincere I am? Don't you feel sorry for me? Don't you see how diligent I am? Answer my prayer." Nothing happens.

A man said to me one time, again, years ago, "Well, I've heard it all my life." He says, "I need an answer from God, and, and He won't give it to me." So he says, "You know what? I have now been fasting for four days." I use Dr. Phil's answer. I says, "And how's that working for you?" So I asked him, because I listened. I listened. So I asked him, "Give me the definitive passage in the Bible on fasting and explain to me from those biblical defining passages what fasting really is and what it does." He didn't have a clue.

Now I'm just going to say it to you now, and we'll get in it a little bit later. Maybe not today, but next week, but I'll give them to you right now. Maybe you can read them. Psalms 69 and Psalms 35. They are the two definitive passages in the Bible that tell you unequivocally what fasting does. Ladies and gentlemen, fasting has absolutely nothing. Let me say it again. Nothing. One more time with fervor. Nothing to do with you getting your prayers answered. Not a thing.

Now I have fun with people when they get into situations like that. Kind of like I told you, you know, when I went to a Baptist church that thought they were something, you know, and it was preaching there down in Alabama or someplace years ago, I talked about the rapture, and I said, "You guys are all so smart and also good in the Bible." I said, "I want to talk about the rapture. How many know, how many people know tonight what rapture you're going in?" Because there's three in the Bible. You should have seen their eyes. See, they knew about the rapture, but they didn't know the rapture broken down into three parts. So I say, "Well," I said that this guy said, "What, come on, you know why you didn't get your prayer answered when you're fasting? What, what didn't you read all those other places? Don't you know that when you fast, you've got to put on sackcloth and ashes?" I mean, one piece of the puzzle doesn't solve it. "You've got to go to work tomorrow with a burlap suit. You're not going to put ashes on your forehead like Ash Wednesday. You're going to put them all over your hair and down over your face. Then your prayers will get answered because prayer and fasting always is associated with sackcloth and ashes." I said, "You do, you want to, you want to not eat, but you don't want to look the part." I said, "You've got to go down the street, go to work in the morning, and walk into the office and say hello." Everybody says, "Oh, you're fasting. I see you got your burlap suit on. Could you step back a little bit when you sneeze, those ashes get on me."

Let me tell you something, folks. I never speak condescendingly to anybody. I preach the truth. But let me just make a general blanket statement here for all Christianity involved in this. Doing something that sounds really godly when you don't know how it works is really pretty stupid. Let me ask, would you, if you get sick in the morning, you got a bad fever, and you got an upset stomach, and you call your doctor, and your doctor says, "Well, I can't see you till next Monday. I'm booked up." And you say, "Well, I need to get in. I'm really sick." And he says, "Well, I'm sorry. We are booked up. I can't get you in." You hang up. This is what you do. Would you go over to the medicine cabinet and open it up and just start taking all the medicine that are in there because you read someplace that medicine makes you feel better when you're sick? You'd kill yourself doing that. We think that prayer, we think that God has some obligation in a law

someplace that when you pray, that He has to answer you, and when He doesn't answer you, you know what happens? We get upset with Him. No wonder He doesn't answer our prayer. We want it on our terminology, our time, not His. Okay. That's the way we work. When we go through the little prayer and fasting routine, and we fast when we don't even know what fasting means in the Bible, you see the misconceptions people are under.

Now here's the million-dollar question, ladies and gentlemen, and I pose this to you again this morning. Here's the million-dollar question: How does God answer our prayers when we have a need? Does He send you a telegram? Do you go to bed at night and have a dream? Do you get out driving down the road some morning, and everything goes big, bright, bright, bright, shines, and there's a vision? Oh, what both people say, "Well, you know what? I just follow that still small voice down inside me." You want to go back into Samuel and find out where that led somebody.

You know what I've learned over the years? I learned in Christianity, there are two concepts. 99% of God's people today are involved in things that are Christian and involved in things that are spiritual. But about 1%, maybe even less than 1% of God's people, are involved in anything that is scriptural and biblical. I am certainly not interested this morning in Christian and spiritual. That is a whole realm of everything that gets people into trouble. What you ought to be interested in is not what is Christian, what Christians do, not what is spiritual, not what seems what's right. You ought to have the Bible down in such a way in your life that everything you deal with, you know, it's biblical and it's scriptural. That's the key.

V. Martin Luther and the Power of Principles

Now here's the million-dollar question: How does God give us direction to keep us from screwing up our lives? Remember now, remember the devil is a great imitator. He'll imitate everything. Let me tell you something. If you don't have this one facet down that I'm talking about this morning, we've not got to it yet. We're going to get there in a minute. I'm giving you some illustrations to emphasize my point.

