

Habakkuk 1:1

Sunday 12/5/2010

The opportunity to be in places and preach in places was doing Bible conferences. I had the privilege to be in Bible conferences with some great preachers that have really done a great work for the Lord. Many of the men that we have in the bookstore back there are men that I know personally and I have preached with over the years.

Years ago, a pastor in New York, when the King James Bible controversy came to a real head (not that it isn't today), he started to have a Bible conference, and they really went from Sunday to Sunday. It was a week-long event. They must have had 60 or 70 preachers. I had preached three or four times, Dr. Ruckman had preached four or five times, and some of the guys that I personally know, Dr. Sam Gibb back there, you know him, Sam preached, and it was always a great time. Some of you had even went up there, and it kind of caught on and got around the country.

They called their Bible conference back then, because of the controversy over the Word of God and that we as Baptists were just fed up with it and we were going to stick with the Book, it coined the phrase, "The Bad Attitude Baptist Blowout." For 10 or 12, 13 years, I went to those blowouts, and they were always exciting. I mean, great preachers, and it was always a great time to get into the Bible and just spend a week filled with the Word of God. It kind of spread out from there and went to other churches.

We have not had a Bible conference here since we started our church. At some point, we are going to do that. I want to get us to the place where I just do not want to do something for the sake of doing it. But this coming New Year's Eve, I want to tell you what we are going to do. We always do something special. In years gone by, we have had to find a place to go because we were renting a building down here that we only had it two times a week, and somebody else always had it on New Year's Eve for years, and we could not have anything. So we would have to find someplace else to go or do something. But God changed all that about three years ago when He gave us our building here and gave us our own place. So we have a place to do it.

What we are going to do is, I have a sign up over there on the wall that some of you probably have already seen, that we are going to host our first annual Bad Attitude Baptist Blowout. We are going to take New Year's Eve, and we are going to do a couple of things. One of the things that we are going to do is, last year when we put our prayer groups into effect, I told you at that point that these groups, that our church had now come to the point and come to the place that we were ready to go to that next level. I also told you that, and you can get the tape and verify what I am telling you, I also told you that doing that would redefine our church and bring us to a point where everybody knew where everybody was at as far as the ministry is concerned. Because you can talk about it all you want, and you can pretend all you want, but reality is, ministry is people. You can find every excuse not to work with people. You can find every excuse not to try to help people, but legitimate Bible-based New Testament ministry is people.

I have told you this many, many times. I was taught years ago that there are only two things worth investing your life into:

1. The Word of God
2. The souls of men

For those are the only two things that are eternal and going to last for eternity. The Bible will last forever.

Matthew 24:35

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

And of course, the souls of men. That is why I told you last year that this next coming year, right now, New Year's, we would look back and we would see the results, good or bad, of where we were and the decision we made. There is no question about it that in this last year, the prayer groups have revolutionized the passion, the perspective, and the purpose for our church. It has taken this church to a different level.

That night, New Year's Eve, I want to do something that we have never done before. I want to take that night. Every other New Year's, we came, opened up our Bibles, and asked God to give us something. One year, we came and we prayed for the building that God had made available for us. We have asked Him to teach us the Bible and had Bible studies, and that is all great. This year, we are going to dedicate that New Year's Eve service totally to give back to Him. We are going to have a knockdown, drag out, blowout.

The Bible says in the Word of God in the Old Testament that the people in the Old Testament, they gave their first fruits unto the Lord. Well, we are not in the Old Testament, and I understand that, but a lot of those principles are good. So I am going to have four guys preach that night that you have never really heard before for the most part, and they are going to be our first fruit, and they are going to preach that night. We are going to build around that just like the old days. For those of you who remember the old Bible conference days when we lift the roof off with singing, we are going to have special music, we are going to have singing, we are going to just build it around, and we are going to take the time, and we are going to give God thanks to make it His night for Him for what He has given us and what He has done this last year. He has totally refashioned and redesigned our church, as I told you He would. We are not the same body of people that we were a year ago, and praise the Lord for that. Of course, it is only going to get better from this point on.

But never, never do I want to in any way, shape, or form ever take for granted or forget what God has done for us. We as a church need to pause. I know we do it every day, and I know we thank Him all the time. I am talking about dedicating one time to Him that we come that night with the express purpose. I want you to give it. If God has changed your life, fixed your marriage, done what He needs to do with your whatever, I want to give God the praise that night and the glory that night through testimony, through singing, through the preaching of the young men that God is raising up in this church and will continue to raise up. We are just going to have an absolutely great time. I have got maybe two other churches that may be coming in. I have got to have lunch with a pastor next week, and then I am going to talk to Frank about the Joplin people coming up. Wichita people are probably going to come. So we are going to make it a great time.

