

Last week, we talked about principles in relationship. In fact, we spent two weeks on that in relationship to marriage. We talked about why marriages fail. We talked about why marriages get into the problems that they get into. We defined marriage from a Bible perspective, and I think, as I said the last couple of weeks, that is the number one thing that couples fall into today: they look at marriage as something that man ordained instead of looking at something that God ordained. Therefore, they try to run it with a worldly set of principles that have nothing to do with God. They try to leave God out of their families, out of their marriage, out of their personal relationships, and then still wonder why their marriages fail. Of course, we know that from last week and a couple of weeks ago how important that is.

## I. The Importance of Ministry Principles

This week, we are going to look at the second most important set of principles for a child of God, and that is in the area of ministry. When I am talking about ministry, I am talking about public ministry. I am talking about you coming to the point in your life where God uses you in a fashion that, from out of this church and other areas of your life, you are taking a major responsibility at some point in your life of areas of ministry within this church. When we ordain our deacons, we license our deacons, and that licensing is a public showing of the fact that this church stands behind them in confidence that wherever they go, whatever they do, as they represent this church, they can be in ministry publicly. That means like marrying people or performing funerals or whatever it takes, or going to another church if somebody needs somebody to fill in and be part of that. Whatever, we recognize them ready to go for public ministry.

I want to talk to you about that concept of it, the importance of really understanding the connection between what we talked about the last couple of weeks in relationships and how it connects in the ministry and the principles involved. This is old to most of you at this point when I am about to say. We talk about it in Lesson 6 in discipleship. You have heard me say it throughout the concept of our time in dealing with principles: the concept of God's will for your life and God's plan for your life. I do not say it again because I want you to, I do not think you know it, but as it ties into what we are looking at here today. I know we have already talked about these, but just basically a redefining of them as we move where we are going to go this morning.

You have heard me say it many, many times: God has something that He wants you to do in your life. He saves you for a purpose. If you are sitting here under the sound of my voice this morning and you are a saved child of God, male or female, God saves you for a purpose. There is something that He wants to accomplish through your life. Now that will be God's plan. God's plan for you will be different than mine. God's plan for the person sitting next to you will be probably different from the plan that He has for you. The plan of God is always what God wants you to do. The will of God, on the other hand, has nothing to do directly with what God wants you to do, but basically has to do with what God wants you to be. When you fulfill the principles and put the Word of God into your life to the degree that you start making the decisions of life

about your family, about your marriage, about the personal choice that you make, then that is when you begin to fill the spiritual part of that relationship, God's will for your life. It is through that. It is through that relationship that you have with God that He will show you what He wants you to do and fulfill the plan. And that is what we are going to talk about today.

You remember last week, by example, I told you that when you come in with marital problems, a couple comes in with marital problems. Sometimes the guy will not want to do what is right and the woman will. Sometimes the woman does not want to do what is right and the guy will. You ask yourself, how in the world do you deal in a scenario like that from the Bible? The answer is very simple: same principle. As long as you have one person who wants to do what is right, God will work down through their life and deal in that scenario and bring that thing to the point that God wants it to come to. I say all that because just as getting the wrong spouse will destroy God's plan for your life and God's will for your life, not getting the New Testament principles down as far as ministry is concerned will also ruin God's plan and God's will for your life.

You have heard me say it, and I say it one more time: God has something that He wants you to do. It has always been amazing to me. When you read the Bible, there must be tens of thousands of characters in the Bible, and not one of them did not God have a plan for. Now, in some cases, they rejected the plan and they became, as the Bible says, a vessel of dishonor. In other cases, they did what the Bible says and they became vessels of honor. The bottom line is this: just like in the Bible, there was not one character that God did not fail to use, whether it be man or woman. It does not matter what they thought about God, whether they submitted themselves to God in a good way or a bad way. God still used them. God will use everybody in this room as a vessel of honor that you will give your life to Him, and He will take your life and use it in a great way, or you will keep your life to yourself, and God will use you as a vessel of dishonor, and it will go from there. It always amazed me how people would read the Bible and they would see that every character in the Bible God had a plan for. Yes, some of them realized that plan and some of them did not. But I have always looked at that and thought to myself, once you read that, how in the world do we exempt ourselves from the fact that God does not want to use us?

The ministry and understanding God's plan for your life is really not hard. What I want to talk about today and what I want to focus on today is the second greatest principle. The first one was your relationship, getting the right spouse, getting the right marriage concept together. But today, I want to talk about the second thing that is absolutely important based on the fact that God does have something that He wants you to do, and that will be the aspect of ministry. When we look at this, we break it down simply into three sets of principles, and that is how we are going to approach it today. This is going to be a very easy lesson. It is going to be a very in-depth lesson, but it is going to be very easy for you to understand, just like the relationship was. What did I tell you? I told you when you begin to put Bible principles in your life, it simplifies the issues that you have to deal with. It takes away the confusion, takes away the mystery, and leaves you nothing but what you either do is right or what you do is wrong. And that is what we are going to do.

## II. Three Sets of Ministry Principles

John Busquette sent me, he is always sending me little e-mail e-burps he finds on the e-mail thing, and he sent me a thing of John Rawlings preaching. Most of you do not know who John Rawlings is, and that is to your detriment. John Rawlings was absolutely one of the last of the Philadelphian preachers. He is dead now. John Rawlings was the pastor of Landmark Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is out of the old school. He is certainly, when I talk about the last of the Philadelphian church age, that would be John Rawlings. John Rawlings was originally from where most of the preachers came from when they come out of that time period. He was from down in Kentucky. He was an old backwoods boy that got saved by preaching of the Philadelphian preachers, and someplace along the line, he crossed the river and came up into Ohio and settled in Cincinnati, and he started, he took over the church called Landmark. You know why it is called Landmark? It is called Landmark because it was the first Baptist church in Ohio. It had great historic background to it, and John Rawlings was a preacher's preacher. He not only was a great preacher, and when I met him he was well into his 70s, but not only was he a great preacher, but he was a mentor to younger preachers. He was a great example of what I always used to like to listen to him preach. Now he was rough and he was crude, and brother, he put it right across the plate waist high. But back then, people liked that kind of preaching. We had not "sissified" Christianity to the point like we have today. He did not practice the refined sensibilities of the better art of speaking. He just flat told you the way it was, and boy, he could put it to you. He was a great, great, great preacher.

When John sent that over to me, and I am sure if you want to get it he would send it to you, but it was just a small excerpt, but it took me back into my mind, and I remember, I remember him saying something, and I had really forgotten this, but I remembered him saying something as I was a young man, and we had him at a Bible conference back at the church, my church, in a home church in Ohio. He was preaching to all the preachers that had come in. It was like a pastor's conference, and I went to it, not that I was a pastor then, but I wanted to be whatever God wanted me to be, and I just wanted to hear him. For four days, he lectured these men on what the ministry really was. It was one of the greatest, I wish I would give anything in the world to have a copy of it on tape. I took as many notes as I could, but have you ever seen my handwriting? Even I have a tough time deciphering what I just wrote sometimes. But I will never forget this. He told these young guys that were pastoring churches, and I thought about this for years, and I had really forgotten it until John jogged my memory with the thing that he sent me.

He said there are three kinds of people in every church. He said when you start to pastor a church and you start to work with people, you are going to find that there are three kinds of people you are going to have. These are the kinds of people that you are going to have to deal with.

