

Romans 8

Sunday 4/12/2009

My goal here is to show you the importance of how biblical principles operate in your life. This is Easter today, and though this will not be your traditional Easter message, I think you are going to find that it goes right along, probably more biblically, with the concept of the resurrection of Christ than most of the things that you are going to find out there today. The bottom line is that so many of us, Christianity becomes just a holiday. Easter becomes something that we do, and we unfold all of the spiritual things in our lives. We bring it out for a day, and then we put it all back away, and we wait for another holiday to come around, whether it be Christmas or whatever the case.

Of course, if you know the Bible and you are a Christian and you love the Lord, you know that there should never be just one day that you set aside to think about the day that Christ came out of that tomb. What we are talking about today are principles, and I have been talking about trying to show you principles that will change your life. You have heard me say it over and over again. We have been in the book of Romans, and in Romans 8, we have really been focusing on great concepts.

I took the time and I said, "We want to just take a block of time, no matter how long it takes, and we want to really focus on principles." I told you that the key to the Christian life, the key to not having Christianity be just Christmas, or Easter, or whatever holy day that we set aside, the real key to having the victory in your life and having the relationship with God that works every day of your life is understanding that your job and my job, every day that we live if we are a Christian, our job is simply to understand more about God today than we did yesterday and then bring our lives into accordance with that.

Your life and my life is a journey. There is no question about that. Nobody is born and then gets saved and just becomes spiritual just like that. Everybody in this room that is saved, no matter where you are at in your life, you are on a process journey. Some of you have got off at a rest stop; you are hanging out there for a while. Some of you do not go as fast as maybe somebody else. That is okay. It does not matter how fast you get there. All that matters is at the end of the day that you do get there.

The process of learning biblical principles is paramount in your life and my life because that is the way that we make the right choices about the issues in life. I have been showing you week by week different scenarios, and there is no way that I can give you all of the principles, but I have been showing you different scenarios by which you can see the principles and see how they apply. We have really been talking about them on Thursday night.

Last Thursday night, we got into Genesis 24, as we talked about last week, and it was a great time to lay all that out. I told you that last week we started probably one of the greatest studies you will ever undertake from a personal standpoint based on biblical principles. It is the principles that are in the Bible about forming relationships. We talked about in reality how to find a spouse and the importance of that. The importance of always doing everything that we do

based on the principle that someday at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we are going to stand and give an account before God for what we do.

I have said it many, many times, and you hear me say it all the time, that a leader, someone who really understands these concepts, is somebody that is always looking around, looking behind, and looking ahead. It is a cute little phrase that puts it all into perspective for you. But when I talk about looking behind and looking around and especially looking ahead, I am not just talking about looking ahead as far as seeing what is out there and shutting down issues before they arise. That is what I am talking about, but not entirely. What I am talking about when I talk about that we ought to look ahead, I am talking about looking ahead at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Everything that we do, every decision that we make, certainly in the aspect of relationships and spouses, we saw that last week because we looked at the biblical definition of marriage based on biblical principles, which is totally unknown today. We looked at the importance of finding the help meet, and I showed you how that in Genesis, when God made all the animals, He gave them mates, but when He gave Adam his wife, she is not called a mate (M-A-T-E); she is called a meet (M-E-E-T). We talked about the difference and why. We defined the biblical purpose of an engagement, all in the concept of building the right relationships.

Then I took you to Genesis 24, and we talked about probably the greatest single chapter that has, well, there were 19, but Thursday night we found a 20th one, so 19 or 20 absolute principles that show you how to find the right spouse and build the right relationship because it is all based on the understanding of looking ahead at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Remember me telling you last week that the person you marry may very well make or break you at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The person you line yourself up with is going to have a tremendous influence in your life.

It is just like the church you go to, the pastor you listen to, the people that you get around; they have a tremendous influence in your life, and they are going to influence you toward the Word of God or away from the Word of God, but they are going to have an influence on your life. I talked about the great absolute principles that we all had to begin to follow when building relationships. I have said a lot of things that I am sure everybody, no matter where you are at in your relationship with God, had to look inwardly and really ask yourself. Week by week, it has been my goal for us to examine ourselves on the inside and ask ourselves, "Are we really following the principles? Are we really doing everything in our lives to be able to put those things into our life?"

I. The Purpose of Christ's Resurrection

Today is Resurrection Sunday. Most people do not know and do not ever stop and think about the fact that when Christ died, there is more to the resurrection, there is more to Christ dying on the cross and being buried and coming out of that tomb on the third day. Did you ever stop and ask yourself why God ended His life when He did? Did you ever stop and ask yourself why He died when He was 33 years of age? Did you ever stop and ask yourself why He only had about three and a half years of ministry? Why did God allow Him to come down, who was going to be the

Savior of the world, who was going to die, who was going to resurrect, and then only allow Him to have such a short span of ministry?

Of course, the answer to that is because of the resurrection, because He did not stay dead, because He was, as the Bible calls Him, the first begotten of the dead. Because He did not stay dead and He resurrected Himself and came out of that tomb, you and I now have the ability to carry on for Him what He did not carry on for Himself. You see, the original plan was God never intended Christ to do it all. He intended Christ to come down to be the model. He intended Christ to come down and in three years' time take 12 men and train those men that they could take over the world and accomplish what Christianity needed to accomplish, that God's plan was, and then Christ went back to Heaven.

Those 12 men all went out and branched out to the world, and they won scores and scores and scores of people to Christ. They related the process that God had taught them, and right there in history and right there in your Bible began an unbroken chain of events that leads us up to even today of men who were with the Lord Jesus Christ, who saw and understood the mission, who realized what He was doing with them, who understood the concept of the resurrection of why He was going back to Heaven, and then they began the process of winning other men and women to Christ, training them up, showing them, and the unending process. You and I this morning, if you are saved, we are just in a long line of the same process that started back in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John when He came out of that tomb, and the same commission that God gave the 12, the same commission that God gave every born-again believer in the book of Acts to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

How do you do that? You do that by learning to be more like Christ. Would you do me a favor? I have something in my car that I need you to get. Would you go get it for me? Go ahead. You need a key? Jimmy, give me my key back there. Would you go get what I need? I need something out of my car. You mean you are not going to do it for me? Why do you not just know what it was? Very good answer. Stand up and tell everybody that one. Why can you not go out and get what I need? You know, I used to be as tall as you before I got sick, but anyway. Thank you.

I wanted him to get something out of my car. He was willing to do it. He was even, did you notice, on his way, and then he stopped and he said, "Oh, I am willing to do it, but what do you want me to get?" I said, "I want you to get something out of my car. Will you go get it?" "Sure, I will. What do you want?" You see, that is the way most Christians live their lives. God has something that He wants you to do for Him, but most of God's people are just like him. They do not know what God wants them to do. They are willing, just like he was willing. But he said it himself, "How does he read my mind to know what he wants me to get out of his car?"

Well, the good thing about that is you can read God's mind. The Bible says this book is the mind of Christ. Paul said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." When you learn from reading God's mind what exactly He wants you to get out of His car—He has a really nice car—when you learn what God wants you to get for Him and do for Him, then you know what you need to do. The problem is that most of God's people are just like him. They want to do it,

but they do not know what it is they have to do, and they are not reading the book to find the principles to tell them what to do.

So you see the end result? He would have gone out five or six times, brought back something different that would not have been the right thing. Finally, because he is a good kid and he really does what he wants, he drove my car down those steps and says, "Here, get it yourself." That is our problem, folks. God saved you and me for a purpose, and the process started, went into power, when He came out of that tomb. The process was for you and I to pick up in our lifetime the chain of events that started with the apostles, went right down through the history of the church, that you and I find out what God wants us to do and then accomplish His purpose. In other words, you and I were the replacement, along with a lot of other replacements, and the key to that is understanding what God wants you to do, and the key to that is knowing biblical principles.