You know what I think the greatest example in history is? It's a guy by the name of Martin Luther. Now here's a man that we're all worthless compared to. Martin Luther lived around 1483 to 1546. He was the one that brought about single-handedly what we know is today in church history as the Reformation. The Reformation was basically Martin Luther stepping out and coming to the point where he broke with the Roman Catholic Church. He was an incredibly fearless man. He was one of the most fearless men that you ever read about in church history. His doctrine wasn't the greatest in the world, but when God needed a super, super dynamo sledgehammer to break the shackles of the Roman Catholic Church, He found it in Martin Luther. Martin Luther, which was rare for his day, lived to the ripe old age of 80 or so years old. The Roman Catholic Church could never kill him. They hated him, but he broke the back of the Roman Catholic Church and really ushered in what we know as the great Philadelphia church age that started at that particular time. But he's one of the greatest examples of what illustrates what I'm trying to tell you and getting to my point.

He was a Roman Catholic priest, and Martin Luther was empty inside. Martin Luther knew that the church did not fill his need for his relationship with Christ, and he was a sincere man. Martin Luther is probably one of the most incredible men in the history of Christianity from studying his desire to have a better relationship with God. Martin Luther, he listened to what everybody said, and he did everything everybody told him to do. He would, he was a priest. He would go to the bishop. He would go to the archbishop. He would go to the Cardinal. He would go up the chain of command, and he would say to them, "I don't have what I need to have with God. I don't have the relationship with God. I'm empty inside. There's more to this. I can't find it. You told me that the Catholic church was everything, and I would find it. All right, I'm here. All right, I'm here, but I can't find it."

You know what they told him? They said, "Well, Martin, you need to, you need to fast, and you need to fast for a week, two weeks, because through that fasting is the only way God is going to come into your world." So, you know what Martin Luther did? He fasted. Oh, he wasn't like us because they didn't have McDonald's back then. He wasn't, he wasn't like us. He didn't go. He went a week, two weeks. Three weeks. That didn't help him. He went to somebody else, and he said, "Well, the reason why is because you're not paying your penance." He says, "You need to whip yourself. You need to inflict pain on your body." So you know what Martin Luther did? He was a much better Christian than you and me. He got himself a whip, and he whipped himself till the blood ran down his back. That didn't help.

Somebody else said, "The reason why you're not finding God is because you're talking too much. You need to take a vow of silence and don't speak for, for a year." He never spoke a word to anybody. Never found God. Somebody said, "Well, you're not making enough penance. God is in this church. There's something obviously wrong with you that you can't find God. You need to get on your knees before God and search Him out." How many times have you heard me say that to you? Oh, but there, "get on your knees and search it out" was different than mine. You know what they told him to do? "There's 400 steps up to the top of this cathedral. Every day of your life, get on your knees. God is in the church, Martin. You obviously got a problem. Every day of your life, crawl up those 400 steps on your knees, and you'll find God." Every day of his life for six months. His knees were so bloodied. His knees were so battered. His knees and everything from his whippings on his back to the knees, to the vow of silence, to the fasting, and all the things that he did. The answer was nothing from God. No answer from God, nothing from God in all the things that he did that you and I pale in comparison.

You know how he found his answer from God? The same way you and I will find our answers from God because it's the only way God answers us. Martin Luther went through everything that God's people talk about today in an extreme sense. God never, I mean, wouldn't you think that God would stand up there and say, "Boy, I'm going to take pity on that guy. I'm going to give him just a little bit of an answer. I'm going to drop just a little, little, I know we don't have him yet, but somebody get me a tract. I'm going to float it down just to say, 'Hang on, Martin.'" You got nothing.

Now, why would God, with a man that dedicated, who when he finally got plugged in, turned the world upside down for God? You think God would have cut him some slack and said, "I'll get

this to you quicker so we can get moving faster." No, no, I'm going to tell you something, folks. It's not about your timing and my timing. It's about His timing. You want to get into, the older I get, and I'm not really that old, but the older I get, not older than Scott yet, the older I get, the less in a hurry I get, because if I've learned anything, the number one problem we have is the fact that we want it now, and we're not willing to wait and pay the dues to have it in God's timing.

Well, I look at Martin Luther's story, and I think to myself, "Why didn't, why didn't God come down and do something for him? Why didn't God come down and say, 'Martin, I'm going to, I'm going to cut this thing short for you?'" I mean, for six months, Martin, Martin, Martin, Martin, Martin, you've been bloodying your knees. You've whipped your back till you bleed, almost to death. "I'm going to help you out." No, God did not. Because God never violates His own principles. There's a theory behind getting your prayers answered. Martin, like you and I, was going and looking everywhere except where he should. It wasn't until he got into the Bible, and God, leading to Romans 1:17, where it says, "The just shall live by faith," that Martin got what he was looking for.