- Your first group is going to be people who are going to minister.
- Then he says you are going to have a second group.
- And then he said you are going to have a third group.

He told these guys, "You know what the problem we have is so many times we let the people who do not want to minister take all of our time. We put our focus on the people who do not

want to minister that we lose sight of the people who want to be trained how to minister, and they do not get everything that they need to do." I thought when I heard that, that was one of the greatest statements about ministry I had ever heard. And John, thank you. It was no accident that God had you send me that this week, knowing that I was going to preach what I preached today, and it fit right in and brought back a flood of memories that I really needed to remember today in laying this out.

If you and I will follow the New Testament guidelines, then you will never go wrong in fulfilling God's plan for your life. Remember, God's plan for you is that somehow, someday, some shape, some form, you learn how to minister. When you learn how to minister, you learn by fulfilling the will of God in your life by being everything that God wants you to be. Over the years, I have seen young men try to do it outside the principles of ministry. You are always going to have people who think that the principles do not apply to them. They are hell-bent for election, going to get into the ministry, but they are going to do it their way. I have watched this thing for a number of years, and I have seen the fact that young men try to do it outside the principles. In every case, it has always been a disaster.

You should know by now, in the time that we have spent in principle, you should understand what I am about to say. Justification and rationalization will never override the biblical principles in anything that you deal with. That is why God gave you the principles. God gave you the principles so you would not have to deal with your own emotions. You could take your emotions out of it. God gave you the principles to protect you and I from making bad choices. But we always find God's people who want to do what they want to do, and the Word of God never really enters into it.

A guy told me one time years ago, and I was dealing with him on an issue, and he did not, and I was dealing with the biblical principles on the issue. He wanted to do something in his life that was outside the principles, and he really, really wanted to do it. It was very obvious he was going to do it anyhow. I would try to keep him accountable with it, but after a while, it was a failed attempt. He said to me one time, I never forgot this, he says, "Why is it that every time we have a conversation, you have got to bring up the Bible?" I thought to myself, "Well, that is because we ought to do everything we do by the Bible principles," and that is the key. We have already seen the great principles of Paul and how that he had in his spirit to do what he wanted to do when the Spirit of God told him what not to do, and he went ahead and did it, and we saw the disasters of that.

Now, the three sets of principles, and I have broken this down into a really easy set of principles for you. It is basically set one, set two, and set three, and we are going to talk about that today. I think this is good because you need to know and understand. You need to know and understand on the record, so to speak, of where this church stands on the aspect of ministry. Not that we have not preached these for, I have preached these for 35 years of my life. But always there are people that come in and they want to say, "Hey, look, I want God to use me. I want God in my life. I want to do something for God." That is great, and I commend you for that, but you cannot do it your way; you have to do it God's way. Just like in a relationship, in a marriage. You can try

all you want to run it the way you want to run it, but until you run it the way God wants you to run it, you are in a dead-end street, and it is going to probably end in disaster.

- The first set of principles, or set number one, is principles on how God calls you.
- The second set of principles is going to be on how God prepares you.
- The third set of principles is on how God sends you.

Let me just say this in relationship to these three: God will never work outside these three sets of principles. Under any circumstances, there will be no exceptions to it. You will not say down the line someplace, "Well, you know what," and I have heard guys tell me this all the time, "Well, the time is short, so I do not have time to do it this way. I am going to get right into it this way." That will never be a legitimate scenario in the Christian life. It does not matter how much time is left. All that matters is that when God comes, He finds you doing it by the book, by the principle. That is all that matters. There is no shortcut to ministry. A lot of people want a shortcut to ministry, but there is no shortcut to ministry. You have to follow the principles in design. The first set of principles is how God calls you. The second set of principles is how God prepares you. The third set of principles will be how God sends you, puts you into public ministry.

### III. Defining a New Testament Local Church

Now we are going to talk about the first set of principles here, and that is how God calls you. To understand this great principle, we need to see and understand in a better way, I think, something that you probably already should know, but it bears a different look at it and a little more magnification on it to help you better understand it. That is the importance of the local church ministry. What I want to do today, if I can, in the time that we have, in dealing with these three things, is I want to first of all, I think it is very important that we define for you what a New Testament local church is. I think we have the idea today that any building that has a church name on it is okay. Then we get into the denominational thing where the Baptists think the Methodists are wrong, and the Methodists think the Catholics are wrong, and everybody falls under themselves. What we do is denominations now, you know what denominations are: Lutherans, Baptists, Pentecostal, whatever. What we tend to do is we tend to think that one denomination is right over another.

The standard joke is, you know, that guy died and went to heaven. When he died and went to heaven, he is walking around up there, and Saint Peter is kind of taking him around showing him everything, and he walks into this one big room, and everybody, must be just millions of people in there, and they are sitting down, and they are all having chicken dinners. The guy says, "Now, who are these?" And he says, "Well, these are all the Methodists." You know, Methodists are famous for having chicken dinner. Then he walks down the hall a little bit farther, and he walks in there, and he sees another five, six thousand people in there, and they are all playing bingo. He says, "Now, who are these people?" And he says, "Now, these are all the Catholics." You know, Catholics are playing bingo. And then he walks down the court a little bit more, and there is this

room, and it is just filled with people in there. When he walks in there, all around the room there are red lights that says, "No talking, please be quiet. No noise, no nothing. Everybody please keep silent." And he says, "Well, who are these people?" And he says, "Oh, these are the Baptists." He says, "Why are all the signs about being quiet?" And he says, "Because they think they are the only ones up here." See, that is how it works. We tend to think that our denomination is right while the other denominations out there are wrong.

Now I want to show you that is not how you define a New Testament local church today. I want you to see as we go through this. But I also want you to see the absolute essential importance of what we call a local church ministry. You see, the first thing you need to have in your life to understand this concept is the right church. Now, why is that so important? Because you are going to see as we get through here that that is how God fulfills these three principles. We are going to talk about that as we go through. And yet, you know which one is right for you. Remember now, just as you marry the wrong spouse and you lose your millennial inheritance if the thing does not go right, you get in the wrong church that is not the New Testament church that God wants for you to have, and you are going to have some serious issues there too.

Now, you know, and the dilemma is, and this is a dilemma. But let me show you how biblical principles make it so easy. Here is the dilemma: in this state and this city, it is probably a hundred thousand churches. As we are speaking right now across the metro area, take Kansas and everybody else over there and Missouri in a metro area, it is probably what, a hundred thousand churches, ten thousand, twenty thousand, I do not know. How in the world, how in the world do you work if it is so important to get to the right church to get what you need to fulfill God's will for your life and God's plan for your life? How in the world, how in the world do you do that? Now let me ask you a question, and I am not looking for an answer back from you, but think about this in your mind. Let me ask you a question: what determines a New Testament local church? Do you even know?