II. The Goodness of God and Redeeming Time

I said a lot of things in the last couple of weeks, and as I said, I know that we all find ourselves in circumstances that we could all do better, and my goal obviously is not to ever hurt you, but to always help you. I think that before we get into this today, there are some things that I want you to understand. I think the most important thing to see in all of this of what we are talking about in the principles, even in the areas of our lives where maybe we do not do them the way we should, I think the thing that we need to understand is the goodness of God that He has toward us.

You do not realize God has never finished with us. God has never finished with us. There may be a time in your life when you are finished with God, but there will never be a time in your life where God is finished with you. There may be a time that you want nothing to do with God. I mean a saved person; I am not talking about a lost person. If you do not think saved people can get back into the world so far and so deep that they lose every idea and inkling of God, you do not know much about people or human nature. You can deny God, but God will never deny you.

In fact, the Bible says over there, one of the great principles in 2 Timothy 2:12:

2 Timothy 2:12

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

It says, "Even if we deny him, yet he abideth faithful" to me and you. The greatest thing I can tell you this morning, no matter where you are at with these principles, no matter where you are at with this commission that God has given to us that He empowered with His resurrection, God has something that He wants you to accomplish, and He will never give up on you. You give up on God long before God will give up on you.

Not only that, you talk about the goodness of God. I have people all the time, and especially as we have come down through these last five or six weeks that we have talked about these principles, it has really revolutionized many of your minds, and I see in many of you a real distinct aspect of your life that you are focusing and seeing what you had never saw before. I am seeing some great victories through it, but I always have the same thing that people say to me.

They will come up, and I probably had eight or nine people in the last five weeks come up and talk to me and felt bad because of the fact that maybe they are midlife, or maybe they wasted 25 years of their life, or did not get plugged in until they got here, or whatever. They feel bad about that because they feel like, "Wow, how is God going to look at the fact that I wasted so much time of my life?"

The goodness of God not only goes to the fact that He is never done with you, the goodness of God not only extends to the fact that He will always take you wherever you are at, but the goodness of God extends even farther that He says in Ephesians 5:16:

Ephesians 5:16

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Not only will He take you where you are at, but He will allow you to redeem the time that you lost when you were not doing what you were supposed to do. How much better can it get than that? We serve a good God. Colossians 4:5 says that we redeem the time and gives you the next key.

Colossians 4:5

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

We redeem the time, and I want you to see this because this is what we are going to base on this morning. We redeem the time. Ephesians 5 says, "Redeeming the time, for the days are evil," but Colossians 4:5 tells us to redeem the time and tells us how: by walking in wisdom. You know how you redeem the time? You know what the first step is? Quit making the bad decisions in your life that got you to the mess you are in. How do you do that? Start walking in the wisdom of the Word of God and applying the principles of the Word of God, and that is how you begin to redeem that time, and God will allow you to make up the time. It is incredible, absolutely incredible.

God has never finished with us. Even when we are finished with Him, He is always waiting to do whatever God. We may grieve Him; we may put Him to the point where He just cannot stand some of the things that we do with Him living inside us, but He is always ready to forgive and to bring us to the point where He is ready to take us and do what God really wanted to do in our lives.

III. The Church's Personality and Purpose

Have you ever noticed, and most of you have been in and out of churches for all your life? I have been associated with churches for almost 40 years. I have seen every kind of church there is, every kind of denomination. I have preached in most of them. Many of you have been in all kinds of churches before you finally got snagged and landed here. You know this by now, that churches take on personalities. They do. It is an interesting study. Some churches you go to, they are very pious. Some churches you go to, they are very self-righteous. Some churches you go to, they are very cold and very unfriendly. Some churches you go to, they are very warm. Some

churches you go to, you get the feeling just when you walk in the door that you are part of a gigantic family, and everybody loves everybody. Some churches are legalistic. Some churches take on personalities, and the reason why they do is because churches are made up of people, and people, based on their relationship with the Word of God, based on their relationship with the principles of the Word of God, will either become everything that Christ is or become everything that Christ is not, or somewhere in between.

It is based on their mindset about God. It really comes back to the pastor. It is based on what the pastor allows them to get into, what he allows them, and what he gives them, and how he holds them accountable, how he gives them the mindset about God, a biblical perspective. People become what the church is, and the personality of the church becomes what the people are. We live in the Laodicean church period. We know Revelation 2, what that is all about. We know how in Revelation 3, we understand how it goes. But the Laodicean personality of God's people produces a Laodicean church, and that is why we have what we have in churches today.

I do not know how much you know, and some of you older Christians have been involved in the intricate structure of other churches. Every church has a little circle of groups that they all follow. We call them fellowships. If you are a Baptist, a fundamental Baptist, you would know that the fellowship that you are supposed to align yourself to would be down in Springfield, Missouri, with Baptist Bible Fellowship. If you are kind of like the southern boys, then you would be connected with the one down at Tennessee Temple and that fellowship out of there. There are a thousand fellowships. You have East Side, West Side, North Side, Northwest by East West; there are all kinds of them. What they are are little circles of Baptist churches who identify themselves with a focal point, and that focal point really becomes the rallying point for those churches.

In every one of those situations that I have ever seen, and you have all kinds of Baptists, let us face it, you have Southern Baptists, you have GRB, you have, outside the Baptist circles, you have Bible churches, you have Neo-evangelicals. I know what you are thinking already, "What one are we part of?" Well, I do not know how to break the news today; we are not part of any of them. We are the outcasts, as one of my enemies once said one time because he did not like the fact that I believe the Word of God, Bible is the Word of God, and I would not join a fellowship. He says, "Well, you are renegades." I said, "That is right." He says, "Yeah." I said, "In fact," I said, "You want to give us a name? Just call us the James Gang, Jesse James, King James." I thought it was cute when I said it, but anyway.

They all do the same thing; they all steep everything in politics. I have been associated with it for many, many, many years. I have seen the fallacies of it, and I also understand that that is not the structure of the New Testament church. The structure of the New Testament church is the only one who tells you what to do is the Bible. Follow the principles of the Bible because I know how it works. Back in the 1980s, and this is no reflection on Jerry Falwell, but back in the 1980s, Jerry Falwell was the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church. He has since gone home to be with the Lord. Jerry Falwell was a very unique guy, and you are going to find that whatever fellowship you are associated with, whatever fellowship that you are connected with, they always play a game of follow the leader. What happens is you will find one guy who is really the mainstay, and back in the 80s, it was Jerry Falwell.

Jerry Falwell came out of the Baptist Bible Fellowship. He started his own Bible college, Liberty Bible College, down there in wherever he was, Virginia. Jerry rose to prominent fame, and all the Baptist preachers wanted to be like Jerry Falwell. I am going to tell you something, I was at a church at that particular time where the pastor wanted to be such like Jerry Falwell, and Jerry Falwell was on television. You know what the first next thing every pastor did? Wanted to get on television. Of course, that was because that is what he did, and he had a beautiful church. You know what everybody did? Everybody made their church just look like his church. He had a nice pulpit, not as good as mine, David built me, but he had a nice pulpit. You know what every pastor in his got a pulpit just like his. It is a game of follow the leader, but the leader is not Christ, and that is what happens in the fellowship syndrome.

I could tell you right now, and if you have not figured it out, I will not do it, but I could tell you right now one or two churches in the Kansas City area that all the other churches want to be like, and you guessed right, it is not this one. It is the same way today. We try to outdo each other. Somebody gets this, we get something bigger, and we have gotten a mindset that the beauty of a church is how big a building you have, how grandiose it is, what kind of sound projection you have, how all the multimedia stuff is all inter-synced and coordinated. People, actually pastors, they think that people are looking for a big mega-church where you have, this guy over here starts a big church, and it is beautiful, and somebody else says, "Well, we will get a big church, we will be better than his, we will put a Starbucks in ours." Somebody says, "They got a Starbucks." Somebody says, "Ah, we will do better than that, we will put a McDonald's in ours." That is what happens.