I'm telling you, folks. When you pray, you talk to God, and you lay out your need. When you read your Bible, God talks back to you and gives you the answer through the principles found in His Word. That's why I keep pushing it. That's why I keep hammering it. That's why I keep it before you. Everything that we do, you have got to learn Bible principles in your life, or you're never, never going to do anything meaningful for God. Remember our tabernacle example, three things in that, in that furnishings in that second section: the Word of God, the Holy Spirit of God, and our prayers to God. God never, never steps outside those three furnishings in our tabernacle. You can be like Martin Luther, and you could do everything. Whip yourself, beat yourself, starve yourself. Until you do it God's way, you ain't getting squat.

Look at Romans 8:26 again. Thank you. I appreciate that. That was your version of amen.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Now watch this. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself." Now you see there, there's not "the Spirit himself." There's "the Spirit itself." You catch that? What does that mean? How come the Spirit of God here is not in a person? How come it's an "it" or "itself"? I'll tell you why. Because when you find the Holy Spirit of God, this is how you learn your Bible. How you learn your Bible when you find the Holy Spirit of God, not a person, but like unto an "it" or an "itself," it's not talking about the personal Holy Spirit of God. Here it comes. It's talking about the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You know what He's getting ready to show you? He's getting ready to show you how you get your prayers answered by the Holy Spirit of God living inside you by the Word of God, the Holy Spirit of God wrote, and put the two of them together, and you get your prayers answered.

Now pay attention. "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Now I know when you fasted, you thought your stomach was making groanings that cannot be uttered. That's not what we're talking about. "And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." And there's the Word of God that this mind being neutral is also

in Christ Jesus. "But he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit because he maketh intercession for the saints according." Now here comes "to the will of God." See, the will of God comes into this. We're going to get into that next week. Right now, I want you to see the basis of how God answers your prayers. You ask. You have a need. You have something that you, a dilemma you're in. The Spirit of God reads your heart. It then does its work and makes intercession for you. The answer comes back to you through the mind of the Spirit because He that searcheth your heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit. He gets your heart lined up with a biblical principle based on a circumstance you find yourself in.

Well, that's why, ladies and gentlemen, this church can never change its stand on this book. It can never get to the place where it's modernized, and we have a contemporary service where we minister to contemporary Christians. This is not a cafeteria or smorgasbord. This is a city union mission soup kitchen. We only serve one thing here. We don't have a church where you come in and you say, "I don't like that. I like those. Those are nice. Oh, no, thank you. Excuse me. Yes. You've got sharp hips." You know. "Oh, I don't like that." You know what? "There's nothing I like here today." Good. Leaves more for us. I'm telling you, folks. God has a way that He does things. It is an absolute way. The bottom line is simply this. This is why we're in the problems we're in today in Christianity and I either world. We're in a changing world, but we have an unchanging Bible. Churches ought to be as unchanging as this Bible in the changing world. You don't reach the world as a Christian by changing to be like the world. You reach the world by being separate from the world while the world changes. You stay with the book. How you do it. That's how you do it.

God never steps outside those three furnishings in our tabernacle. Why? Because the thing about God, and the greatest thing about God that I've ever learned in my life, is that God, and you can take this to the bank, and this is why it is so important to see this, God will never violate His own principles. You know how you know if the devil does something for you or God does something for you? You know how, going back to that young man that wanted to move to St. Louis, or did move to St. Louis, and messed up his life and messed up his world. You know what he should have done? He should have used the biblical principles. He should have realized that God, no matter how bad you want to do something, no matter how right it looks, no matter how sweet it sounds, or how nice it tastes, God will never, never under any circumstances, violate the principle involved about any given circumstance.

I asked you a while back, "How do you know when the devil is doing something versus when God is doing something?" He imitates Him all the way. How do you know? How do you know if it's God in your life or it's the devil in your life? Please don't tell me that the devil, when we start to come to church, that you drive down there, he's sitting in the backseat, and you're coming down 40 highway. Then he says, "Hey, slow up, Bob. Slow up down here, pull in the tool shed. I'm going to go in there, and I'll just wait for you in there till you get out. I'm going to go in there with all those unshaved people. I'm going to carouse around. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that. I want to get in there with all those. I will. I don't want to be down there with churches that I want to be in there where my people are." No, no, no, no. He would much rather be in every decision you make in your life than it would be down there.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the million-dollar question is this: How do you know it's God in your life versus the devil in your life? How do you know it wasn't God? How that young man, how should he have known that it wasn't God selling his house, but it was the devil selling his house? How should he have known that it wasn't God? I'll tell you, the answer is simple. The devil will always violate God's principles. God will never be violating His principles. That's why when you learn the principles, you're never in danger of making a bad choice. You're never in danger. Every given circumstance and situation in your life, I'm going to go through them here in a moment. Not to the degree I'd like to, but I'm going to show you. I'm going to show you.