The answer lies in the book of Proverbs, and we do not have a lot of time to go back in that, but Proverbs 22 and Proverbs 23 are two great chapters because in those two chapters it talks about the fact that God has given us two landmarks, and those landmarks are absolutely crucial. If you are going to find something, anything in life, you have got to start with a point of reference. One time I wanted to put a fence in my backyard, and my neighbor behind me owns a lot of land, it goes on for like one hundred and fifty yards and down through the woods and everything, and I wanted to make sure that I did not, I did not get my fence on his property. I did not want to build it and have him come up and say, "Hey, you are ten feet on my property, you know, you need to move your fence." So what I had to do to the fence guy is I had to have a surveyor come out, and I watched him work, and you know what a surveyor does? Years and years ago, probably in the 1800s, when Missouri was formalized, what they did is they sent out surveyors, and they basically laid the whole state down in some kind of survey format that they could always, you know what he did? He looked back there someplace, and down there under a ton of dirt and under the leaves, he found a little plate that somebody had put in the ground that whenever it was originally surveyed, marked that geographical plate that that is where the property line was. You know what he did? Once he found that point of reference, then he could lay out exactly my fence

line, and he knew exactly where my property ended and that guy's property started. My point is this: if you are going to find anything in life, you have got to have a starting point and a point of reference in your life.

Now we are talking about finding a church because the church that you go to, the church that you give yourself to, just like the person you marry, is going to form and forge where you go in your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You see how absolutely crazy this would be if you did not have a point of reference or a starting point. I mean, you have the Methodist church, the Catholic church, the Presbyterian church, the Baptist church, the Nazarene church, Bible churches, evangelical, neo-evangelical, neo-orthodox, orthodox, you have Lutheran, you have Greek Orthodox, you have churches called chapels, you have community churches, you have Christian churches, you have Bible churches, you have cornerstone churches, you have charismatic churches, you have churches of God, you have church of Christ, you have Pentecostal church, you have holiness. Man, it is confusing.

A guy said one time, "Go to the church of your choice." No, no, no, you do not ever want to do that. What you do want to do is you want to go to the church that God chooses for you. But you see what the dilemma is: what church is that? Just as people never look at the person they marry in light of where they are at with God, in light of where their millennial inheritance and what God wants them to do, they never look at churches the same way. That is why not only are so many marriages broken and busted, but that is why so many of God's people go to church every week. They are involved in it Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night. They do everything in the world, but they never accomplish God's plan in their life because they never learned how to put God's will in their life, and nobody ever brings them to the point where they train them and equip them. If God's program runs through the church, which it does, how do you choose which one is right? Of course, that is a dilemma we all face, and the answer lies in the fact that God gave us two landmarks.

I am going to define for you a New Testament local church in just a second, and if you do not hear anything else, you need to hear what I say on this, and then you can go back to sleep. God gave you two landmarks in the Bible. Those two landmarks are traceable down through history. God did that so you would always know where you are at and have a point of reference to find a New Testament church.

The first landmark is found in Proverbs 22:28. Keep in mind now, you and I are told that we are not to remove these landmarks. When you remove the landmarks, then you are like me trying to put a fence in my yard not knowing where my property line is. A landmark gives you a point of contact; it gives you a point of reference.

*Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.*

That ancient landmark will be the nation of Israel. If you want to understand history, you do not go take a history class; just get your Bible. If you want God's perspective on history, now you have got to hear something else: there are two perspectives on history. There is man's perspective on history, and then there is God's perspective on history. One of my favorite writers on history is a guy by the name of Will Durant. I think Will Durant wrote probably, I used to have them all,

some of them got lost and transferred over the years, but I think he wrote something like, I do not know, a 20-volume series on the history of the world, and he broke it down into a, into a, into a very, well, I am not going to say understandable because each book was about that thick, but he covered basic points of history. One of his books he compared Caesar and Christ. One of the books he talked about the Reformation. One of the books he talked about the Anglo-American history of how the Anglo-American or the English nation formed. He talks about the European history. Now to me, it was fascinating reading. It had nothing to do with God or the Bible, but it was a man, a human man who was lost, gave his incredible perception on history, but it was history from man's standpoint, not God's standpoint. When I got into the Old Testament parts of it, when he talked about the Hittite empires and the Babylonian empires, he never even spent 20 words dealing with the nation of Israel, and yet we know from God's standpoint that all history in the Old Testament follows around the nation of Israel. You want to find God in the Old Testament? Find His people. It is that simple. His people are the nation of Israel.

Now the next, the next principle in Proverbs is Proverbs 23:10, and that is where we are told to not remove the old landmarks. That will be for the New Testament. See, He gave you a set of landmarks for the Old Testament, the nation of Israel, so you can always find out where you are at, and then He gave you a set of principles for the New Testament so you and I could always find out where we are at in finding the right New Testament church because defining a New Testament local church, you want to look for the one that lines up to what the New Testament says a church should be.

*Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless:*

For you and for me, to save a lot of time here this morning and keep from boring you to death with a history lesson, for you and for me, that will be the church of Antioch found in the book of Acts where they are first called Christians in Acts 11. Then it runs down through Acts 11 up to Acts 13, and then you see the establishment of what we know as the first New Testament local church found at Antioch where they are first called Christian. That is your reference point. What you want to do, what you want to do is you begin to take from there and find out exactly where this church goes.

One of the things that I am criticized for, and people do not like about what I teach and what I say, is that they do not like the fact that I have heard this all my life, and it is really a half-truth. Maybe now that I am going on record, maybe it will clear the air because I am sure my enemies are listening to my tape, so I want to say hi to all you out there listening to this today and hope that your day is going well. One of the things I am accused of is the fact that I am against Bible colleges or Bible seminaries. No, I am not. I am against Bible colleges or Bible seminaries. That is really not true in a sense, but here is my problem. I have been accused of being against higher education. Hey man, nobody has been higher to me. I went to the seventh grade. I got there. It is always a thing where people take me out of context all the time, but it is not that I am against Bible colleges or seminaries. The problem is that I am just so pro-local church because I know the Bible teaches that God's structure for this age is a local church. I do not know what else to tell you. I am not going to change and believe what you want to believe when the Bible is so clear on that particular point.

I asked a guy one time, I said, "Do you," and he was one of these guys, and I asked him, I said, "Do you know where the first New Testament church is found in the Bible that is our model?" He did not know. Then I asked him this, I said, "Do you know where the first Bible college is found in the Bible?" It is also in the book of Acts. He did not know. He did not have a clue. I am always suspect of people who like to talk about what they believe when they cannot take it back to the Bible to justify and to lay out what they believe.

Now I have a letter here I am going to read you. Please understand that I am reading this, I never talked this way, but I want to read you a letter I got in the mail this week, and it is a good letter. Let me tell you a story that goes along with this letter. All the way back in, I do not know what, 1978, 1979, I had, I had been a youth pastor, and then the opportunity arose for me to take over a college and career class. Here is my understanding on it: I knew at that point in my life that I wanted to make a difference in people's lives, and I knew that in a youth class, high school kids, I only had so limited because the church at that time that I was with was so big that once they got out of high school, they had it all chopped up in little Sunday school classes, so once they, once I, once they graduated from school, they went into this class, college class. I lost input in it. It was not like here where Kyle, you can have contact with him forever no matter how old they are and bring them right back and work into your ministry. It was not like that. Every, when you graduated, you went to the next class, and that was the deal. That is how it worked.