Jesus had a word for that in Matthew 23:27, and it was called the whited sepulchre principle.

Matthew 23:27

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

You know what a sepulchre is, do you not? That is where you bury dead people. He says that churches were beautiful on the outside, but there was nothing going on on the inside. The beauty about any church, and this is where we have lost the perspective today, the beauty about any church is not what is on the outside. The beauty of any church is what is on the inside, the people that are there. You, and the Bible you have in your hand, is the thing that makes you this church and makes this church's personality, and we have lost that concept today.

I told you a couple of weeks ago that a church only exists for two reasons, and it is built on the concept of two basic principles in the Bible. I gave them to you then; I will give them to you this morning because this is the only reason we exist, and we have lost this today. We have lost the concept of reaching out for people. I lost my dog one time when I was a kid. He was my favorite dog, and I wanted to get him back. So here is what I did: I went down to the lumber yard and got some great, beautiful pine lumber. I built the most prestigious, beautiful doghouse you have ever seen in your life. It had two stories, it had air conditioning, it had windows that were nose length that he could see, it had automatic food droppers, it had everything that a dog could ever dream up, and it was the most beautiful thing in the world. I put that thing in the backyard, and I just

waited because I knew the moment that dog knew that there was a big, beautiful doghouse waiting for him, he would be right back and never leave again.

He never came back. Well, I found him, but not that way. I found him by going down the street calling out his name. I found him by looking in every backyard, every empty field. I found him by going down the road and searching in every crook and cranny. I found him by going down the road and getting into every place that I thought he could be and calling out his name, and finally I found him and brought him home. You know, that is how you build a church. You do not build a church by putting up a big, grandiose building and people are going to come, just like you do not build a big doghouse and your dog comes home. You have to go out in the highways and the byways, in the neighborhoods. You have to go out in the workplace, every place that people are, and call out the name of Jesus and get them to come. That is how you do it.

The first principle was Galatians 6:1:

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

The second one was Romans 15:1:

Romans 15:1

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

You see this? You know why these two basic principles should be the basic two principles that every church on this planet operates by? Because those are the two principles that God used to reach you and me. God just did not build some big, beautiful cathedral church, and we wound up in it. You know how you got saved? You got saved, maybe you got saved in a church, but you got saved because somebody came and found you and brought you there. That is how you got saved. Those two basic things that Christ did for us: He restored me, and then every day He bears my infirmity of my weakness.

I am going to show you something this morning and give you a little better understanding where I am coming from. I have always looked at churches, and I have been associated with them all my life. I know how the system works. I have always looked at churches in the light of a favorite passage of mine, and I want you to turn to it, back in 1 Samuel 22. I think it is one of the greatest principles in all of the Bible that every pastor ought to know of what a church should be. I think it is set up in such an example that the day I read it and grasped the reality of it, I never had the same concept of what kind of church I needed to build. I think that 1 Samuel 22 is a great thing. I call it the Cave of Adullam principle.

Let me read it, 1 Samuel 22:1-2:

1 Samuel 22:1

David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.

1 Samuel 22:2

And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

To me, that has always been a picture of what any church should be. That cave was no different than any other cave, but I want you to notice that when God's man went to that cave, God brought the people to him. I want you to notice the kind of people that came: people that were in distress, people that were in debt, and people that were discontented. I believe that any church ought to be just like this story right here. I believe it ought not to worry about all the grandiose things that are going on out there, but look at the people and have a place that people that have distress can come. That is what David did.

You know, there are going to be issues in our lives; that is what we are talking about in our study on Bible principles. There are going to be things that you and I do or get into or befall us, whether we caused them ourselves or they just happened because of the fact that we were in the wrong place at the wrong time or whatever, but there are going to be issues in our life that are going to bring distress in our life. You ought to have a place where you can go. You ought to have a place where you go that the distress may be in your marriage, that the distress may be with your children, that the distress may be in your own personal life of something you are going through, that distress may be in your job, that distress you are going through, distress may be in a relationship that you are involved in, and of course, you need to have a place where you come. Like they came down to see David in a cave, just a cave, no mausoleum, nothing that would have set it apart from any other cave other than what they got when they got there.

You are going to find people that are in debt. I love the way the Bible defines things differently. I know that probably a lot of you listen to Dave Ramsey, and I think Dave Ramsey is worth listening to. I think he is a great guy, and I think he has got some great common sense financial stuff that he really talks about. This is no reflection on him because I really like him, but at the same time, I also know that we today in Christianity, when we do not totally operate from biblical principles, we say a lot of things that we could say a lot simpler and make a more impacting point.

Now you take the word debt. The word debt is a lot like the word addiction. Remember we talked about it a couple of weeks ago? If you would go to most places where they deal with people with addictions, they would start out by just taking the common sense approach that addictions are bad. I understand their purpose, and I am not saying they are wrong in trying to help people that way, but I am telling you something, you do not do any justice by telling them that addiction is wrong. Not all addiction is wrong. Remember I gave you the verse back there in Corinthians that showed you the family of Stephanas who was addicted to the ministry? Addiction is not wrong as long as it is the right addiction.

Somebody comes around and says, "Well, addiction is bad." No, no. If it is the right addiction and you are addicted to the Word of God, you ought to be addicted to that book just like some people are addicted to drugs. You get a guy that is on drugs really bad, whether it be heroin or

whether it be coke or whatever, he sells his whole life just so he can get a fix. He will steal from you. He will steal anything he can. The old story of Mel Trotter, who was a drunk that was a terrible alcoholic back in the 20s. Mel Trotter was somebody that was so despicable before he got saved. He is told that he lost his little girl, and he had been gone for weeks on a drunken binge. He comes and he finds out that this little girl had just died. He goes to the funeral, a drunken bum, and this little baby girl, he did not even know she was dead, was laying in that little white casket. While everybody else was weeping and crying, Mel Trotter only saw one thing. You know what he did? He stole the shoes off the baby in the casket so he could sell them and get more money for booze.

Mel Trotter later got saved. Mel Trotter turned his life around and opened up the Pacific Garden Street Mission and was a superintendent for people that had addictions for the rest of his life. God knows how many hundreds of thousands of men and women got their life turned around. You know what Mel Trotter did? You said he got saved. Besides that, you said, "Really got God in his life." Sure he did. But Mel Trotter really just changed one addiction that was wrong for the right addiction. Just as he could not go through a day without a drink, you ought not to be able to go through a day without getting in that book. You know what your problem is? You do not have an addiction. That is your problem.

Now you take the word debt, same concept. I heard Dave Ramsey say one time, "You know what? A child of God, a Christian should never be in debt." I thought when I heard him say that, I said, "I know what he is saying, but boy, I would say it a different way." Because the Bible says that you should be in debt. Paul every day of his life said, "I am a debtor." It is not should you be in debt or not; it is who you are in debt to. See how that thing works? There is a difference between no Bible principles and Bible principles. Yes, you are going to have people come into this cave, what we are, a cave. You are going to have people come in here in distress, people that are in debt, and people that are discontented.

Life has left you empty. People have let you down. Circumstances have failed you. Your friends have failed you. Life has failed you. Everything that you put your trust in has let you down because you put your trust in everything but the book you should have put your trust in. I want you to see all of this because last week and this week we talked about some areas that I am sure some of us, if not all of us, find ourselves in. I preface everything I say because I never want to come to the point in what I say that may be harsh, but it is true. But I never want to come to the point where I become condescending to you. I certainly never want to give the impression that I have arrived and you have not arrived and you need to get to be like me. We are all just in this cave, and we need to help each other. That is what a church does. A New Testament local church. It comes at a point where our goal is restoring each other. Our goal is helping each other with our infirmities. There is not a time that somebody does not have a problem in this church that there is not 15, 20 people that are not willing to help and work through all of those areas. That is the mark of a New Testament church.