VI. The Church's Role in Learning Principles

Now I know what some of you are saying right now, and I know I can hear it. I can hear it. Let me, let me calm your fears. You're all going to die. No, I'm just kidding. Let me, let me calm your fears. I know what some of you are saying. You're saying, "Well, look, I'm just a young Christian. I've been coming to this church. I'm just being disciplined. I just got saved two, three months ago." "Well, I just came back to God, you know, six months ago. I'm going through this process. I believe with what you say, Bob, and I hear what you're saying. But the bottom line is, at my stage in my life, how do I do that? How do I get to the point in my life now where I don't make a lot of bad choices?" Hey, let's face it. We're faced with choices every day. Some of those choices we make bad, we get away with. Some of them haunt us for the rest of our lives.

You say to me, "What, I'm just a young Christian. I'm just trying to get my foot in the door. I'm being disciplined by this person, or I'm, I'm coming to Scott Shankle's class. I really want to learn. I really want to be everything God." But what do I do? You just painted a bleak, black picture because I don't know anything about the Bible principles. Hey, what do you think the church is for? You realize what Jesus Christ went back to heaven. His physical body in Acts chapter 1 and 2, He replaced Himself with, with three things. You know the first thing He replaced Himself with was the Holy Spirit of God. In Acts chapter 2, the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit of God came like a mighty rushing wind, and it fills believers. That had never happened before in the history of the world. Why? Because Christ just went back to heaven, and now He has to replace Himself with something here to carry on what He wants to do. That thing comes in three installments.

You know what the second thing was? The Word of God. When the time 90 AD rolls around, John writes the last books of the Bible. Now the Bible is complete. Now we have the second part. We have the Holy Spirit of God that lives inside you. You have the Word of God that now is your roadmap of life that the Holy Spirit of God is going to show you how to do it. Now you need a, you've got to realize that God has something that He wants you to do. You need a vehicle. The third aspect was the local church. That's my job. My job. My standard thing to you, when in doubt, find out. Don't face any major decision in your life without finding what the biblical principle is. I've got a number of you on those cards that you're going through the principles. You're learning how to use them. You don't do it overnight. But that's why God gave you church. You go to most churches in this town, you couldn't even get in to see the pastor if you had a problem, let alone spend an hour a week with him. My job is one-fold. That is to make sure that

you have everything in your life to get what God has for you. To help you learn those principles. That's our job. Now I've got other people that are farther along and coming down the line. They're doing the same thing with other people.

Ladies and gentlemen, young Christians, you need to get this down and listen to this. Nothing in this world. Nothing in this life. Or anybody else or anything will ever give you the right to override the biblical principles in your life. Because, ladies and gentlemen, they are there for a reason. You're all raising kids, most of you. You have little kids. Our elementary division is full of them. You know what? As those kids, do you just allow those kids to do whatever they want to do? Don't you have, I hope you do, don't you have rules in your front, in your home? Don't you have policies that they've got to follow? Don't you have certain things that they can do and they can't do? Don't they know? Don't they know where the line is? Don't you have a set of principled guidelines that your child knows, "This is okay. This is not okay. This is where I'm at." Okay. Your goal is to, when they grow up, those same principles that you instilled in them at eight, four, five, six, seven, and eight are going to be automatic by the time they get 16, 17, 18, and 19. Well, Christians are the same way. I told you through the seven stages of spiritual growth. Some of you come in your baby. Some of you come in your little children. Some of you come in your children. Some of you get to the point of young men. Some of you get to on up that scale. You know what? You learn the basic principles now, and then you build them in your life as you grow. God answers your prayers, supplies your needs, your requests through the principles of this book.

VII. Paul's Disobedience and the Principle of Consequences

Now I want to show you one of the greatest examples in the Bible, and this is where I want you to turn. I want you to come over to Acts chapter 20. I want to show you. I want to show you another. We looked at Martin Luther. I cannot not give you this one. This is absolutely probably the greatest illustration. My prayer this morning is that God permeates this on your mind. Acts chapter 20.

Now I don't know of a better example of a violated principle that led to a disaster in a man's life in the Bible better than this one. This is the story of the Apostle Paul when he refuses to listen to the principles of the Word of God and go down to Jerusalem. I want you to see this. Now I've got to say this to you. I want you to get this first. In my mind and my way of thinking, from what I know about life, Bible, and history, the Apostle Paul is probably the greatest Christian that ever lived. You say, "Well, Christ was better." We have it. They're not the same sense. As far as a man born again and saved and then gave his life to God, there probably is not a more fruitful, a better example of a child of God anywhere in the Bible.