Well, I took over the college class, and the guy that I, the guy that I who left, some of you were around then, you know who I am talking about, and it does not bear anything, he was not a bad guy, but he was just a political guy, and he was going down to Savannah, Georgia, and down in Savannah, Georgia, Dr. Cecil Hodges had just opened up a brand new Bible college, and they wanted to get kids from all across the country to come to that Bible college, and they had hired this guy to come down and be their front man who would go out and do that. Well, there were four guys that I really thought that were really key guys that I could really take and train. I looked at them that they were in that ministry, and I did not know it at the time, but while he was telling me, in this, he was underminingly talking to these guys, and he got them, he got them half scholarships down to the school, his Bible college, and so he was going to strip the leadership out of that, out of that deal, and take him down there, obviously a feather in his cap. So he took four boys down there, and those four boys were really good kids. To my knowledge today, and that has been quite a water under the bridge, I have had contact with some of them off and on, all four of those boys never made it to the ministry or out in the world and just done well.

A couple of years ago, one of the boys called me, and his name is David Cage, and David, I know you are going to hear this tape, so because you will see why here in just a minute. So he called me, and I talked to him, and he was in, and he was really struggling with some things. Then he called me back about, I do not know, eight, nine months ago, and we have our website up now, and he is living in California now. David, David had had his faith taken from him by the Bible college system, and for a while he was back out in the world. He got married, and he called me back, and David, David was a really good, all these guys were good, but David was a really good kid, but he is a classic example of what happens when somebody takes your Bible from you

and ruins you. So I talked to him a couple of weeks ago, or a couple of months ago, and he got the, he got the website, and I got this letter from him this week, and I have got to read it.

Now, please understand that I am reading this. I never talked this way, but I want to read you a letter I got in the mail this week, and it is a good letter. I will do one of two things because I know that some of you are very sensitive. Would you like me to read this letter as he wrote it, or would you like me to bleep out the things that he, you are too quick to shake your head no here, that bothers me. Would you like me to bleep out the things that he puts in it? Now, it is nothing really that we all have not said this morning when our family was not fast enough getting into the car or something like that. Okay, so let us not pretend we are pious, but I will, I would like to read it in its entirety because I think it loses the impact, and I like the cuss, and that is the way I can do it without any kind of repercussions coming on me. I am just going to read it. If you are getting mad and leave the church, let us see here, where we got here, John, make me a list of four or five churches that if they want to leave, you can give them two on the way out over there. Okay, thank you, sir. Okay, here we go.

"Hey Bob, I am sick of Laodicea, and I am tired of being part of the vomit. Pray for me as God washes this stench off my miserable, professionalized, politically correct, putrefied soul. I want, now this next part I want you to get it, unfortunately it does not have any cuss word in it, but it is good anyhow. I whined to God for years about missing all those Bible studies you did long ago when I went down to Atlanta to attend, uh, we ain't got no Bible college. I love it like it was God's fault or something. Well, plain and simple, I made some bad choices, wasted many years, polluted my mind and my heart, and I am a fool. So no more of this crap. I have downloaded everything you got on your website, put it on a laptop, and I am going through it every chance I get. I am going to learn it, and by God's grace, I am going to get, I am going to let Him change me, and I am going to war. If this letter sounds kind of angry for a guy just wants to say thanks, I am sorry, but I needed a kick in the ass, so thanks a lot. Your brother, David Cage."

Now David, I know you are going to hear this because you are probably a genie, you will have this on the thing by this afternoon probably or by tomorrow. So I am going to tell you this, David, I do not really have a good address for you, and I do not have your phone number, I do not have your email. I guarantee you if you send me that stuff or get it to us, there are people in this church that will stay in touch with you and encourage you and call you and email you and write you and get you whatever you need to get you done.

Now you see what, now that is, there is a case exactly what I am trying to tell you. The church, and this is where I get in trouble, the church exists for one reason. You know what that reason is? It is to equip you. You know what that Bible college did? It stripped him. You either get equipped or stripped, but that is the way it works in this political correct Christian society, and that is the problem that you get into. Now you have a landmark, you have a landmark, something God, someplace to go because it is through the church that God will call you.

Here comes the definition of the church. You do not find a New Testament local church by denomination. Now you have got to get this: a New Testament local church is not designed by the name that it calls itself, but it is designed by what it believes and teaches as it lines up to the

early church in the book of Acts. You are going to find that, you are going to find that there are seven basic principles that you want to look for in any church, and these are the seven exact principles that the church at Antioch had and followed. You can follow the seven basic main principles up through the early church, up through the Dark Ages, up into the Renaissance, up into the Reformation, and every aspect of it, and you are going to find that not only were these seven principles found in the churches, but when our country was founded, these seven same principles were the, were the seven principles that were built into our own Constitution on these principles.

Now, very quickly, we are not going to have time to go through these. These are something we can do on Third Night if you want, but let me give them to you.

- The first one that the New Testament church in Acts believed, and this is true all the way through church history, they believed that the Bible, the Bible, the Bible, the Bible was the final authority in everything that they had.
- The second thing they believed: that you had to be saved by the blood of Christ.
- The third thing they believed: baptism was only for adults, no baptism of babies.
- The fourth thing that they believed was they were pre-millennial in their approach to the Bible.
- The next thing that they believed was a complete separation of church and state, no politics involved whatsoever.
- The next thing that they believed: they reconciled themselves to be the only true structure by which God called a man, God prepared a man, and then God sent a man out.
- The last thing that they believed was the aspect of eternal security.

Now you want a New Testament local church as defined. I have got to tell you this is not Bob Baptist Bob's principles. This is not something that Bob put down or got out of a Baptist handbook someplace. You know my position on it, the Baptists are as big as idiots as anybody else. These are Bible principles. This is going to the Bible, to the landmark, finding the point of reference, finding out what they believed, and then staying with what the true church had all down through history. Now maybe you understand better why they called the church there in Cincinnati Landmark, and they stayed with the principles, and they stayed with the book.

That is the God's seven principles that any church should operate by and the way what they should do and what they should believe. Now, based on that, it would be safe to say, and this is the, this is the hard part, this is the tough part, based on what I just gave you, that tells you that

99% of the churches in this country are not defined as New Testament local churches by the Bible. No wonder they want to get away from the Bible.

My goal, and I have made no preface about this any way, shape, or form since we started the church, I have told you this a thousand times: I am not interested in the name. I am not interested in, I am interested in one thing, and that is the Bible as far as truth and keeping this church as close to a New Testament local church as I can. We do not want to remove the landmark, and I understand that what a New Testament Bible-based church should be and the importance of being doctrinally pure in all that you teach because it is through this structure, and here we go now into the first one, it is through this structure that God will call you to minister for Him.

#### IV. Principle 1: How God Calls You (The Samuel Principle)

With that, I want to, now that you understand that, I want to take you into the first principle of how God calls you. For this, we want to turn into 1 Samuel 3, and this is one of the greatest passages in all the Bible that shows you a young Christian and how this process works. This is without a doubt one of the most incredible passages in all the Bible. Now look at 1 Samuel 3, and I am going to read it down here, and then we are going to make some thing, I am going to show you how this thing works.

*1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.*

*2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;*

*3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;*

*4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.*

*5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.*

*6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.*

*7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD revealed unto him.*

*8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.*

*9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

*10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.*

Now this is one of the greatest passages in the Bible that shows how God calls you. Let me kind of brief the story for you so you know what we are dealing with here. Here is what you have got. We know the story of Hannah and Samuel. She wanted a boy, she got a boy. She promised God that if God gave her a son, she would give that son to the Lord. Of course, she does. She keeps Samuel for a while, gets him to the point where, I do not know, maybe six or seven, eight or nine years old, Bible does not really say, but then she takes him down to Eli, who is the priest, into the temple, and she turns him over to Eli and basically says, "I told God that if He gave me a son, I would give him back to Him. I am giving him back to Him. Take him and make him something great."