Remember on that board over that wall is your sign-up because I want you to bring, you put you down how many are coming. I want you to bring a dessert or some kind of finger food that we can eat later on in the evening. We are going to start at 7:00, and we are going to have a great time. So I want to separate that from everything else we have talked about in the announcements because I want that to be the thing that we pray for, pray about, and we are going to really take that night and give it to the Lord. We will be talking to you more about that.

I. The Book of Habakkuk

Now we are in the book of Habakkuk today, and believe it or not, my introduction goes right along with Habakkuk, and you will see why as we get on down through here a little bit. The name Habakkuk means "to embrace." If you are a visitor here, just so you kind of get on the same page with us, we have started coming through every book of the Bible. Our Thursday night Bible study, we take a small section of a Bible, and we talk about the outline of it. I told them that every book of the Bible in some way, shape, or form portrays who Christ is, and that is a real key in your Bible. So we are coming through each book of the Bible on Sunday morning, looking and laying out how Christ is portrayed in the Bible. You can see the tables set up across the back. Most churches do not do that. We are doing that for this session because some of the people want to get their notes in as we do it. When you come on Thursday night Bible study, you will see scores of tables set up because that is how we operate, and everybody can put their notes in the Bible. So we are coming through each book of the Old Testament, laying out those key things.

As I said, the name Habakkuk means "embrace." Christ is typified as the God of our salvation. You will find that in Habakkuk 2:4, and the New Testament principle will be found in Titus 2:11. Every book of the Bible is unique in some way, shape, or form, and Habakkuk is the great dark horse in Scripture. When you start to read the opening verses, there is no family genealogy mentioned like there are with many of them. There is no city from which he is from; it does not tell you where he is from. There is no time period mentioned when he writes. There are no kings listed who he even writes to. Nothing at all. I find that everything like that in the Bible, when it kind of is an oddity, is always something that is very significant, and we will see what that is in a little bit as we go on. But you want to make that mental note, and I put that note in my Bible there so I understand that there is something different about the book of Habakkuk as far as the absence of information about him.

When you come through this book, like all the Old Testament prophets, 95% of it is the negative preaching of God's impending coming judgment. Habakkuk is a pre-exile book. It is a book that is written right before the exile. We have studied now when we come through Kings and Chronicles on Thursday night, gave you the order of everything. You now know where this all fits with the last kings of Israel and the last kings of Judah and how to put it all together.

This book is, I think, one of the great hidden books in the Bible. There are some books in the Bible that are just kind of tucked away that it is not really apparent how much of an impact it will make on something in your life. Everybody knows that if you want to get some great scientific facts and some great deep facts about the Bible, you go to the book of Job. Everybody knows

that if you have a time of trouble and you want to find some kind of consolation and get some kind of peace, you go to the book of Psalms. There are a lot of books in the Bible that we just take for granted that are good books that lay out things that we need to know. But then within the Scriptures, there are those books that God just kind of tucks away. You have got to dig a little deeper. You have got to kind of lift them out and take them apart and see the great principles that they have. Habakkuk is a book like that.

I think personally, in my own personal life, the book of Habakkuk has been the one book that I think that I would classify for a specific area. When I talk about the book of Romans, we studied Romans, I told you how the book of Romans is dealing with a basic fundamental doctrine of what we believe as a church. We came through that. The next book we are going to go through when we finally get to that point is 2 Corinthians. I believe the book of 2 Corinthians is the handbook on ministry. I think 1 Corinthians shows you how a church is not to operate. 2 Corinthians shows you how a church should operate. There are books that do that.

Now for me, the book of Habakkuk is probably the greatest single book in the Bible of understanding the concept, the biblical concept of leadership. It is a great book on leadership, or maybe I should say on what it takes to be a leader. It lays out the concept of leadership, but at the same time, it strikes and shows us what the fatal flaw was within the nation of Israel. You have heard me say it many, many times. The nation of Israel was the greatest nation on the planet back in that period of time. God had done everything He could, from bringing them out of Abraham, growing them up, sending them down to Egypt, and now sending them out and establishing them in 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings and Chronicles, establishing them as a great nation, and then they completely fall apart. I think that when you begin to go through this, you begin to see the great failures in the nation of Israel that caused them their problems.