I get amused today how that, you know, even in politics, you know, Barack Obama likes to tag himself with FDR, you know, or Abraham Lincoln, you know, or, or they all like Harry Truman. People like to associate themselves with people because we look back on that person in history. He's very credible. So we think if we line ourselves up with him, talk like him, do things like him, and act like him, people will think that we have credibility. It drives me crazy when I hear preachers or even people talk about their pastors, you know, in past, referring themselves to the

Apostle Paul. Let me tell you something. There ain't a man on this planet today. Probably hadn't been a man on the planet since Paul. That could ever tie his shoestrings. Paul, without a doubt, was the greatest single man who is probably the greatest single example outside of Christ that you and I will ever have about everything you ever wanted to know about the Christian life, going into the ministry, and everything concerned with it. I do not know of a greater man who walked this planet, who loved God, who did what with God, who came from the extreme other side like most of us did, and then found Christ and then gave his life over to Him. There is no better example and probably no better Christian in all of the New Testament than the Apostle Paul.

But I want you to see this. Like every good Christian, he had a burden. See, Paul was a Jew, and Paul knew that before he got saved, and this haunted Paul all of his life. You hear him talking about in his testimony. Before Paul got saved, he used to persecute Christians, Jews. He used to put them in jail. He used to torture. He used to come, kill. That was his job. In fact, when he met Christ on the road to Damascus, he's on his way hearing that there's an old past Baptist church down in Samaria someplace. He's going to have them all go arrested and tortured and murdered and killed. But what happened? The Lord appears to him, and he gets saved. He never got out from under the burden of the Lord. He never got out from under the burden from his people. In fact, in Romans 9:3, and Romans chapter 9 is that great chapter we'll get into in Romans, along with chapter 11, it talks about our understanding of the nation of Israel. He says this, he said, "You know what," and I'm going to paraphrase, he said this, he said, "You know what, folks. I'm saved, and I'm going to heaven. I know I'm God's man. But you know what? If I could die and go to hell. If I could reverse the process. If I could make a deal with God. If I could get God to listen to me. I would gladly die and go to hell. If my countrymen Israel could find Christ." He said, "I wish myself accursed for the nation of Israel." That was his burden. He had a tremendous burden for his own people.

Paul has this mindset that he's got to go down to Jerusalem. That he's got to go down and he's got to reach the Jews. He is so burdened. He so has such a desire that he literally talks himself into thinking that God is in it. I want to show you two verses. These are probably for your life and my life, of where you're at and some of the decisions you're going to have to make down the line, is probably the greatest thing you'll ever see.

Look at Acts 20:22. Get that in one hand, and then get Acts 21:4 in the other. I want you to get them where you can flip from one to the other. We're going to go to Acts 20:22 first, and then we're going to flip right over. The key to here is being able to see them quickly.

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

All right. Look at Acts 21:4.

And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

Now let me ask you a question. Anybody see something strange between those two verses? Raise your hand. I want to see how many do first before somebody. Anybody see any strange there? I know maybe don't feel bad if you don't. Don't feel bad if you don't. It's okay. But this is a lesson. If you're reading this and you know what, what do you see the strain between verse, the first verse and the second one I read? Anybody keep your hand up. I just want to see how many we got here. How many we got? Terrence, what do you see? "Spirit" is capitalized in the second one. It's lowercase in the first one. You know what that shows me? That shows me when I read the first one, it was Paul's own flesh that had convinced him to go. It wasn't God's Spirit that called him down there. It was Paul's flesh that called him down there. His burden got overwhelming, and his burden got over, over the top. What it did is he allowed his burden to override the principle that God had given to him.

Now God tells him two times, really called him four times, but we're going to look at the two He does here that we have in four. Look at Acts 21:4. Now he goes down there, and he finds certain disciples. "And we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit. Principle number one. Don't go down to Jerusalem."

And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

Two times God gave him the principle: don't go. Paul is so burdened by his own burden that he overrides the very principles. You certainly do know the rest of the story. He has convinced himself that this is what God wants him to do. This is what the boy going to St. Louis convinced himself he was going to do. Two times God tells him, gives him the principle, don't go. But he's so sure he's right that he exercises his spirit over God's principle. Let's see what happens now. As Dr. Phil would say again, "How'd that work out for him?"