I say that to say this: whatever situation you find yourself in, there is always something that you can do about it. That is my point. God's forgiveness is unending. The forgiveness of a church should be unending. The forgiveness of a pastor should be unending. Many times it is not. I

heard a story one time, I love this. This guy died and went to Heaven. Yeah, amen. When he died and he got to Heaven, Saint Peter is running the gate. He says to Saint Peter, "Man, I really want to go to Heaven." Saint Peter says, "Well," he says, "you are here, but it takes something to get in." He says, "Well, what does it take?" He says, "I do not have anything." I said, "Oh, it is not much." He says, "You just have to learn this. You have to spell one word. If you spell this one word, you can come right into Heaven." The guy says, "What is the word?" He says, "Spell the word love." The guy said, "Oh, that is easy. L-O-V-E." Saint Peter said, "Come on in."

A couple of weeks went by, and the guy was walking down those golden streets up there. Saint Peter said, "Hey, I have to do something down here at the headquarters. Can you watch the gate for me?" The guy said, "Absolutely. Be happy to." So this guy goes out and stands at the gate, and he is doing Saint Peter's job. It was not long that he sees this guy walking out of the mist coming toward him. He says, "Oh, here is somebody going to come into Heaven." They watch this guy come on up here, and pretty soon he looked at him. He says, "Well, that was my worst enemy down on planet Earth. I hate that guy." He says, "This guy, he has got to come to Heaven." Well, you know what? At least he is going the right way. The guy came up, and he looked at him, and he says, "Hey," he says, "I want you to know first thing, I am really sorry. I was really a jerk down there, and I am really sorry about the things that I said about you and the things that I did to hurt you." The guy says, "Oh, it is okay. We are in Heaven now, man. All right. No problem. Glad you are here." The guy says, "I am too." He says, "Can I get into Heaven?" He says, "Well, yeah, you should get into Heaven." But he says, "You have to spell one word." The guy says, "Oh, okay. What is the word?" He says, "Spell Czechoslovakia."

That is the way we are. This is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday today, all over this city. I am just telling you, all over the city, Easter pageants, Easter services, new hats, new dresses, everything. But what God's people ought to really be focusing on today, we do not. I love kids, and I just really enjoy. I have 200 things that I pull off of them every once in a while. I have 200 things that people ask kids about the Bible, and they come back with some of the most hilarious answers you have ever heard in your life. Another thing is I love, I have a collection of, I do not know, probably 300 church bulletins that really are hilarious where they did not know how to put them all together. Like one place says in a bulletin, "Come early tonight and hear our choir practice, and then hear the pastor preach on the endurance of Hell." Choir.

They asked this kid what Easter meant to him. I hear these things, I think to myself, that is a little kid, but we as adults, we do not know what it means either. They asked this little kid, he says, "What does Easter mean to you? Or can you tell me the Easter story?" This little kid was like 10 or 12, maybe eight or nine years old. The kid said, "Yeah, I can tell you the Easter story. Jesus died, and they put Him in a tomb. He came out on the third day, and He saw a shadow, and He went back in. It was six more months tribulation." I thought to myself, "Boy, you probably could get that good of an answer from a lot of God's people who do not understand."

I do not know for you, and I cannot speak for you, but for me, resurrection is every day of my life. It is the backbone of what you and I believe. It is not something that should be shadowed on one day a year. It is something that every day in your life, you ought to live the principles of Christ coming back and resurrecting Himself from the dead. On Resurrection Sunday, I would

rather talk about how to resurrect your marriage. I would rather talk about how to resurrect your own personal relationship with Christ. I would rather talk about how to resurrect your relationship with your children. That is where the real resurrection needs to be.

What good is the fact that Christ resurrected Himself from the grave, which He did, if the principles applied do not help you resurrect the things in your life that you need to resurrect? You see, we live somewhere between "come out of the tomb and saw a shadow." Today I want to, and I told you this last week, we want to move into the second greatest aspect of understanding biblical principles in relationships. This is a great Sunday to do it because I want to talk to you today about the greatest chapter in all of the Bible in explaining what God's opinion is in finding and building relationships on marriage, divorce, remarriage, and biblical separation, and many other things that go along with it. All the issues that you and I have to deal with in all these areas of our lives.

If you ever get to the point where you ever become really good at working with people, and just face it, the number one problem that I deal with all the time is marital relationship problems. You have a variety of garden variety of problems people get into. We know that marriage, the family is fractured. We talked about why last week. We know why people have problems and they cannot resolve those problems. This will be your base text as somebody working with people and marital issues. There is nothing that is not covered in this chapter. You will find single principles and principles that apply in combination with other principles, and they just all come together. The goal is to learn these principles like the back of your hand and know how to use these things in the process of resurrecting relationships.

Again, the standard mindset of most Baptist churches on divorce and remarriage. This has had to change over the last couple of years because of the divorce rate in America. I remember 18 years ago, I saw some statistics that said at that time, 18 years ago, that over half the adult population of the United States of America had been divorced one time, and half of that number had been married and divorced again. That was 18 years ago, and I am sure that now with the way society has gone and the way the world has gone and the way this country has gone and the departing from the principles of the Word of God, that it is even greater.

Divorce in most Baptist churches was always the unpardonable sin. I remember in some Baptist churches that when you came for the church and you were divorced, they put you in a state of special class, kind of like a leper colony. They had a special class that you had to go to. They did not want you to associate with single women or single men because they knew the obvious, that you would hook up with somebody in their church. Because you were the anathema of being divorced, they could not permit that. Then they found out very quickly that that did not work, basically, because they always find a way to get together. That is just life. Boy meets girl, girl meets boy, and look out, it is all over anyway.

You are going to find that they went back to Matthew 19, Deuteronomy 24, and came up with the most cock-eyed concepts that have nothing to do with the church. You have heard me say it before that the teaching, the Bible teaching for the church on divorce and remarriage and all of the issues is found in 1 Corinthians 7, the church at Corinth. You will find there, and most pastors

do not have a clue to do with this, you will find there that Paul gives extra revelation that takes place in the church that they never had on the Old Testament under the law. We went through this in great detail in the marriage class, and I am sure you can still get the tapes. A couple of, I think it was right over the holidays, Joe Christiansen asked the question on Thursday night, and we went through it there.

You have to learn to be able to use these principles, and first of all, understand my goal was not to lay them all out. My goal week by week is to take these subjects that we all have to deal with, and let us face it, relationships and building relationships are the key. My goal is not to lay them out, but to show you the basic format of biblical principles and how they work in a broad range of subjects that show you how, in this particular case, relationships and marriage. I show you how to take the principles that come into effect at the resurrection and resurrect wherever you are at in your life to get you to the point.

I say it again: what good is it today that we have Easter? What good is it today if Christ came out of that tomb and came back from the dead? What good is it today if He resurrected from the dead if you and I are still in a slump as a Christian and the power of the resurrection has not affected our life? People do not want to hear that today. They want a nice little Easter pageant. They want a nice little story. They want a tomb with somebody coming out of it. They want to sing all their Easter songs. They want to have lilies and all of that stuff. Nobody wants to get down to the real brass tacks of the resurrection. The real bottom line is the resurrection because He did not stay dead, and you now are alive in Christ Jesus. The power of the resurrection, the principles that came into being because of the resurrection, should be the resurrection power in your life to live a victorious Christian life for Christ. And it is not.

As sure as I give you some of these principles, you are going to find that you are going to say to yourself that you are in these situations. That is okay. That is why I took the time to show you no matter where you are at, God will give you what you need.

IV. Biblical Principles in Relationships: Unequally Yoked

In beginning to look at these principles, I want you to turn over to 2 Corinthians 6. I want to deal with the obvious first. I want to deal with the obvious that you need to realize in the infinite concept of building relationships. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, here is what it says, a familiar passage to most of you:

2 Corinthians 6:14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:15

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

2 Corinthians 6:16

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore, because of what I just said, come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you. Now, the first principle you find here is that under no circumstances marry somebody or commit or even consider marrying somebody that is not a believer. There is absolutely no purpose in it that is going to help you in any way, shape, or form. I mean, you find people that find themselves in all kinds of scenarios. We are going to talk about that in a little bit. But the principle stands that you never consider.