Now you need to understand this: in the Old Testament, the structure that God worked through was the priesthood and the tabernacle. That was the structure. That was the nation of Israel. What the church is to you and me, where in the Old Testament the structure was the priesthood and the tabernacle, in the New Testament the structure is the priesthood, you and me, in God's local church where God sends you to go, a New Testament defined local church. So when she sends him down there, it is a picture of you going into a church and beginning to learn the Bible and beginning to fulfill God's will for your life. Remember we talked about that starting out, and in the process of time, as you learn to be what God wants you to be, then God is going to call you to do for Him what He wants you to do. Follow me now.

Look at this day. He is down there. He goes to sleep one night. Look what happened.

*1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.*

*2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;*

*3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;*

I have got to tell you this is one of the weirdest places in the Bible because, and it is something that you have got to see, it is one of these places that I believe the Bible kind of sets out by itself. Look at 1 Samuel 3:1. It says:

*And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.*

Now that is quite a statement if you know anything about the Bible because in the Old Testament God did things through the prophets. He gave things through visions, and He gave things through the people that He spoke to. But now in this particular time here, for whatever reason, God says, "That is not working anymore." God says in this particular time, "The only way I am going to reveal Myself to anybody is through what I have already written." You know what that tells me? That tells me that is a picture of the time you and I have right now in the New Testament church. You know why? Because God does not answer us by visions. He does not give us dreams. He will not send a message through somebody. The message that God has for you is already in that Bible. You see, I am preaching something to you, but I am not preaching something that is not in

the Bible. It is not like Bob coming up here, "Oh, I got a revelation from God today, you know, you all need to do this." No, I am giving you the message out of what He already wrote. That is all I am doing.

Then I will show you something else down there in 1 Samuel 3:3.

*And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;*

Now that, I do not know if you know this or not, but from the Old Testament that lamp was never to go out. The part of the priest's job was to keep that lamp burning 24/7. Back in the book of Exodus, that lamp was never, never, never, never, never to go out. The only other place you find where the lamp or the candle, that is what that lamp was, the only place you find where the lamp of God goes out anywhere else in your Bible is in the Laodicean church period that you and I are living right now. You know what it says in the book of Revelation? It says that God took the candlestick from the Laodicean church. We are living in a Laodicean church that mirrors the time that Samuel ministered under Eli where the light of God is gone, and the only way God revealed Himself was to a young man was through the Word of God, through the structure that God had for that young man. See, that thing works.

Now here is the problem. Notice 1 Samuel 3:3 and 9. The process: God calls him three times. Three times he is sleeping, and He says, "Samuel." Samuel gets up, runs over to Eli, and said, "Yeah, what you want?" Eli said, "I did not call you, go back to sleep." He calls him the second time, "Samuel." He runs up, runs over, "What do you need?" "I did not call you, go back to sleep." The third time God says, "Samuel," and he runs over to him, and Eli perceived that God had called the child.

Now you know what you have got there? I will tell you what you have got. Let me just simplify it for you. You come into this church, and you will want to do what is right. You come into this church, and you want to learn the Bible. You want to grow. You get into the right church with the right structure, and you will begin to, begin to build the will of God in your life. You will begin to build the character qualities that God wants you to have. It is through that will of God and the character qualities that God has for you, you know what God is going to do? He is going to begin to reveal to you what you want to do, and He is going to call you by name, and He is going to say, "Bob," He is going to say, "Tom," He is going to say, "Sue," He is going to say, "Ralph," He is going to say, "Mary." And you, because you are such a young Christian, now this is Samuel's problem. This is where I have got to go back to my verse here.

Now watch 1 Samuel 3:7.

*Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD revealed unto him.*

Now we know that what that does not mean he is down in the temple. He is down there with Eli. He has known God about God and the concept of God and the priesthood of God all of his life. What that means yet that God has not revealed Him to him. He knows God, but he does not know how to discern what God is saying, and that is where so many young Christians fall down. You get a zeal, the Bible says, but not according to knowledge, and you begin to feel God

something doing something in your life, and I am sure that He is. I always like this because, you know, it is a thing where God had put a man in his life that was looking out for him, and when he came down and said, "Did you call me?" Eli said, "Just go back to sleep." The second time he said, "Did you call me?" "Go back to sleep." But the third time Eli perceived that God was doing something with a child, and I want to be honest with you, I have watched many of you who are now leaders in this church go through that same exact thing. I watched you struggle with God dealing with you, but because you have to spend some time building that relationship with God that you understand what God is telling you to do and do not get it off track. This is why God puts you in a structure and for somebody to teach you the principles so you do not make the same mistake that so many other people make.

You know what Eli's advice was? Go back to sleep three times: 1 Samuel 3:5, 1 Samuel 3:6, and 1 Samuel 3:8. But then the last time he perceived what he is saying is this: "Look, keep doing what you are doing." Now I like the fact that he says sleep because sleep in the Bible represents rest, and to me that simply means that he is telling that young kid, "Just go back and keep doing what you are already doing. What you are already doing, God will reveal Himself to you in time." You know what Eli did not do? He did not come the first time and he say, "I did not, I did not call you, go back to sleep." Second time he did not say, "Oh, I did not call you, go back to sleep." Third time he perceives of the Lord, and then here is what he said, "I think God has called you. I think now you are going to be a great man of God. Your mother brought me down here, it is all coming clear now. You know what? You are going to be a great prophet of God. First time I did not know, second time I did not know, but I have got perception, and now I perceive that God has called you." "I will tell you what you need to do, Samuel, you need to go to Bible college. You need to get down there and get trained and go to Bible college." You know what he said? "You know what you need to do? Go back to sleep again."

When you are working on getting God's will in your life, God is going to begin to work the plan into your life, and that plan can become confusing. You may think God is calling you here when a child is calling you here. He is just putting this here in your life to get you some part that you need to get you ready over here, and because you do not understand how He speaks, because you do not know how He is talking to you, because you are still young at this, God put a structure in your life just like He put a structure in Samuel's life.

Now look at the end result.

*19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.*

*20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.*

*21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.*

You have got to find out what Shiloh means in the Bible, it will help you put this story together even a little bit better. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh, for the Lord revealed Himself to

Samuel in Shiloh how? By the Word of the Lord. There it is again. He stayed with a structure, and all of Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew, "We have gotten God's man." Now that is called the Samuel principle. God calls you through the structure of a New Testament local church, the way God has designed it to work.

## V. Principle 2: How God Prepares You (The Paul and Timothy Principle)

Now we have got to look at the second set of principles. The next one is how does God prepare you? Now we are going to have some fun with this one. I love this one. This is fun. If you have been around here any amount of time and you got plugged into this church, you have heard this in one form or the other: "Oh, you are just following a man. You are just following a man." Of course, the model for what we have here of how God prepares you is the Paul and Timothy principle.

Now I have some terrible news for you. Somebody says, "You are just following a man." Somebody says, "You are just following a man." Well, I have got some great news for you: that is what you are supposed to do. You just want to make sure it is the right man. When God wanted to prepare Samuel, He managed to be for Eli. When God wanted to reveal the world, when God wanted to reveal Himself to the nation of Israel, He did it through a man.