4. It was a disaster.
5. He got shipwrecked. They lost everything they had. They got in the middle of a terrible storm.

You know what the name of that storm is? Somebody tell me what that storm's name is. What is it? Euracylon. Euracylon. I can spell it for you. E-U-R-A-C-L-Y-D-O-N. You're right. I don't capitalize it. Somebody tell you what Euracylon means. What kind of, what does that mean? Oh yes. You're just full of the answer today. What do you got? What did you get that from? Institute. Oh, glad to see somebody learning some stuff. Real loud, Nicky. Say what it is. Real loud like you're yelling at him. It's a storm where the wind changes so you can't stay on track. It's a wind that keeps changing. See, back then they had sail ships. They had to get wind in the sails, and you had to, you get, you kept, you kept the sail to the direction of the wind, and it pushed you along. But a Euracylon wind, a Euracylon wind, is the worst kind of storm to be in because the wind keeps changing directions. Therefore, you can't sail a straight course because the wind keeps changing where if it's coming from the east, you can sail the west, and come from the

north, and sail the south. Well, you can change the rigging. But when the wind keeps changing every direction it goes, you're stuck. You violate God's principles, and He'll put you in a storm that the wind changes every time you try to go another way. You'll wind up shipwrecked. You want to talk about the perfect storm.

Now I've got to ask you a question. Now why did God allow, now you've got to think this thing through. Why did God allow the greatest Christian ever lived that I don't find another time in his life where he even thought about doing something wrong? I can't find where he belched in a meal. I can't find where he ever slammed a door in an old woman's face. I can't find where he ever said a foul word to anybody. In every example of his life, it is 100 percent right on the money. Why did God let a man who had that kind of integrity, who is the example in the Bible for you and for me and everything like, why did God, who he had done 99.9999999 percent of the time right, let him get shipwrecked and his ministry and come to the point where he got into a storm that they lost everything and ultimately, ultimately took him to Rome where they killed him?

You know why? Let me give you the answer and another question for him. If God didn't spare the greatest Christian ever lived because he'd violated the principles, who in the world do you think we are? If God held the greatest Christian that ever lived to the authority of the principles and wouldn't cut him any slack, who in the world do we think we are? Now we have got a conceited, bloated image of ourselves. God held him to the principle, my God, people, what is He going to do to you and me? See how these things work. See how these things work.

You see, when you know the principles, and this is what I try to teach you. I don't care if it's Monday night or Thursday night. I don't care if it's Sunday morning. I don't care if it's Institute. I don't care if it's in whatever we do. I'm always pointing out the principle when you come in and you have an issue in life, and we try to start working through it. What is the first thing I do? If I would ask for a show of hands, probably half of you young Christians are doing this right now. You get your little three by five cards, and you start identifying the issue, the problem, the thing you got, and then you write down the principle. Why do I do that? Because I want you to begin to learn to use the principles for every given situation you find yourself in. Let me tell you something, a strong Christian doesn't waste time asking God for an answer to his issue, which 90 percent of God's people doubt. If he knows the book and he knows the principles, then he knows what God would say in any situation he finds himself in. He just has to follow the rules of the day and the principles for any given situation. That's why it's so important to learning this book, understanding how God will answer your prayers, a theory behind how He does that.

You know, many of you now have worked with me for almost four years, somebody longer than that, and you're working with me with multiple people. I purposely have put people in your life that I thought were complicated people because I, you know, I see, you know, that those are the best way for you to learn. I had somebody ask me this week, and, and I've had several conversations with my people this week that, you know, one of the things that I'm learning as I'm watching how that you are becoming very good at dealing with people. I was talking to somebody this week, and somebody was asking me, "Why did you put so and so to work with so and so?" I said, "Well," I said, "You want the honest truth?" I said, "You can learn from this,

don't take this in a bad way." I said, "After being in the ministry as many years as I have, you can pretty much tell if somebody is going to make it or they're not going to make it." I mean, there are people that come in that are just submerged over their head with problems, and when you add a drug addiction or an alcohol addiction to that, and you add all kinds of factors into it, the chance, and this is not, I'm not a prophet, no, I'm not predicting, I'm just saying through the experience of dealing with people, there are, you know what, you can put so many things in your life that I don't care what you do, you ain't getting back to God. Before I go any further, it has nothing to do with God not wanting you to come back. It has to do with you painting yourself in such a small corner, you can't get back.

I mean, you put alcohol in your body for 10, 15, 20 years and try to quit, I guarantee you it'll rule you, you won't rule it. You get marijuana and now stuff and drugs in your system, and you get your body accustomed to that, you have no idea how those kind of, those kind of substance abuses alter your body and get you addicted to them that you think you're just going to walk away. "Oh, I'm saying I got the Holy Spirit of God. I, greater is He that's in me. All I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Yet, try it for about six months to see what happens to you. You're in a fight for your life, folks, you know that. You know what the principle is on it? The principle is simply this: sin never leaves a man better than it finds him. That's why the Bible says for a young man, young lady, remember now that creator days that I used before the evil days come, stay chaste, stay pure, stay away from that stuff, don't get that stuff in your system. You'll have enough things in your life you've got to deal with without putting something in that's going to shackle you to this world.