We came through the other night in Genesis 24, and I showed you how that two times in that passage where he was looking for a bride for his son Isaac, he tells Eliezer, "Do not get me an unsaved person." No consideration. Even in the Old Testament, and I told you this a couple of nights ago, in the Bible, in the Old Testament, in the New Testament too, oxen are likened to Christians. Asses are likened to unsaved people. You find under the law in the Old Testament, the book of Deuteronomy, it was a violation of law to yoke up an ox, which is a picture of a saved person, with an ass, which is a picture of an unsaved person. That is what the Bible is making a reference to here when it says unequally yoked. When you marry somebody, you are yoking up. You are putting yourself into a harness that side by side you are going to pull the load for the Lord, basically. That is why to be unequally yoked.

I have been asked many, many times, "How are you unequally yoked?" If you are paying attention, I am sure most of you are, there are four things in here that you need to see. These four areas are what makes you unequally yoked. When you have these four things working together for you, then you have the ability to be everything that God wants you to do.

The first thing he says there, verse 14, is "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what? Fellowship."

- 1.) Fellowship. We know from 1 John 1, where it talks about that fellowship is based on our relationship with Christ. 1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. The fellowship that you and I have, the fellowship that you and your spouse have to have, has to go back to the Word of God. The real definition of Bible fellowship. I know people, and this is where, again, most churches get the wrong definition. When they talk about, "Let us go fellowship tonight at the church," they are talking about going down to a restaurant someplace, getting some pie and coffee, or getting a bite to eat and sitting around and talking. I am not saying that is not good; we do it all the time. I am not saying that is not important. But what I am saying is that is not the biblical definition of fellowship. Biblical definition of fellowship is you and Christ and whoever you are with in the Word of God together. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another. My point is this: you cannot have that with an unsaved spouse. There is no, first problem is there is no real fellowship because real fellowship is based on the principles of the Word of God that both of you have. If you do not

have those principles, you are out of luck. There is nothing that you can do to have that fellowship.

- 2.) Communion. That would deal with the intimacy together. Not intimacy in the physical sense, but intimacy in the spiritual sense. Remember, I told you a couple of weeks ago that any man or any woman has three needs: they have spiritual needs, emotional needs, and they have physical needs. This would follow into the spiritual and the emotional needs. Communion based on the book of Song of Solomon.

The next word there in verse 15 is "And what concord hath Christ with Belial?"

- 3.) Concord. I like this. Concord with Christ with Belial. Up to this point, it was fellowship with righteous and unrighteous, that is saved and lost. Communion with light and darkness, that is a little more definitive, that is a light versus darkness. But now we got real definitive in verse 15, "And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" Belial is the Old Testament name for the devil. So now we have got it right down where we have got to the bottom line: it is Christ and the devil. Of course, we know that the Bible says in John 8:44:John 8:44

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. For every unsaved person, "You have your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you shall do." So the next thing he is talking about is concord. What does concord mean? The word concord means togetherness. When you talk about a concourse, which is a root word of concord, concourse means a bridge that links two things. It pulls, it makes the two things together by a bridge. When the Bible talks about concord, it talks about the concept of you guys having the ability to work together through a concord, a togetherness, a bridge to solving problems in your life, a bridge to raising your children, a bridge to dealing with issues that you have to deal with in your life. There is none of that when you hook up with an unsaved person.

- 4.) Agreement. The last thing is in verse 16, "What agreement hath the temple of God?" That is an easy one. Amos 3:3 says:Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? You know what keeps your family, and now you and your wife or you and your husband, however it is going to work in any relationship, or even if you are unmarried and you are in engagement or you are thinking about getting married, you are never going to agree on everything. There are some things that it does not matter if you do not agree on. It does not matter if you go out to buy a new car and the wife says, "Well, I like red," and you say, "Well, I like gray." Let her have the red car. What do you care? It does not matter. Those are not the things you get in a fight over. You should not get in a fight over. It does not matter. Those kinds of things, those are the things that are really non-issues, but there are some things in your life as a couple or a prospective couple that you ought to be in agreement on. Those are the biblical principles that you have in your life. That is how you make choices. When somebody wants to do something and somebody else does not want to do it, you do not get in a fight over it. You look and see what the biblical principle says, and you follow the line of reasoning. That is an agreement. The problem is most people do not know the biblical principles. They do not have that concept to work in their life through an agreement. So they disagree. They disagree on how to discipline

their children when the Bible gives you every concept of disobeying your child. They disagree on their finances when the Bible tells you every aspect of how to deal with your finances. They disagree on just how to make decisions about this. I have never found anything in life that really makes any difference that is not defined in the principles of the Word of God or shows you how to do that. These are the four areas: fellowship, communion, concord, and agreement.

This is why it is wrong to marry an unsaved person. But let me say this to you: do not ever think for a second that a saved person can lack these same things too. I have never found much that an unsaved person can do that a saved person cannot do. In fact, now that I think of it, there is only one thing that a saved person cannot do that an unsaved person can do, and that is dying to go to Hell. Everything else he can do, she can do. That is why you want to look for a prospective mate under this principle. You want to find someone, first of all, you want to understand it. You want to find someone that you can have fellowship with. That does not mean going hunting together or going here together or going on vacation together. That is all fine and dandy, but it means the baseline of your fellowship has to be in your relationship that you have together with the principles of the Word of God, walking in the light as He is in the light. It does not take long to find out that whoever your prospective mate is or married to does not follow that line, male or female. This is neither about everybody. Of course, these four areas can be found in saved people, just like unsaved people. These are the things you need to watch out for.

V. Addressing Specific Relationship Challenges

As soon as I say the principle number one, the obvious that you should not marry an unsaved person, somebody is going to walk into my office and they are going to say, "That is exactly the situation I find myself in." You see, these principles are true, and these principles work, but they are designed for a perfect society. They are designed to keep a society perfect. We know that in Genesis 1, 2, and 3, God made a perfect society for Adam and Eve, did He not? What a deal. They did not have to work. They did not have to do anything. They had fellowship with God, fellowship with each other. They had beautiful weather, no snow, no rain. Everything was perfect. All you want, food everywhere. All the animals were your friends. What a deal. God had a perfect world, and man messed it up. That is why these principles will help you get back as close as you can in this life to a perfect world.

Let us face it, and that is why I said what I said at the beginning of my message, because even though we talk about these things and you find yourself in so many scenarios, and I do not want you walking out of here today saying, "Well, my God, my life is over. Bob just laid that thing out, and that is exactly the same situation." That is why I took the time before we ever got into these things to tell you that wherever you are at, there is something you can do. You are in the right place. You are in a cave. It is all right to bring your distress in here, bring your debt in here, bring your discontentment in here. That is what David pulled it all together. Oh, by the way, did you notice that the Bible says that there were about 400 people? To me, that is always the magical size for a church. Churches get so big that there is no way that the pastor can deal with all the people, and I do not think that is good. I know there is no magical number in the Bible,

just like there is no magical age that your child has to get saved. Every kid is a little different. I know there is no magical number, but that is a good example there. That shows you that about 400 people got down there with him, and he ministered to them, and they brought in their problems, and they knew where to come to get the problem solved.

As sure as I lay out these principles, some of you are going to find and say, "I am in those things," and I will tell you again, God always takes care of you where you are at. If all you have to do is want to do what is right, that is all you have to do. All you have to do is come and to get the advice and the principle that you need in your life, and you need to understand that God will take care of the circumstances.