II. The Importance of Leadership

I am pretty much old school when it comes to things. I do not buy into a lot of the garbage that goes on in the world today and in Christianity especially. I was raised and trained that way. I know there are a lot of guys today that talk a lot about things, but I see a real lack of leadership, and leadership depends on a person's depth. I think it takes a lot of time to build leaders.

I was in the Army, as many of you were. Some of you were in the Marine Corps. That is unfortunate, but just kidding. But in the military, the worst kind of officer, in a combat situation anyhow, things have somewhat changed. But in my day, the worst kind of officer that you wanted, and an officer would lead a platoon, a company, or whatever, in small cases it would be a platoon. The worst second lieutenant you could ever have would be somebody that would just graduated from OCS. Now, OCS is Officers Candidate School. What they did was, this is different than West Point. West Point is a four-year, five-year program depending on where you go through in every aspect of military history, military tactics, and everything, and then you graduate at the West Point Academy, and it is a very prestigious thing, and they turn out a lot of good officers. So the commanding generals, probably not all of them, or the corps commanders that we have today in our Army, all of them are graduates from West Point.

But back in World War II, and in my time, they had what they called OCS, which was Officers Candidate School. When a guy would go into the military and he decided he wanted to be an officer, and they would send him to Officers Candidate School, and 90 days later, just three short months, they would send him out, and he would be a second lieutenant and be commissioned. We called them, as they did in World War II, "90-day wonders." The last thing you wanted to be was in a combat zone where you had men that were in combat, men who understood the perils of combat and understood how to survive and stay alive as best you can, and then be given a 90-day wonder who never had any combat experience at all, and you have to follow his orders, somebody is going to get killed.

My point is this: it takes a long time to build leaders. You do not build a leader in 90 days. You do not build leaders in a short period of time. I do not believe that you are born a leader. I really do not. I believe that God makes you to be one if you so desire by you going through the issues of life. I think life itself produces leadership. Some of you have went through hard times and tough times, and you have disciplined yourself to it. You have learned a lesson from it. You have grown through it. I believe that leadership will be born out of adversity. I believe that when a man or a woman comes to the point where they grow through the things that they go through, when they recognize that life's school is never over, that there is always something else to learn, and there are always mistakes to help us see and learn the way that we do it, that that is how God takes men and women and builds them to be a leader if you so desire.

I think a lot of what you see in a ministry today, very frankly, is a lot of "monkey see, monkey do." Somebody hears somebody, sees somebody's successful ministry, and they are smart enough, clever enough to parrot it and to talk the talk and pick up a few things. But the reality of it is that is not the kind of second lieutenant you want leading you into combat. You want somebody that has got some combat experience. You want somebody that knows how to read the trail, somebody how to read the signs, and you want to know exactly what the situations that you are in. That takes a while to build that kind of leadership.

I labored under two men in particular for the first 10 years of my life when I got into the ministry. I do not proclaim to be a great leader. I am not suggesting that I am in any shape or imagination. I think it took me probably under those two men, probably 10 years just to grasp the fundamentals of leadership. Building leaders does not happen overnight. It is not something that you are going to get to. It is something that you do not, I do not think you arrive to. If anything I have learned anything in life, especially in a ministry, there are no experts. I do not believe there are any experts in anything in life. I believe that we are all students, and we are just on different levels of learning. I do not think there are any experts. I know there are not in the ministry. You may find some who think there are, but there are not.

You are going to find a lot today that when Romans 8:28 says, "all things work together for good to them that love God or call according to His purpose," I believe that is a key factor in leadership. I think that when you recognize that God puts everything in your life to help you be everything that God wants you to be and allows you to make the mistake, allows you to disobey Him, He could come down and kill you on the spot or me, but He does not. You know why He does not? Because He wants us to learn from those mistakes. Now, obviously, most of the time

we do not learn from those mistakes, and our life gets very cluttered and complicated because we keep on making those mistakes. But the Bible says that all things work together for good to them that love God or are called according to His purpose. The key is, did you learn from it?

You are going to find that leadership requires a great balance between grace and truth. You have to have the truth of the Word of God, but you have to have the grace to know how to use it. I have found over the years that when young men get saved who I see have what I think is leadership potential, and even ladies. I certainly do not want to leave the ladies out because we have some great ladies who are leaders in our church, and I have had great ladies who are leaders in all my areas of ministry all my life. So I certainly do not want to leave you out. But I think that leadership has to be a balance between the grace and the truth. You cannot have any more truth than the grace that you have to use it. Because what happens is you become prideful, you become puffed up, you become full of knowledge, and everything becomes about you. It is not about what God is doing; it is about what you are doing. I see that happening in young men all the time, all my life, all my ministry, I have seen that happen. That is why it is so important to keep that balance. You do not want to get your truth out of proportion of your grace because it takes those two being able to work it to keep the balance and keep everything the way it needs to go. That is part of it.