*6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

*7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.*

*8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.*

*9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

Of course, the Bible says that was a true light, the lighteth every man of the world. When God wanted to reveal Himself to the nation of Israel, He picked a man. When God wanted to get the gospel, He used Peter, a man. When God wanted to get the Gentile world to get the gospel, He called a man, Paul. When God wanted to prepare young Timothy for a pastor, He put him under a man. So when somebody says, "You, you are following a man, you just follow a man," hey guys, that is what you are supposed to do. Make sure you have got the right guy.

I talked to somebody this week, and we talked about this Thursday night, and I talked about this week, somebody come over and they said, "I really want to learn the Bible. I really want to get the Bible. I really want to learn it." And I sit down, and when I read the Bible, I do not get anything out of it, and I try to read it, but it means nothing to me. And they said, "I really get frustrated," and I said, "I want to know how do I, how do I learn the Bible? I am trying to read it, I want to know it, I want to learn it, but I am not just not doing anything for me. I pray, I ask God to show me things, but when I sit down, oh, I get a few things, but I am not getting what I want to get out of it." And I thought to myself, "That is a dilemma of so many of God's people today." You know why? You know why you do not get anything out of that? People like that remind me

of a guy one time who, who his favorite thing was when he had a need, he felt the Holy Spirit of God would just give him what he needed. So whenever he had a need, he would just flip the Bible open up and put a finger down in that verse, and that would be the verse that God gave him for his scenario. Only problem is one day he did that, he owned a big problem in his life, he opened that thing up and he put that thing down and said:

*Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.*

I do not know how that helps him with his problem. That is not how you do it. You do not have to happen chance the Bible. You do not have to play Christian roulette with the Bible. That is what He gave you principles for, and God never intended anybody, never did He intend anybody to sit down and just open up the Bible and read the Bible and figure it out for yourself. Nobody in the Bible ever did that. When God took Paul and got Paul, He shook him up on Mount Sinai in Arabia, and He gave Paul directly what He wanted Paul to know about the mystery of the church, and then He told Paul, "You go down and you tell everybody," and you put in an automatic chain of events. Paul once started churches, he trained the men in those churches, those churches took it and trained somebody else, and then He gives you examples of Timothy, Philemon, and He shows it, Titus, all three were won to Christ by Paul that he invested his life with. Those three are probably three of ten thousand people that Paul ministered to.

God never intended for you to sit out and open it up and figure it out yourself. He gave you a structure, and then He will put a man or a woman in your life. We call it discipleship. I call it one-on-one. We call it Bible institute. We call it the things that you get by following a man because that is what God wants you to do. I mean, if I am wrong or mistaken in Acts 8, when the Ethiopian eunuch is sitting on the back of that chariot trying to read Isaiah 55 and he cannot figure it out, and God sends him Philip, a man, and Philip runs over to him and asks the classic question:

*And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?*

What was his reply?

*And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.*

Somebody says, "You are following a man, you are following a man." That is what you are supposed to do. Make sure you have got the right guy. One of my boys years ago, this is hilarious, one of my boys years ago, we met a guy that did not care for me or our ministry, you know, and did not like the King James Bible, and he says, he says, "Oh, you go to your, you, you have been taught by Bob." And he says, "Yeah, that is right." He says, "Oh," he says, "uh, he says, 'You are following a man, you are following a man.'" He says, "What do you mean I am following a man?" He says, "Well, you believe that Bible is inspired and inerrant and in state." He says, "Yes, I do." And he says, "Well, that is what Bob teaches, you are following a man." My boy said, "You believe that Bible has mistakes in it?" That guy said, "Yes, I do." My boy said,

"Who taught you that?" You recognize that everybody that accuses you of following a man is following somebody.

Sometime when you have a rainy afternoon and there are no football games on, read 3 John. 3 John is a great book. It talks about two kinds of men. One of them is Gaius. Do not let the name fool you, he is okay. The Bible talks about Gaius as a fellow servant. John says he is really the real deal. He says he walks in truth and the truth is in him. Then he talked about another guy, his name is Diotrephes. That whole book, and it is just a short book, you could read it probably in 15 minutes, probably 10. But that whole book is about two types of men. One is Gaius who walks in the truth, and the other one is Diotrephes who stood against the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. John says there that he tried to hurt the work. John says he "prated against us with malicious words." The Bible says in 2 John 1:9, John says he loved the preeminence of men. He loved for people to look at him and know how great he was with the Bible. His whole countenance depended on you recognizing how much he knew, how great he was. But John says he hurt our work. Then he comes down there and he says, "Remember his deeds." Now if you go to my Bible in 3 John, you would find a list of about 13 or 14 people down through my life. I called them the Diotrephes of my life. You know what, in the ministry, you are going to have those kind of people. There are people who have never built anything themselves. There are people who could never pastor a church if their life depended on it. Most of the time their own families are against them, and they cannot even get that right. You are going to find that their whole life is going around who they cannot get anybody to follow them. So they go around telling you that you are following a man, so hopefully, just hopefully you will follow them. See, that is how it works.

Somebody says, "What do you do about people like that?" Let me tell you something. I have learned this over 30 some years in a minute. The Diotrephes of life never bother the work of God. I always liken them on a trip from here to Kansas City to Seattle, Washington. You know which, look at that as your ministry, starting in Kansas City, winding up at Seattle, which is in heaven, and you have got a troop to go there. I look at the Diotrephes on that trip, just look like bugs on a windshield. They do not really matter. They make a little splatter, but they do not really matter. The next year at the next gas station, you get that big old gray sponge there and you just clean them off. They do not matter. They do not matter at all. Everybody in here ought to be following somebody. You just better make sure it is the right guy. Better make sure it is the right guy.

You know what Paul said?

*Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*

He said in 1 Corinthians 11:1:

*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

*17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

*18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*

He is talking about saved people. He is talking about the Diotrephes in life. He is talking about the people that will try to get you to quit following one guy to follow them when their own family will not even follow them. Everybody follows somebody. You know what? Here is how it works. God puts a man in your life to build you, and the devil puts a man in your life to tear down what God is trying to build. It is like the old Bible college concept. The church equips you, the college strips you. Talk to David Cage. Talk to my buddy David Cage.

Paul invested his time with Titus, Philemon, and Timothy. Of course, he told us in Timothy, he told Timothy, "The same thing that I have committed to you, you take and commit to faithful men." The man in my life that taught me the Bible was Mel Shabbat. The man in his life that taught him the Bible was Peter Ruckman. The man in Peter Ruckman's life was E.W. Pile. I do not know who ministered to E.W. Pile, but somebody did. And somebody ministered to the minister, that ministered to E.W. Pile. All the way back to the early church with Paul and Timothy, there was an unbroken chain of events of faithful men committing to faithful men what God has given to them. That is how you learn your Bible. That is how you get equipped.

I learned a long time ago there are only two things in this world worth investing your life in. The quicker some of you learn this, the better off you are going to be. There are only two things as a child of God. Only two things I have found in over 35 years of ministry that is worth investing your life with. Because it is the only two things that are eternal and going to last through all eternals. One of them is the Word of God, the other one is the souls of men. Everything else does not matter. It just does not matter.