Now, what do you do? What do you do when you find yourself in this very scenario? You find yourself in this scenario for a number of reasons. Maybe you were a saved person, and you were at a fellowship of God when you got married. Happens all the time. Now you find yourself where you are saved and your partner is not saved. Now you find yourself where you come to church and you hear some magnificent speaker who lays out great biblical principles—I am talking about not myself—and you get all of the things that you hear, and God's Spirit comes down and grabs you. The Spirit of God, you now realize that God has something for your life. But you look around and you say, "But look at the situation I am in." Sometimes you come to the point where neither one of you were saved, and after you got married, the bottom line was you got saved, and your spouse did not get saved. Somebody invited you to church, and you went to a Bible study, and you trusted Christ as your own personal Savior. Now here you are. What do you do in that scenario?

These are the kind of real-life issues that have to be dealt with. This is the everyday of getting into people's life. This is what a pastor's job is. It is sitting down in a cave when people come in with distress, discontentment, with severe weight of debt on their shoulders, and being able to unravel it and show them exactly what God wants them to do. Let me just say this for you, first of all, as we start to look at somebody, and I do not care what scenario you are in, because we already know there is always something you can do. Here is the bottom line. The first thing you need to realize God's lifeboat for you, God's life preserver for you, is the local church. That is God's structure. You will never find any other organization anywhere in the Bible as God's preferred plan. The reason for that is the church is not an organization; the church is an organism. It is alive. It is different from every other group or thing that is out there. A lot of God's people are messed up on that. The bottom line is God has one program that He works through directly, and that is the local church. Why? Because you are told that that is His body. That is where that is your protection. That is where you get the help that you need.

If you are a young lady and you are struggling through some things, the next thing you can get is some other ladies around you who will be the same thing, who have got the victory over it, who can now help you get through those problems. If you are a young man and you are into those scenarios, you find yourself in one of these, the best thing you can do is to get the help that you need. But in both your cases, begin to operate under biblical principles. How do we redeem the time? We redeem the time by walking in wisdom versus walking in darkness. There is always something you can do in those scenarios.

I have had people come in and say to me, "Well, you know, I got married when I was at a fellowship with God, and I married an unsaved guy. Now I just realize that the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6:14 that I should not have done that. So I am going to divorce him so I can do what is right." Well, that sounds good, but that is not the principle involved here. That is not what you do. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul lays out the whole detail that if you find yourself in those scenarios, there is something that God will do.

Let me tell you how God works, and I do not care what you may be married or not married, but I am going to tell you that God only looks for one thing in marital problems. Only one thing. He only looks for one thing, one thing and only one thing He looks for. If He finds this one thing, that is all He needs. But He looks for one thing. It would be nice to have two things, but many times you do not get two things. You only get one thing. But if He just has the one thing, you know what that one thing is? All He wants is one person who wants to do what the Bible says and do what is right. That is all He wants. Two is nice. Two is nice. But one is enough because you know why that is? You find yourself in any scenario, no matter how you got there, what God will do is this: if you have got a lost spouse in your life and your relationship, here is what God will do. God will, and you want to do what is right, male or female, here is what God will do. God will reach down through your life and through you will reach out and touch that other person's life.

Now, that does not mean that it will be easy. It does not mean that there will not be some problems because when that person automatically starts to feel the Holy Spirit of God convicting them, they are going to, he is going to blame it on or she is going to blame it on you. That is just the way it goes. I tell people all the time that find themselves in those scenarios, and they will come in and say, "Well, it was really bad this week. It is really bad." I always tell them this: you have to understand. Here is the principle: see this thing for what it is. He is not mad at you. She is not mad at you. This thing is not about you and them. This thing is about them and God. But she cannot see God. He cannot see God. So what he does or she does is they lash out at you because God is using you to reach them. But that is the way it is supposed to be. He paid a price for you. Now you pay a price for him. Are you willing to be the tool and the instrument that God comes down through to reach out to save your spouse?

Many times you find yourself in a work environment. Many of you have told me this, that you work at a place where they do not like you because you are a Christian. Sometimes they give you a rougher time because you are a Christian. They will dump the load on you because they do not. You have some choices now. You can either get mad at that, quit your job. You can go file some kind of lawsuit against them. Or the bottom line is, you can recognize that that is your job as a Christian. Take it on the nose for Christ. You know what happens when their little kid gets it. I remember back working back at the factory when I was just a young Christian. I tried to be a fervent witness for God. I would get all kinds of guys problems, guys and everything that just give me fits over a stand for the Word of God. I was a tract passing out person, and I did everything I knew to do. I would get all kinds of problems.

It was this one guy who just gave me fits. He caused me problems for everything. He would just try to downplay everything I did. But yet one day when his little five-year-old girl had to go to

the hospital and have surgery, he pulled me aside off my forklift, took me in the back of the thing, and he says, "Bob," he says, "I have to ask you a question." He said, "Will you pray for my little kid?" He says, "I know I made fun of you, and I know this, and I know that. But," he says, "I know also that you do believe what you believe, and I need God right now. I need God right now. You are the only one I know that stood for God here. Will you pray for my little child?" Well, you know what? You see, in time, I won that guy to Christ. But where would I have gotten if I threw up my hands and I said, "I am not working here. I will go in a Christian place to work." Where would I have gotten if I were to respond, reacted to him, lost my testimony? You see, that is your job. That is my job. It is to hold the line, to pay the price that God can reach down through us and reach out to other people, especially when you find yourself in a relationship situation where you are married to an unsaved person. The Bible says, "Stay with them." Paul says, "You do not know if you are going to win that person or not." You let God give God the chance to reach down through you to reach out and to touch that person because He will.

Let me give you a great principle, and this will get you through when nothing else will. The Bible says in Isaiah 55, it says that, it is not Isaiah 55, it is Isaiah, I think it is Isaiah 11. It says that "thy word will not return again void." That is one of the greatest promises and principles that you can have anywhere in the Bible. You know why? Because sometimes you do not see the Word of God working in people's lives. Sometimes you think it is just the opposite because we get the idea that once I give you the Gospel, you should fall on your knees and do what is right. That is not going to happen. You think you come and get a counseling session with me, and your marriage is going to be just fine. That is not going to happen. You think that you are going to get into a scenario where you get things to do, and you go home and you say, "Oh, God, you are going to work through me. Here it is. I met with Bob on Monday morning, and by Monday night I expect my husband to be saved and my wife to be saved." It does not work that way. I have had them come in to me and say, "I do not think this is working. It is worse now than it ever has been." You see, it is easy when you do not operate by principles and you go by what you see. But the principle says God's Word does not return void. He always accomplishes the purpose where to it was sent by. I guarantee you, do not look at what you see. Know for surety that God's Spirit is drilling that person.

We preached on the street one time years ago in Ohio. I had finished my preaching, and somebody else was up there, and I went down about a half a block to the drugstore to get a lemonade to cool down my throat. I could hear one of the guys down there just going to town. I was sitting over there sitting on the thing drinking it, and the guy came in, and he waved up the gal over there, and he said, he says, she says, "How are you doing?" He says, "Oh," he says, "you must be born again. You must be born again." He says, "Hell, I do not know if I have been born the first time." And on it went. He had been walking down the street, and my boy was over there preaching, and he was preaching, "You must be born again." Now, let me tell you something. If that guy lives to be a hundred years old, he will remember, "You must be born again," for the rest of his life. You know why? Because that was Holy Ghost sent and Holy Ghost ingrained, and it stuck him like a knife. That is what you hold on to. Many times, many times when it gets so bad, it is because the Holy Spirit of God is at His best and tearing him up on the inside.

Now, let me say this. What do you do if you are in an abusive situation? What are the principles for that? What does Paul say about that? Well, there are different kinds of abuse. This is where these things, all kinds of situations are different. There are different kinds of abuse. If there is physical abuse involved, that is, it means the guy or the girl hits you, beats you, does something physical to you. The principle here is found in Jediaiah 16:4, "Thou shalt send his rear to jail." If you get the reverse revision, it gets even plainer than that. Bottom line is this: never put up with that. I have never understood why a woman will let a man beat on her. I guess women beat on men. I hate to make this the man thing, but I guess there are cases. Any man here ever beat up by his wife? Not your wife, you beat up by a woman? You go get something out of my car. I guess it happens. I have to be honest, I never dealt in a counseling case that way. I mean, I would hate to do that because women can, you know what the Bible says? Do not mess with a brawling woman on a rooftop. No, my officer is upstairs. I am afraid she will throw him out the window and then me right after him.