The Bible says, "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." You heard me say it before. Take a little piece of thread. Pop. Wrap it on your finger. Pop. Take that same little piece of thread about that, you know, measure it six inches, then measure another six inches, measure another six inches, measure a hundred six-inch pieces of that thread. You take one little six-inch, pop, you take that one little inch and, and say, "Watch this, I want to impress your girl some night. Tie that thread around my finger. Watch this, honey." Okay, tough guy. Just imagine every six-inch thread of the glass of booze, a cigarette, a hit on a joint. I love that kind of talk. What did I just say? That hit on the joint. Does that mean you held up a bar? Okay, six inches, whatever your little deal is. Take that, you got a hundred of them. Now take it one time, you break it. Take that little six inches, wrap it around a hundred times, you'll die before you break it. She's never a question of, "Will God, will God let you come back?" There's never a question, "Will God take you back?" There's never a question, "Can I?" The question is, "Can you get back?" That's the question because you get yourself far, far out left field, you just can't get back. So you take my glasses one more time, you're going to be in trouble.

Many of you, when you come in here in our church and you sit down with me the first time, you're in situations over your head. When a person comes into me and asks me a question, and he's got some problems or she's got some problems, first of all, I never give them my opinion. My opinion is worthless. I never tell them what to do because I don't have to live your circumstances. What I will do is show you the biblical principles. I will show you the consequences of where you're at versus the good consequences of where you need to go. Then I

will, if you want to, I will put in act a plan in your life and put as many people with many things, as many circumstances, and me myself right in the middle of to help you get out of it. That's the way. But we will do it one principle at a time, understanding how God answers your prayer.

I started to say, many of you have worked with me and dealing with people. You know what? You're getting good at it. I talked to two separate people this week that dealt with circumstances, and in both cases, as I was listening to them tell me how they handled it, in my mind, I was, I was, they were telling me what they were saying, what they had said to this person or what they were dealing with this person, and I, in my mind, I was getting ready to say to them the next thing they ought to do, and before, while I was thinking it and getting in my own mind, they went ahead and said exactly what I was thinking and laid out the principle exactly the way that I would have done it. You see, you're getting good not because you're any smarter than a person sitting next to you. You're good at what you do, and you're getting it better at what you do because you're learning a theory behind what you do. You're using principles, and there's nothing better that will get you closer and into the book more than using what you know in somebody else's life, and it's a situation that, that, that, what makes men and women and gives them the ability.

Now you'd come into me this week and you'd say to me, "Bob, I lost my job." I'd give you 10 principles how to deal with losing your job in prayer. Come when he come into me and say, "Bob, my child's really sick." I'd give you five principles right off the top of my head that you ought to be claiming. Somebody says, "I got sick. I got cancer. I got, I, how should I proceed? I got all kinds of circumstances that I got to face with." I could give you 20 principles right now that will help you make the right decision so you don't make a bad one. You say, "I want to be a pastor. I want to get into the ministry." I'd give you seven absolute principles you've got to have and 20 other ones that's got to fit into that that'll make you successful in ministry.

Well, you say, "Well, Bob, I've been praying, and well, God just didn't answer my prayer." I'd give you five off the top of my head and one of the greatest passages in the Bible, no, two in the Bible, that will show you how to deal with that kind of circumstance and situation. You say, "I have an addiction." I got 20 verses for you at least that will give you everything you need to know to work through those things if you'll hold yourself accountable to them. You say, "Well, Bob, I've just tried and tried and tried, and I just cannot get the victory in my life." I can give you 30 principles right now that will get you on the road if you'll do it to get into victory. You say, "Well, I got a grandma on life support, and they want us to pull the plug. What do I do?" I'd give you 10, I'd give you 10 principles right now to tell you what to do. Pull that sucker. No, I'm just kidding. I'd give you 10 principles right now to tell you what to do. You see what, "I got a medical decision I got to make." I'll give you five principles right now that'll tell you how to deal in that scenario. You say, "Well, I just got married." Well, suicide, that's the best way you can get out of that. Somebody says, "I just got married, and we were, we want to have some kids. How does God look at that? How many kids should I have?" I'll give you five principles, tell you right now how many kids you should have. You think I'm, hey, somebody said, "Well, I just got a new puppy." I'll give you two principles right now in that book that tells you how to deal with a new puppy. Think that book doesn't cover it all? Say, "I got a cat." Cat too. "I got a canary." Oh, shut

up. Canaries too. Somebody says, "I like to hunt." I'll give you two principles right now on hunting in the Bible, and it'll define what kind of person you are. Oh, you, that book is everything God said it is.