III. Leadership in Society

I personally think that in this country, the problems we have, I think it all goes back to a failure of leadership. I really do. I think we have an absence of good leadership in this country. I think people are more impressed and more concerned about their own personal agendas, their own personal things. I think that our country has made a lot of bad decisions and a lot of choices.

I will tell you something else. I told you, I am old school. I look at things differently than most people do today. I look at things the way I grew up, and I have had the advantage that most of you young kids have not had, and some of the older folks here have had the same advantage I have had. Whether they have seen it or not, I do not know. But I have seen what the country once was to what it is today. I have actually lived through the transition from a country that understood what patriotism is, understood what core value. You want to talk about core values? I remember what core values were. Core values were June Cleaver, Ozzie and Harriet. Those are core values. That was a country where divorce was a word that I remember as a kid growing up, and in the movie magazines that my mother used to love to read, divorce was the scandal only left open to people like Elizabeth Taylor. I remember Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor and all that back and forth, five, six husbands, all of that stuff today. It is a no-brainer, man. Things have changed.

I think it was a bad thing. I think one of the things that we did to hurt our young men, I think, when we did away with the draft. I was drafted. Well, I beat the draft, I enlisted, but I got my draft papers right after I enlisted. But I think back in my day, when you turned 18, you went into the draft system, and you were going to spend, unless you got some kind of medical deference or were going to school, you had two years military obligation that you had to give back to your

country. I think that is a good thing. I really do. I do not think it would work today, but it was good in my day.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor back in December 7, 1941, the lines were so long for men to join the military because of their feel of honor to their country. It was unbelievable. This country could be attacked today. It was a 9/11, and we just try to find a political solution to it because we do not have the core values, the leadership today to be able to put that thing together. I think the volunteer army is a great thing. I do not think it lessens our army to have a volunteer army. I think probably for the way it is today, it is a better thing. But I am talking about you guys. You learn some things in the army. You learn when to get up at the right time. You cannot lay around in your bed at your mom's house and do whatever you want to do. I mean, she may stick her head in the door and say, "Honey, it is time to get up." You will not find that out in the military. I think that the discipline, the structure, it is good. I think as our country, through the leadership, I think it all just kind of fell apart.

But I am old school, you see. I look at things differently. I think we do our kids a great injustice. We are living in a society now where when your kids get into sports or some kind of challenge thing, everybody has got to win. There are no losers today. Everybody wins because we live in a society that does not want anybody to feel the pain of failure. But yet I have got to tell you something, folks. Failure is part of life. When you take failure out of a kid's life, how is he going to learn to overcome the obstacles in life if he is always compensated when he does not come in first place or second place? I tell you what, it builds determination when you do not win all the time. It makes you work harder. It makes you examine yourself and evaluate yourself. But we have come to the idea where we have taken all of those things away from children today, and children now, everybody wins. So you know what they grow up doing? They grow up thinking that everybody deserves something.

You know what is going on in England right now? They are tearing that country apart because of the fact that the young people, college students, are rioting and burning everything they can burn simply because they want now and demanding that they should get everything free. They are demanding education, and you pay for it. They are demanding this. They do not work in Europe anyhow but 30 some hours a week, and then they get three months vacation every year. But they are being taught and trained now to demand everything. It is coming to this country. Now this message is not about solving that because I do not know how you would solve that. I think the little kid in the elementary division had the best answer. Maybe we ought to put him in charge. But it is coming to this country, and it is coming to this country because we have taught our children. We have taught our generations now that nothing is, you do not work for anything anymore. Everything comes to you on a silver platter. You cannot lose, and you are given some kind of reward even for failure, and I think that has destroyed any chance of good leadership. I think our country is suffering because of that. I really do.

I am old school. You know what I think? I believe this is so inherently ingrained in me and every fiber in my body. There are things that I believe about the Bible that I will just shrug and say, "That is okay." There are things that I say, "Yeah, I really believe that." But there are things that are so ingrained in me because of the way I am and the way I was trained and the air I came out

of that I will just never change, and I will die. Most people, they will say goodbye to everybody when they die their last breath. I will quote this out my dying breath because I believe it so much. You know what it is? It is a simple little quote. I believe this: everything, and I mean everything in life, rises and falls on leadership. Everything, everything.