Here is the bottom line: do not ever put up with it. I have never understood why a woman will allow a man to do that to her and then call the police. When the police come, "Well, I love him." Well, that has nothing to do with it. Put him in jail, make him attend anger management classes, make him be the embarrassment to work when his boss calls, "Where is he at?" "Well, he is in jail because he whipped me." Make him accountable to the concept. I have never understood it. You want to, I mean, some of you take that same thing down with your children. How many times do you want to tell your child to do what is right? Once, twice, three times, four times. Your kids already know they have nine or 10 times before they have to shut it down. They are playing over there, and you say, "Hey, do not do that. Put that away." "I told you that." Your brother looks at the sister and says, "We have eight more times. We have to worry about it. You count this time. I counted last time at eight. I am not going to tell you again. This is number eight. We better shut it down. Now we may get nine out of it, but do not push our luck." How many times do you want to learn the lesson? Do you not want them to respond to you the first time you tell them?

What do you do? Do you not discipline them? Do you not deal with them? You know what? There is no difference in dealing with a three-year-old than a 40-year-old with a three-year-old mentality. Let them know that there are consequences, and every time you touch me, you are going to jail. End of story. That is how it works.

What do you do in a situation where maybe you are married to a spouse, male or female, and they bring drugs into your home or alcohol into their home? What do you do in a situation where, do you just take it? Do you just allow, do you allow the dad or the mom to bring it in? I do not know how many times a kid has told me to get into drugs or alcohol that got into it because of that. I had one kid tell me one time that my dad drank, and they tried to keep it from me, but he said, "When they would go to bed, I would sneak." He said, "I started drinking beer, going down, drinking the suds out of my dad's beer bottles, found by the couch after everybody was gone to sleep." I mean, I am telling you, what do you do? Do you just lose your kid too? Do you just make, like some people go out and buy a burial plot before they die? Do you just go out and sign them up for AA long before they have to be there? No, there is always something you

can do. There is always a biblical principle, and based on the scenario of where you are at and how severe it is, this is where the Bible put in the clause of a biblical separation to protect your children, to protect you if you have to.

You know what? It does not matter where you find yourself. It does not matter what scenario you are in, in a relationship or getting into whatever, whatever you find yourself, wherever you are at, there is always something you can do.

I will tell you another one. Probably happens all the time. It is getting remarried after a divorce. The Bible says there is nothing wrong with that if you follow through the basic principles. But here is what happens all the time. I am telling you, I have dealt with this all of my adult ministry life. Here is what happens: same problem that you bring into the first marriage. If you do not identify them and deal with them and fix them, you will bring them right into the second marriage. Most people get out of a relationship where if it is bad when the first time, what are they? They are lonely, they are despondent, they want somebody to be. Instead of making that the church, instead of making that the biblical principles, instead of finding in their distress, in their discontentment, in all of those things, the debt coming into the cave where they get what they need, they try to find it in another relationship. Every relationship because of compounding problems on the other relationship.

Here is what always happens. It always happens. The person will tell, the person they are marrying, their sad story. The other person will tell their sad story. The guy believes that, "Boy, she is an angel. She could have never, that husband she was married to was a jerk." She is believing, "Well, his wife was just an absolute witch." I mean, how could he? The bottom line is, it always takes two to tango. I have never met a scenario in a marriage scenario that they broke up, that there was not something that needed to be fixed in both cases. Maybe not as severe as the other, but there is always something to be fixed. When you walk into another marriage blind to that and think, "Wow, it was not his fault. It was not her fault. It was the other spouse's fault." You are in for a rude awakening. You have to identify first what is in your own life that has to change. What did you do in the relationship that did not make the thing work and broke it down, and then fix it?

Bible says you are okay to marry, but it says, "in such shall have trouble in the flesh." Then I think the next thing, you walk into a second marriage or a third marriage or whatever it may be, and you get the mindset that this is just going to be like the first time again. I think that is the biggest mental mistake people make. They get married, have a bad marriage. They get married a second time, and they walk in and thinking, "Wow, this is going to be just like the first time." It is never like the first time. It is never like the first time. Because God only intended it to be one time. But yes, I understand those things happen, and God makes a way, but you cannot go in and think, "I am going to get married again now, and it is going to be like I was never married before." Those kind of concepts in your mind, when you get into the relationship and then you realize, "Oh, there is another spouse. Now there are children. Now there is this. Now there is alimony. Now there is this problem. Now there are those things." That is not like the first one. That pressure builds up because we did not look at the principles involved first and understand

how those principles play in. I am not saying it is wrong. Paul says it is okay to marry. But you have to understand that each spouse has to do this.

This is the importance of an engagement. A biblical engagement takes care of these issues because you get a chance to see the other spouse in full progress. It is kind of like when you build a building, you go through. The last thing you do is do a punch list of everything. Make sure it is done right. Well, that is what an engagement is. It is your punch list. I do not know how many times couples do not see the signs. They do not see the signs. They, you know, I have seen situations where they get into the marriage, and one of the others has a tremendous anger problem. You are telling me that you did not see that before? That when you blow up just because of something that means nothing, and anger is your way of dealing with it.

Now, I have to tell you, anger is a biblical emotion that God gave you. But it is not a license for you to bully people or get what you want because you do not know how to deal with scenarios. So you just throw a temper tantrum and blow up. Do you let your child do that? I used to work at a mall, and it had, it was an outside mall, and the things were held up with posts like this all the way down about this far and all the way down for 100 yards. It was a huge mall, and I was a dishwasher in a restaurant. I was coming out of work one night, and this woman had a child, and this child had just come out of a toy store. Obviously, I do not know the woman or the child, but the child wanted a toy that it did not get, and she did not buy it for him. I am not kidding you, that child was screaming and kicking, kicking his mother. Oh, yeah. Wow. Right. You never kicked your mother? No, you ever kick you? Here we kick you, kick him just for. You know, and they were out there, and this kid was squalling. He was crying. He was kicking. Then she said she was embarrassed. I mean, I was embarrassed. It was not even my kid. But it is one of those deals where you said to yourself, "I wish that was my kid for about five minutes." I think. So she started getting him out of the mall. You know what he did? I kid you not, he hung on to every pole like that. She is dragging, and she has got 200 poles to go. It is one of those scenarios that I left the kid and went and got the car.

That kid from pole to pole to pole, she had to drag down there and got him out. I could hear him echoing all the way down the thing. I thought to myself many times since I have seen adults act the same way. Because that is what we do. Uncontrolled anger is your little temper tantrum. It is your way of bullying. It is where you are getting what you want. I will tell you, if you ever get into a relationship where somebody has an anger problem, I will tell you the principle involved. Proverbs 24:24 says:

Proverbs 24:24

He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:

"Make no friend with an angry man." You know what? You know how you deal with anger? You know why people get angry? Because it is through their anger, uncontrolled anger, that they get what they want. It is their way of, "I am a baby boy or a baby girl. I cannot really deal with life. So I am going to get angry and throw a little temper tantrum, and then either scare you into doing what is right, or you are going to feel sorry for me, or you are going to get tired." Here is what

you do. In any scenario you find yourself in, just look at her and say this. Look at him and say this, "You know what? The Bible says, 'Make no friends with an angry man.' So right now we are not going to be friends. Whenever you get through this little anger deal, call me." What I want to hear out of your mouth the first time I want to hear is this: "I am now done with my anger temperament, and I am ready to be an adult." That is all I want to hear. If he, if she called, if you pick up the phone, it is her. She says, "Hi, honey. How you doing?" Click. If you pick up the phone, it is him and say, "Hi, sweetie. Hi, is not it a wonderful day?" Click. Before you click, you may want to say, "Remember now, the only three words I want to hear out of you is, 'I am done with my temper tantrum, and I am a big boy now, and everything is okay.'" You know what that does? You know what that is going to do? You know what they need? They need to feel the embarrassment of saying that. They need to feel the embarrassment of a grown person acting like a nine-year-old. Anger out of control is a terrible thing. What happens is it shows clearly that somebody is not operating under the principles. They are under emotions. Anger is an okay thing. Righteous indignation is an okay thing, but you need to understand the principles involved in getting into it.