Operating your life without knowing the theory behind the things you do, especially your prayer life, is a disaster. We spend so much time telling God our woes, but absolutely no time reading the Bible, collecting the principles to see what He says about it, what we ought to do. We need to quit telling God what He already knows. "God, I lost my job." Oh, no kidding. When did that happen? "You lost your job? Oh my goodness, who didn't tell me up here that Bob lost his job?" He knows that. "Oh God, I've got some incurable disease." No, when did that all happen? You just got, you had an appointment with a doctor. Why didn't you give me that appointment date? I would have been there. See what I'm saying? God already, God already knows those things, and next week I'm going to show you why those things come into your life.

Quit telling God what He already knows. Find the principle that tells you what to do in any given circumstance, and then just simply say, "God, this is the situation I find myself in. I am so glad that You did not leave me in this by myself because God, You showed me through this story right here, or this principle here, or Bob preached this two weeks ago, or I found this on my own. There's the principle that I need to get through those. I'm going to take those principles, and so I don't forget it, because you know what, this is scary, and my emotions could overwhelm me, and I have a tendency to be flighty anyhow, and what happens is, is when it, when things start to move me and shake me, I have a tendency because one of my infirmities is my flesh, one of my infirmities is my forgetting, and one of my infirmities is my prayer life. So what I'm going to do, I'm going to write these things out on a three by five card, and every time I feel scared, every time I feel like I'm weak, every, I'm going to go to those principles, and through those principles, You're going to give me, guide me to more principles, and every level of this circumstance that I go through is going to be another set of principles so I get through the other side of it. So God, I'm not asking You to fix it. I'm not asking to change it. I'm not asking why, God. I'm not asking You to fix it. I'm not asking to change it. I'm not asking why. I'm just got ready, got the principles. I'm just asking for You to bless these principles in my life and help me follow them." See what I'm saying? Boy, that's a difference in what most of our prayer life is like, isn't it?

Listen, for the last 30 years of my life, until the day I die, the Lord takes us out of here, I will never cease to keep before you the number one aspect of a Christian life, and that is in everything that we do, that must be based on biblical principles. I'll teach them to you Sunday morning, Thursday night, Bible Institute, one-on-one, you come in to me for problems in counseling, or I can help you anyway, it'll be based on the principles. The Bible and its principles are the only constant in this world. It's the only absolute truth in any age. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Now maybe you won't listen. Happens all the time. Maybe you'll mess your life up royally. But I'm going to tell you something, this church has to and always will be based on the unchanging truths and the principles of the Word of God. As we see this old world, our country literally before our eyes, you can almost day by day see it spinning out of control. We are going from what we started with our founding fathers in a republic, which is based on biblical principles, to

a democracy, which is on, which is on unpopular opinion, and we're sliding right down the path of socialism. We're seeing values change, ideas change, beliefs change, morals change, Christianity has changed, and everything that you have to deal with in your life, these changes affect every decision. They affect your family. They may affect where your kid goes to school. They may affect what you do. They may affect in every aspect. It's going to put you in a position that you not only have to deal with them, but you have to make decisions about them, and you better understand it. Wasting God's time by throwing up goofy prayers when He's already given you the answers that are in this book. Okay, if you don't know what they are, no problem, get with me and let me show you the process. If you already know, begin using them even better than you already are. Don't make a decision in your life. Don't make any major catastrophic thing in your world that you are not 100% sure that it's not you wanting to do it over what God wants you to do. Remember the greatest Christian ever lived, God let him screw up his life, get shipwrecked in a storm that he could not get out of. Who in the world do we think we are? Keep your prayer life consistent. Know the theory. Know the theory behind how God answers your prayers.

Now we've looked at two aspects. Last week, I showed you the misconceptions of prayer. This week, we went some more of those, but we looked at, okay, how does God answer my prayer? Now next week, I'm going to show you how to pray. I'm going to show you how to pray. I'm going to show you how to use Romans 8:26, 27, and 28 and make it work in your life. I'm going to show you the idea of how to work these three things. I'm going to show you next week how fasting does fit in. I'm going to show you next week why it's so important that that, that that fire from the prayer, the incense, and the candlestick had to come off that brazen altar. I'm going to take the time. I've given you two aspects of it. I've showed you the misconceptions, and I showed you why the aspect of how God answers your prayer. Now next week, we had to get those out of the way for next week. I'm going to show you now that you know this, how do you pray? How do you pray? How do you get your prayers answered? What do you do if your prayers don't get answered? Let's pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for the