I know it was true in the nation of Israel. That is the issue Habakkuk had. We are going to look at it here in a minute. The leaders of the nation of Israel that God had chosen to be the leaders that was going to carry them through, they failed the nation of Israel. They failed the nation of Israel. I mean, we saw it in 1 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles when God established the kings and the prophets. You know what He did before that? Before that, He had the judges. Before that, He had Joshua and Caleb. Before that, He gave them Moses. You know who those people were? They were leaders. In every case except Joshua, Caleb, and Moses, the leadership failed. But when the nation of Israel went down into captivity, when the nation of Israel fell apart, and this is what Habakkuk is writing about and all the prophets are. When the nation of Israel went down the tubes fundamentally, the baseline, the single biggest issue that got them and destroyed them was simply one concept: the leadership failed in carrying out to the people what God gave them to do. I believe that everything rises and falls on leadership.

IV. Leadership in the Church and Family

I believe it is also true of the New Testament church. I believe in Ephesians 4:11, He says it very clearly.

Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

You see what that is? Those are leaders. Any church, this church, this is why my emphasis is in this church is to build, take men and women. I mean, every man and woman in this room, anybody who sticks their nose in the door that shows any kind of sign of leadership. I mean, comb the crowd for every man and every woman who have the basic fundamental traits that you look for that you can develop and bring through and give them the traits of being a good leader. That is why in the church we have the concept of pastors and elders.

The book of Habakkuk, as I said, shows us the real fundamental problem with the Nation of Israel. The book is about failed leadership of that country. But just as easily, it could be about this country or any country. It could be about this church or any church, or it could be about any home or your home because, as I already stated, everything rises and falls on the leadership or the lack of it. The lack of leadership will always destroy any organization that has to have a structure to it.

You will find in the Bible that God ordained three institutions. We have talked about this before. Those three institutions are the three things that God put into play that have a structure. Of course, the first one that He did was civil government. We studied this in the book of Romans,

and I showed you how that in Romans 13, that is the great chapter on how we relate to our civil government.

I like to read great books about great men. I could get lost in a book. I really enjoy biographies about men who were faced with insurmountable odds, who were faced with things that the average person would never get through, and yet they find whatever it takes to get through that, to get them through. I think that is some of the most insightful information that I enjoy reading them so much. I really do. Whether they are saved or they are lost. I believe that you can learn a lot about courage and a lot about leadership because leadership principles for unsaved people, they just basically steal them from Christianity and put them in the world. But I think it is the same.

Most of you saw the movie, and most of you probably never read the book, but a while back they came out a movie that was called *We Were Soldiers*. Most people saw the movie, and most people did not even know who Hal Moore was. Hal Moore was one of the greatest military men in the 20th century as far as the leader is concerned. Hal Moore was the commanding officer of that 7th Cavalry that would drop down there in Vietnam, and I was in the military shortly after that time, and the stories were legends. I read the book, *We Were Once Young and Soldiers*. That is the name of the book. It is incredible. The men in that company saw him and recognized that he was their leader. He cared for his men. Those men would do anything for him because they understood that he cared for them. Some of the greatest material on leadership you will ever find.

I enjoyed reading the book a number of years ago called *The Patton Papers* that had to do with probably my own personal feelings, probably the greatest general that this country has ever had in the last century, General George Patton. Always flamboyant, egotistical, absolutely. But boy, the term "Let George do it" got started with Patton. It is incredible the leadership skills that you can read and glean. I do not agree with everything they do. I certainly do not agree with everything that they, the way they handle things. But they were leaders. They were leaders. Another great biography is about Admiral Halsey, which I think they did not call him "Bull" for nothing. He was a great leader in everything that he did. I think the biography on John F. Kennedy, and I did not care for John F. Kennedy. I think John F. Kennedy had a lot of issues and a lot of problems. But he was a great leader when it came to taking the responsibility for things, and it was an incredible thing.

I like the Christian ones. I told you last Thursday night in church history, Dallas Billington's book *God is Real*. You will find leadership principles personified by reading that one little simple book that is just incredible about the fact of how a man came up from Kentucky into Akron, Ohio, and built a church with absolutely nothing and built it on the single concept that he believed that God was real. We have a book in our bookstore back there by Dr. Ruckman, *The Full Cup*. I do not know of a greater book for any young man or any young gal who is thinking about the ministry of understanding the inside of the ups and the downs and not the glorified side of it but the dead dog side of it of the things that you go through to serve God in that book. Incredible book.