## VI. Principle 3: How God Sends You

Then our third and final set of principles. This is how God gets you into the ministry. Now I want to say this, there is no doubt in my mind that in the years to come, some of you will be in full-time ministry. I had a guy talk to me this week who definitely needs somebody to come and work with him in his church. Called me and said, "Hey, do you have anybody that you feel would be what I needed for the ministry?" I told him, I said, "You know what, I do not have anybody ready to go at this particular point, but I have got some on the burner and they are cooking." I said, "I probably cannot help you, but down the line, I will have God show direction, God show leads. I will have the people that need to be done." Yet at the same time, that is true of some of you. God has to do what He has to do.

But at the same time, I also know what my job is right here. We have been here together now six years. Every bit of that time, some of you came somewhere on the process. But I have watched this thing, and I have watched how this thing really just goes. I have taken, and I am kind of like an arrowhead maker. I am trying to shape a head of a javelin. There are two or three of you guys in here. Right now, as we stand, if something happened to me, you could form into an alliance and you could handle this church. In time, we want that thing to come where we shape that arrowhead to the place where it becomes the tip of a spear.

Behind the scenes, with everything we do, like volleyball, like Bible study, like institute, like the upcoming softball deal, you either look at that as a ministry or you look at that as a softball game. You will either look at it and see the opportunities to bring your friends in, to minister to them and get them into a New Testament church so they can get the Bible and get saved maybe, or you will look at it as just a softball league. You will look at it one way or the other. You will look at it determined, "Why do I want to get in and out? I really cannot play softball." Can you minister? Can you do something to somebody else? You see, that is the key. That is what you have got to look for. The shape of that, the head of that javelin gets shaped. It gets sharpened and it comes to a point. The point is that someday somebody is going to have to take over this church. If Jesus does not come, it is going to have to be formed to a point where it is ready to go that it cuts on both sides. I look at everything that we do in preparation for that.

You see, you have the luxury to look at it like a volleyball league. You have the luxury to look at it like just a softball league. You have that luxury. You have the luxury to choose whether you come to Third Night Bible study or not. You have that luxury. You have the luxury to come and take what you like out of here and not like. You have that luxury. As a pastor, you do not have that luxury. You have got to look at everybody you have got, and you have got to break it down, as old John Rawlings said, those who want to minister, those who want to learn how to minister, and you are going to have the ones who are never going to minister. You have got to take what you have and focus that and angle that spear point to get it to cut that you can train some leaders that will take, no matter what happens, and stand and make sure that the doctrine of this church stays pure. Make sure the things that we do are biblical and follow the line that has been given all the way down through the church.

Now, when it comes to going into the ministry, let me give you the number one principle. When you want to write this down, this will answer a lot of questions for you. Here is a simple fact. When it comes to going into the ministry, whether you go out someplace else or you work here, nobody goes out. They are sent out. Say this again. Nobody in the New Testament just decides to go out. Nobody. Nobody in the New Testament woke up one morning and said, "I have decided I am going to go into ministry." Nobody. There is not one example anywhere in the Bible in the church where anybody just decides to go out. They are sent out.

I will show you how this principle works. Remember 1 Samuel 3:19-21? The Bible says that Samuel stayed there with Eli. He grew, and the Lord was with him. Here is really the key. Here is the key to young Samuel, and here is the key to you and me. Here is really the key. I can stop right here and be done now for the rest of the day, but that is not going to happen. I could have just gave you this verse and never gave you anything else, and we could have been done, but you would not have put it in the right context. Here is the key. Here is what some of you who are going to minister do, and here is why some of you will never minister, this is what you do not do. It is just that simple.

Look at that passage again.

*19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.*

*20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.*

*21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.*

He hung on to everything he learned. He got every concept that was taught. He realized that his life was not about what he wanted to do. It was not about his career. It was not about his future. It was about that God had saved him and God had called him, and there was a process, and the way that he had to get there was stay in the structure and learn from Eli, but not let any of God's words fall to the ground. And the Lord appeared, 1 Samuel 3:20, and all Israel, and Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet. You know what my advice is to you? Let God establish you. When God establishes you, you do not have to rent a billboard that says, "I am ready for ministry." When God establishes you, you do not have to print up T-shirts and "look at me, I am ready to go." When God establishes you, then everybody knows. I have got to be very honest with you, one of the joys of ministry is watching that progress in your life, watching that process. I have seen some people that brought some of you into church that when they, you came in, they were good, and you do nothing, and now, what, two or three years later, they are not even here anymore, and you are growing and doing and doing the work of God. I love to watch the process. I want to watch young men who come into this ministry, who grow up, who really grasp it, young ladies who get saved, come into this church, know nothing, know absolutely nothing, and buy into the structure, and let God form them, mold them, fashion them, and watch God promote them up through the system. That is the way it works. God established Samuel through the Old Testament structure, and all Israel knew it, and then sent him out to be the greatest prophet that Israel probably ever had.

When God wanted Paul and Barnabas to go out, look at Acts 13. Look at the principles involved.

*1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

*2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

*3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

*4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*

Now they were in the church that was at Antioch, there is our model church. Now they were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas and Simon, it was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. Now here comes the key. And as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me, Barnabas and Saul," that is Paul, "for the work whereunto I have called them." Now look at that thing. You see, once Paul went to Sinai and got the gospel concept from God Himself, you know where Paul went? He went to a local church down in

Antioch. Even though he had just got the direct revelation from God of the gospel, in fact it is so direct that Paul himself calls it "my gospel." Even though he went face to face with God, notice how God never violates His own principles, and neither should you and I. Even after he got the message straight from God directly to him, and he got the green light to go, you know what Paul did? He put himself under the authority of a New Testament local church, and let them send him out, and let the God speak through them, even though he knew that God had called him to do. Now what are you going to do with that? You know what you are going to do? Some of you are going to do exactly what you want to do. That is what you are going to do. That is what they always do, and that is just the way it is. God told the leadership of that church that it was time for them to go. They had recognized what they had done. They had done a work that nobody could deny. God had established them, and now they were on their way to ministry.

I will show you another one in Acts 16, when God called Timothy to go with Paul. Watch this one. Just a couple chapters over in Acts 16:1-2. Look at the process. Look at the process.

*1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:*

*2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.*

Now there is a whole lesson in that, that we do not have time to get into it this morning, but you want a good study on what God looks for in a young man? We could take a couple hours on that one. Now here is what I want you to see, Acts 16:2. Which was well reported by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. The first time Timothy shows up is in Acts 16. You are going to find that Paul looks for him, and Paul looks down through there when he finds a young man, but I want you to notice, it was not just somebody that was out there, it was somebody that the Bible says was well reported of by the brethren. Timothy had done the job. He had a good reputation in that church.

You know what Proverbs 22:1 says?

*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.*

It says a good name is better than riches. In any church, as God is going to establish you, you have got to do it cleaner and better than anybody else. If you are ever going to be a leader in this church, you have got to live it by the principles. It is by the book, because that book will establish you. I tell you all the time, you know what, I mean, I think many of you, many times you, you know what, you would be better off if you just followed the principles. I have told you many, many times, you know, the key to your success is the fact that if you are going to be a leader in this church, you have got to do it better, cleaner, better than anybody else. You have got to do it better, cleaner than anybody else. I mean, you can never, never come to the place where you use this church other than ministry. You cannot ever come to the place where you, as a leader in this church, take advantage financially or any other way of anybody in this church. You have to be a leader, you have to be above reproach. You have to be a giver, not a taker. You have to be

somebody that is putting out, not taking from somebody. Your business dealings have to be above reproach.