Now, how do you tell, how do you know if someone has gotten to that point? How do you know in a prospective mate? How do you know in a relationship, how do you know how that person has fixed the problems that they had? How do you know that? Well, the greatest way goes back to what we talked about in Genesis 24 with a single greatest concept. That is simply this: doing what they are supposed to do at the well. That is the concept.

Now I am going to finish with this last one. This goes right along with the rest of them. This is the number one thing that I deal with right here. It happens across this country. That is when you get married and you get another relationship, you have kids from the other families. That is a problem. I will tell you why it is a problem. It is a problem because most people do not stop and think of the biblical principles involved before they get into a situation like that. I am not saying you should not. I am not saying there is not something you can do. I am going to show you what you can do. I am going to show you what you need to do, but it is something that you ought to consider before you get into it.

I will tell you, I have seen this. I have seen guys that wanted to marry a woman or a woman that wanted to marry a guy, and they show it. "We are in love with that person." I thought they were everything that they wanted, and they had one or multiple kids, whatever. It does not matter between the other marriage. Here is what they thought: they thought, "You know what? I do not really care about the kid, but I really love this person." That is a disaster to go into. Because once you get into it, you are going to find out, as Dr. Phil said, "How that worked for you." It did not work for you because they are still in your world. They are still in your home. They are still in you, and you still have the responsibility.

Now, what do you do? I call this the non-biological parent syndrome. What do you do when you find yourself in a relationship where you have children from other relationships biologically that are not your kids, and yet you now are married to a woman or married to a man? You want to have a spiritual home and a spiritual relationship. You want to have everything that God wants you to have. But now you are faced with the fact, "How do I deal with this kid? I cannot really

whip him because he is not my child. I cannot deal with it in the way I would if it was my own children. I am in a jam." No, you are not in a jam. There are biblical principles that cover every scenario.

I have a person ask me, I get this all the time. A guy says to me, he says, "You know what?" He says, "I married in a relationship. I have a girl or a boy or two girls or whatever from another marriage." He says, "He says, I do not know. We are struggling because the bottom line is we, we, they are playing both ends against the middle. How do I do that? How do I get into a scenario where I can take charge? I do not think it can be done." I answer him back every time I get the same answer. "You know what? I want you to come to church on Sunday, and I want to show you at least 30 or 40 young men and young ladies who I am not their biological father, and yet I have more influence over them than their biological father." It is because of the Paul and Timothy principle. I recognize that I am not your biological father, but I am in many of your cases, your spiritual father. The bottom line is this: as your spiritual father, sometimes when you do not have a good biological father, my biological father died when I was 19, 20 years of age. If God would not have put a spiritual father into my life that picked up where my dad left off and gave me everything that I needed, I do not know where I would have been today. It is the same model that God used in my life that I use in your life.

The bottom line is this: you may not be their biological father or their mother, but you can be their spiritual father and their mother once you begin to realize what your spiritual responsibilities are. There has to come a time in those relationships, and I tell parents all the time, there has to come a time when you shut down the law, and this is the way it is. I think every family ought to have one sign. I am not big on signs, but I think that you ought to have one sign in your house, and it is out of Joshua 24. It says:

Joshua 24:15

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

It says, "I know not what others may do, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." I think that sign ought to be an absolute graphic that your kids see it every day, and they realize and understand that. "You know what? I know I am not your biological father. I am not your biological mother. But here is the bottom line: I am responsible for you spiritually. As far as this house goes, we are going to serve the Lord." Now, you have two choices with that. But one of them is going to be, "We are going to work together to solve that problem."

I have had meetings where I got the whole family together over the years, and same scenario. I have said to those families and the kids, "Look, kids, now, I do not know if you understand this or not. Now, Mom and Dad, me and not always done everything right. But Mom and Dad are trying to do what is right now. I know that she is not your biological mother or he is not your biological father or whatever the case. But the bottom line is they are responsible for you. Your Mom and Dad realize that someday they are going to give an account at the Judgment Seat of

Christ of how they deal with you. You are going to give an account how you respond to them, but they most surely are going to give an account of how they are going to deal with you."

Now, the bottom line is this: this is going to be God's house. Mom and Dad have made some mistakes. I have people working with Mom and Dad. I am going to get people working with you. But the bottom line is this: we have got to begin to work together and make this thing work. The bottom line is this: it is not an option not to. You both have other parents. If you are not going to do what is right here, you are not going to follow the line here. We are not going to allow you to live an ungodly, worldly lifestyle in God's home. You are not going to disrespect your mother. You are not going to disrespect the authority in this home. I may not be your biological father, but I am your spiritual guide in this home. You may not like that. You may not care about that. But you know what? That is the way it is right now. You only have one or two choices. You have got to establish the authority biblically, and then you have got to work at being their spiritual father or spiritual mother. You have got to begin to develop a time where you pray with them. You cannot just lay down the law and then walk out the door and say, "Well, I am the spiritual guide." You have got to implement. It is like pastoring a church. What influence would I have on your life if I just came up and preached and left? If I showed up five minutes before I was ready to preach and I left two minutes afterwards, you never saw me during the week. You could not get a hold of me. I just came in. But every time I was here, I declared for you for an hour, "I am your pastor. I am your spiritual leader." That does not work. You have got to say it. But then you have got to live the principles to earn the right to do it.

VI. Conclusion: The Church as a Spiritual Home Base

There is always something you can do. The longer you wait to do it, the harder it becomes. But there is always something that you can do. That is why on this Resurrection Sunday, that is why in a time when we are looking at the thing that changed the world, literally changed the world, that empowered you and me to carry on for God what He chose not His Son to carry on, but chose for you and me to carry it on. That is why the devil is after your life. That is why he wants to destroy your marriage. That is why he wants to destroy your children. That is why he wants to put into your life all the things and get you to make all the bad choices. That is why the church exists. The only reason the church exists is like it was back there in Samuel when down in the Cave of Adullam. God had David in that cave, and there were people that came to him that were in distress. There were people that came to him that were in debt, and there were people that came to him that were in all kinds of problems and all kinds of dysfunctional situations. God met them there and gave them what they needed.

I do not care what situation you get in. I do not care what situation you find yourself in. There is always something you can do. I told you a couple of weeks ago that every church, every pastor, every Christian worker needs to be proactive. That is why we did the child training material. That is why we did the marriage enrichment. That is why we have the marriage class right now that goes through and does everything that people need to give them the proactiveness. That is why we need to in everything that we do when you come in, we sit down, and we put out a plan. We lay out the biblical principles. We give you exactly what you need. That is what the church is

for. It is your spiritual home base, your spiritual soul system where you get everything that you need to get through the things of life to make the right choices that God can get everything out of your life that not only does He deserve, but He wants.

God on one hand is never done with you. God on one hand will give you every tool and everything that you need through the church to accomplish what you want to accomplish. The devil on the other hand will put every person, every scenario, every situation in your life to keep you from fulfilling what God wants you to fulfill. I do not know how many times I have seen somebody come in, get plugged in, find the Bible, get this going, and then God bring somebody, some gal, some guy, some person in their life to try to pull back from them what God had just given them. That is how he works. It looks like it is a nice Easter Sunday out there, and we are all here all nice time. We all get a nice warm fuzzy feeling, but the minute you walk out that door, the devil is going to try to do everything to keep you from being the man or the woman God wants you to be. You have got to fight with every ounce of strength to do that. The only way you can fight it is through the principles of the Word of God. Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.