The issues in our country are very simple to grasp. There is no leadership in the core values that made this country great. Nobody will be unpopular to make the hard decisions today. We try to please everybody. No one is willing to lead us out of our problems. That was Israel's problem. Israel had fell into a lackadaisical attitude where they just simply did not have the leadership. They dumped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The leadership dumped the message of God, the Word of God, and then came down and persecuted the messenger of God when God sent him a message.

I think it is true with Christianity today. No group of people are more dependent on solid leadership than the church. The Bible says they are likened to sheep that are in need of a good shepherd. We have studied in church history how that we have seen how that the leadership in every period of church history have failed. We saw the church at Ephesus over there in our chart. Ephesus means "fully purposed," the church of the early church of the first couple of centuries. Ephesus means "fully purposed." They had everything to do the job that God had called them to do, and what happened? The Bible tells you in Revelation 2, they left their first love, which was the Word of God. You know how they left their first love? They were led away from it by the leadership of the church. We already come up to the end, number seven, the Laodicean church where you and I live today. We are in the Laodicean church, and we find today that as with the nation of Israel, and as with our country, the fundamental problem today is the fact that there is no leadership.

We have pastors who have an inability to minister. You know what they do? It is the standard operating procedure. When a pastor does not know what he is doing and he makes a lot of dumb mistakes, you know what he does? He blames it on the people instead of taking responsibility for himself. That is the game today. Let me tell you something. Let me tell you very clearly. If this church ever goes belly up or this church ever fails or ever falters or ever falls flat on its face, it will simply not be anybody's problem in here but mine. It will not be something you did. It will be something either I did or I failed to do. Somebody says, "Well, you have people in your church that will cause you problems." Then you as the leader need to kick them through the goalposts of life if that is what needs to be. Everything comes back on leadership. You allow the problem to exist and destroy something in your church? That is you, not them. You already know people are going to have problems. You already know people are going to cause problems. You allow it to go on because you do not have the guts to deal with it? That is a leadership problem. I will never point at anybody in this church that said, "You messed up my church." If you mess it up or it gets messed up, it is because I allowed it to be messed up. Everything rises and falls on leadership. I believe that. Blaming your people for your inabilities, it just cannot happen.

I believe the next thing that God ordained was our families. The failure of families today is without a doubt at epidemic proportions in our country. It is hard to find someone who has not been touched in some way by a broken family or not part of it themselves. Yet I will tell you very clearly on the authority of the Word of God, marriage and families fail 100% of the time. Now, you are not going to like this, but that is all right. Marriages fail 100% of the time for one basic fundamental problem: that is a lack of godly male leadership in that family. Zach is not here today. I guess I will not get an amen. 100% of the time marriages fail because the husband fails

to be the spiritual leader that he should be because everything rises and falls on leadership, everything. As a husband, if you are saved, you are to lead your family spiritually. Just like I cannot blame, I cannot blame this church's failure on anybody in this church. We have to take the responsibility for our families as spiritual men and women.

The Bible says, husbands, that Bible says a great verse over there in Colossians 3:19.

Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Now that is a great verse. Why would the Bible say, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them"? I will tell you why. Because a husband has no reason to be bitter at his wife. "Well, she did this or she did that or she said this or she is this way." No, you got it wrong. She is exactly what you led her to be spiritually. Mirror, mirror on the wall, I look at my wife, and I see why we are going to fall. It is your fault. She is the mirrored image of your spiritual life because that is the way God designed it. It will not work any other way. That is why the Bible says as a husband, you have no reason to be bitter at your wife. She is what you made her to be because you are the leader.

If you are a dead-end church, if you are a church that is lackadaisical, if you are a church that will not care about people, if you are a church that will not give anything, if you are a church that will not get into your Bible, if you are a church that will not win people to Christ, whose fault is that? That is my fault. It is not your fault. It is my fault for not standing behind that pulpit and preaching the Word of God and letting the Holy Spirit of God convict us to do what God wants us to do. Never anybody's fault. Everything, and I mean everything, rises and falls on leadership.

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 5:8, not providing for your family, and that can be financially or leadership-wise, but not providing for your family, the Bible says you have defied the faith, and you are worse than an infidel. Hey, look, you may want to blame it on everybody else. You may want to blame it on circumstances. You may want to blame your failure of your marriage and your relationship. You may want to blame it on everybody else in the world fundamentally. You cannot get away from it. It comes right back to the fact everything rises and falls on leadership. That is why Israel failed. That is why this country is failing. That is why marriage is failing, and that is why churches fail. The book of Habakkuk shows us how to stop that.