I tell you all the time, and I have had a standard rule, and you do not follow it most of you, but I have told you this from day one: it is better off if you do not do business with people in the church. It is better off. You are just better off. I have told you that from day one, because the devil always gets into details. Two reasons for that. You know why? Because the person who does business with the person in the church, they expect something a little more because we are Christians, and you should not expect that. You should not expect a better deal. If you go to somebody and they have a particular business that you want to do, if they give you a better deal, that is them. But you should not go in expecting it, because what happens is, once the bill comes back and it is not what you suppose it should be, because when we are in the same church together, then you get an attitude about that. You should never go that way. You are better off just to not do that. At the same time, there are people that get themselves, that they take advantage of people, and you know what? Then you get an attitude about that. I have learned it. I have learned it. I have learned it over the years. You are better off in every way, shape, or form. You are better off to take your business outside. I am going to make a statement. It is not a very nice statement, but I am going to make it. You know what? The worst hosings I ever got in the business world, I got from God's people. Not from unsaved people. You are just better off. You want to do whatever you do and be above reproach. You want to have your character and your ministry established that when a ministry time comes up, there is no question about it. Nobody says, "Well, she ripped me off," or "he ripped me off," or "they still owe me money," or "they did this," or "they did that." You do not want that on your resume. You want it done cleanly by the book, and you never in ministry. Listen to me. You never, never, never in ministry put yourself in a position to take from somebody that is a Christian. Never, never, never. You give, but you never take.

We got a thousand dollar check this week in the mail from a couple that I worked with in marriage that had some severe problems. Worked with them for a number of years. I do not know that it is going to work out for them, but you know what? They appreciated the time that I spent with them, and they appreciated all that I do, and you know my policy. I do not, I do not ever, you know, and they never asked me, "Do you want any money," or "Should we keep it?" They never did, but this week, he called me on the phone and said, "I am sending you, sending you a thousand dollar check." He says, "How do you want it made out?" Now, let me tell you what most pastors would do at this point. See, this is off the clock. What are you looking at? It is off the clock. It is off the clock. I love you. This is off the clock. This is not my time. I counsel them from two in the morning to five. I am off the clock. You know what most pastors would do? "Make it out to me." Because they would say, "Thousand dollars, well, this has nothing to do with the church. It has nothing to do with the church. So I am going to take this because this is my," and maybe, maybe that is okay. I am not making a judgment on one way or the other. The bottom line is this. I will never take from anybody. I cannot legally in my mind before the principles of the Word of God ever justify trying to help somebody with the Bible and then taking money for it. Now, I get paid a salary here, but that is my job. But you pay me a salary. I am not working on a side of my own. I do not have a little shingle out the back says "Bob's

Counseling Service, half cut rate." I said, "Make it out to the church." You never take from people. Never. You never, now that does not mean that people do not do nice things from it. I like Reese's cups. I like brownies with lots of ice cream, the chocolate ice on the top. Okay. Okay. I understand. I have my, I have my downside too, you know. You bring me a Reese's cup and you lay it on the table and walk 10 feet away. He took it. I saw him take it. But he snapped that. He is a Reese's cup stealer right there. He is. He walked through there and grabbed that thing. You never take. I am telling you, you never take. You never take. I do not care how legitimate it looks. I do not care what you never take. You never take. You give back. Our job as ministers is not to take. It is to give. It is to give. You give your time. You give every, every aspect to you. When somebody needs something, you are a giver. You give to them. You do not ask for anything back. It is unconditional. Let God establish, establish you in your life, well-reported among the brethren. There was not one thing anybody said because he did it by the book. And so will you. And so will you.

When Paul wrote First and Second Timothy, I always loved those books because they were books that were written directly to him. In those books in 1 Timothy, you will find 12 principles, absolutely essential, absolutely necessary. 12 principles that God through Paul, his man, told him that he had to do to be in the ministry. Absolute principles. In 2 Timothy, he tells you about the right doctrine and how to protect it. The New Testament church is the only structure that God ever ordained to call you, to train you, and to put you in the ministry. You can find another application. You can believe somebody else. I talked to him first before you do it.

I told you a couple of weeks ago that one of our, in one of our principle studies, that when Christ went back to heaven in Acts 1 and 2, He replaced Himself with three things. The first thing He replaced Himself with was the Holy Spirit of God. The second thing He replaced Himself with was the Word of God. The third thing He replaced Himself with was the local church. These three things are what you need that Christ gave you when His physical presence went back to heaven. These are the three things that He gave you to fulfill God's will for your life, thereby fulfilling God's plan for your life, then getting yourself ready to go. The Holy Spirit of God is your guide to ministry. The Word of God is your road back to ministry. A local church is your vehicle to ministry. In the world that we call Christianity, we have the devil taking two of those absolutely imperative three things out of our lives. See, he cannot get the Holy Spirit of God if you are saved. But what he does get is the Word of God and the local church concept. The local church equips you. The higher realm of education strips you.

I want to tell you one more story. And then I am going to close this out. We are in good shape here. A number of years ago, right up the road here, there is a place called Calvary Bible College. A number of years ago, I had two of the boys of the chancellor or the president of Calvary Bible College in my youth ministry, really my college ministry. He did not like me, and I really did not care for him. He knew my stand on the book. He was a Greek and Hebrew expert. One of his boys, the youngest one, came in to see me. This boy had some real spiritual issues in his life. He was struggling with what he wanted to believe about God and do in his life and what God wanted to do, but the pressure he was getting from his dad. Every time he would come to a Bible study or he would come to church and he would go home with his notes, his dad would look over his

shoulder and make fun of me, tell him how wrong I was. The kid come in and talked to me one time and he said, "I do not know what to do." And I told him, I said, "You know what you have got to do? You are going to have to decide whether you are going to follow the Word of God or you are going to follow your dad." And I said, "And that is a tough position to be in." He stayed a little while and then he come back. Now keep in mind, this was a man who was the president of the Bible College right here in Kansas City. If I told you your name, some of them would probably know him, but I am not.

About six weeks later, maybe a couple of months later, his boy came back in and I could tell the boy had changed. He brought with me and he said, "I want to show you a book." And he said, "I want you to explain all of these to me." You know what his dad had done? His dad so hated that King James Bible. His dad so hated anybody who would tell his son that he had a Bible that he could believe and trust, not only with his soul, but with everything in his life. His dad had found him one of his books from the college that pointed out 105 mistakes in the King James Bible. At that point, I lost that kid right there. Now where I was his friend, now I am his enemy, and he wanted me to defend in 105 places why the King James Bible was wrong. You know what that kid is at today? He is out in the world. I am not sure he was even saved when I dealt with him. But I guarantee you this, he wants nothing to do with God. He wants nothing to do with anything about God or that Bible. You know why? Because someone who should have been the one to give him the Word of God and equipment with the Word of God, stripped him of it. I could give you a thousand stories just like that. Because that is the way it works in this Christian world that we have today. God wants to prepare you because He has something for you to do. Every head bowed and every eye closed. Now I am going to be done here in just a second.