Hey, you give me a couple with problems. I do not care who you are. I do not care what the problems are. You give me a couple with problems, and then give me a husband that will take the responsibility of failed leadership and do what he needs to do to fix it and do what is right with it, and I guarantee you, you will get it fixed. I told you before in the Gospels, there was never in any scenario in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were any woman ever rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. Men did it all the time. There was never one place in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John where a woman ever rejected who He was. Do you know why that is? Because she saw in Him everything a woman looks for in a man, and He was the perfect one. You want leadership? Then start doing what He did. It is built on a personal, intimate relationship with Him. She said, "Well, she will not follow me. I tried to lead." You cannot lead with a beer in one hand, a cigarette in the

other, and a receipt for the Hooters. No wonder she will not follow you. I would not follow you either.

V. Learning from Failure

Now let us look at Habakkuk 1. Somebody asked me something one time, a long time ago. They asked me why the Bible lists the terrible sin that it does in a book that is supposed to be about everything being holy. I thought that was a really good question. The reason that is is because one of the greatest things you learn about learning the Bible is that word that I have told you many, many times, the word "contrast." God does list the failures, the sins, and some despicable shape or form in the Bible. He does that to show you not only what the person got into, but that Bible will show you how he got into it. In many cases, it will show you how he got out of it. In many cases, it will show you what happened to it when he did not get out of it. In other words, the Bible is a great book on models because you can learn to be better at whatever you do by looking at failure.

In this particular case in leadership, if you want to be a good leader, if you want to be the right kind of leader, then you know what you do? Then go back in history and learn the lessons of history because they are all connected. You find out why Israel failed, why the church failed, and you take those things and apply them into your life, and then start to work at you do not fail, you will get the thing done. You will get something accomplished.

My ministry, the first 20 years of my ministry, was built around two men. One was the greatest pastor in the world, as far as I was concerned. The other one was the worst pastor I had ever saw in my life. One of them loved the Word of God with a passion. The other one had a disdain for the Word of God. One of them loved and his life was filled with people and young men that he put into ministry. The other one wanted to shun anybody that did not have a lot of money. I grew up as a young man when I just got into the ministry, but what I learned by contrasting the best with the worst was absolutely invaluable in my ministerial experience. You know why? Because I can learn from when somebody does something wrong just as I can learn from when they do right. Most people cannot do that. Most people do not have the ability to see that. Boy, that is so true.

Now, let us start to look at the book of Habakkuk here. We have laid out the problem. We now know that leadership is the number one issue. We know now that leaders are not made. They are not born a leader. It is the circumstances of life and how you deal with it. I tell people all the time. People start whining to me about the tough time they have in life, and I realize that some of them are very tough. But let me tell you something. You are not responsible. You are not responsible in many cases for the bad things that happen to you in life. Life will deal you some bad cards just by the hand you have got to play. Now, I understand in saying that, that you put yourself in situations sometimes that causes you bad problems. Throw that away right now. You in life are going to have some problems. Many times you are not responsible for the bad things that happen to you in life. But let me say this to you. But you are responsible how you deal with them with the Word of God. And there lies the secret to leadership. God will take the bad things in your life as long as the good things and mold you as long as you follow this process.

Now, I am going to give you a process. You will understand a little bit better why I do things the way I do around here. If you ever get to the place where you are in ministry some point or you have a church down the line, you will have a better understanding of how you have got to do it.

VI. The Burden and Vision of a Leader

Now look at Habakkuk 1:1.

Habakkuk 1:1

The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

Obviously, the first thing a leader has to have is a burden. Leading without a burden will get you nowhere. But you have to make sure it is the right burden. There is a lot of burden around today that I do not believe that pastors have. I do not believe it has anything to do with. Some guy goes out there and has a \$60 million building or an \$80 million building or a \$100 million building, and he puts that burden on his people. You know what I think? I do not think that is God's burden at all. I think that is your burden, and you want to put that burden that was yours on God's people. You know why? That is why you have got to beg for money. Why would you say that? Because I know a guy by the name of George Mueller that lived in the middle of the 1800s that was in England that had absolutely nothing, and he prayed in without ever going to anybody over \$10 million to build over 300 orphanages. That is why. J. Frank Norris raised \$5 million in a depression, which would be like \$500 million today. So I know that God pays the tab when it is His burden. You do not ever see God's people running around begging for money. Hey, if this is God's church, then it is God's church. You never see me get up here and say, "Now you have got to get, I will close the doors next week if you do not pay for it." I do not care. You are not going to see God's people begging. "Oh, please give. Please this." That is when it is your burden. If this is God's burden and God's work, then He is obligated to pay for it. That is not my job. My job is getting in your face. That is my job. Like that old song, "We got something going on." Yeah, we do. Like ugly on an ape. You have got to have a burden.

Now let me define that for you. I think Habakkuk 1:1 is one of the greatest single verses in the Bible personally because it says, "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see." See, now that is a great key. You want to mark that in your Bible. He just did not have a burden. It does not tell you that. He saw the burden. He did not just have it. Anybody can get a burden. The question is, do you see God's burden in your life for this church today? That is the question. If you cannot see it, you will never carry it. I think that is one of the most tremendous verses in all the Bible. He just did not have a burden about something. He saw God's burden, and that became his burden. Probably with most of God's people today, I am not saying they do not want to have a burden, but they will never get a burden because they do not take the time to get a relationship with God that He can show him that burden. Everybody thinks the idea of a burden is some hokey-pokey spiritual mysterious thing that, "Whoa, what is that?" It is the most plainest thing in the Bible, but it was the fatal flaw with the nation of Israel's leadership. They lost sight of God and God's burden.

Let me ask you a question. Do not answer this. Is it a burden today? Is it God's burden or is it your burden? Do you even know what God's burden is? Can you see it? Are you so, in your personal life, are you so cluttered up with your own burdens? You cannot ever get to God's. That is Christianity today. Well, God wants to clear it off. He wants to make a path. He wants to allow you to see, not just have it, see the burden. That is what Habakkuk did. You see, the real issue with God's people today is real simple. You have people who see what God sees, and then you have people who cannot, they will not, or they do not want to see what God's burden is. As a leader of a church, any church, particularly this church, we must learn the lessons of history and never lose sight of God's burden in what He wants us to do. Ladies and gentlemen, in a nutshell, that is the job of a pastor. That is his fundamental role. As God chose him to be the head and be the leader, his job is to lead the church in that burden and in that vision. Building a \$60 million or \$150 million sound system or going out and doing all that is not God's burden. God's burden is that Book and the lives of people. I would not care if we met in a tent. I would not care if we met in a blank field someplace. I would not care what it was. I would not care if it was a dilapidated warehouse. I would not care. The beauty and the splendor of God's church is not the stupid building or the steeple or the bells or the whistles or the this. It is the Book that you have got, and that is the beauty of any church. My job is to transfer the burden that God has given me that I have in my heart that He has shown me and to put that burden into your heart. Now, how does that happen? Well, it happens by learning the book of Habakkuk. These great truths today by the failure of the leaders of the nation of Israel that we do not make the same mistakes.

I want you to look at Habakkuk 2. Let us begin to look at this for a moment here. I want to look at the first three verses.

Habakkuk 2:1-3

1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

The first thing we have already looked at, and that was the fact that they failed to see God's burden. But in Habakkuk 2, we see the second thing that they failed to do, and that we as leaders must do. Here you are going to notice that the burden is now called a vision. Ah, see, it is manifested itself. That is what God does. God will put something in your heart, and He will take the principles, the preaching, the teaching, or somebody else in your life, and He will take that burden and in time will clarify it into a vision. I do not mean a vision like you wake up in the middle of the night and a star dancing around your head. No, your child left on his little protractor that puts the stars around there. I am not talking about that. I am not talking about you drive down the road, and there is a billboard, and you see this. That is it. No, I am not talking about that. I am talking about that through the preaching and the teaching and your time in that Book, God takes the burden. I have people come to me on a time saying, "God, Bob, I have got

something in my heart that God wants me back. I do not know what it is." You know what that means? God has given you the burden. He just has not translated into a vision yet. It will come. My job through the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God is to get the burden that God has given me that I see and get it to you.

Now, I want you to see this. The second thing here is this: "I will stand upon my watch on a tower." One of the greatest things you will ever study in the Bible is the concept of a tower. One of the greatest concepts found in Song of Solomon 4:4, which is the Tower of David. Sometimes it is referred to over there as you will find that in Psalms 61:3, "a strong tower." Sometimes it is in Psalms 18:2, where it will be "a high tower." But it always has the same concept. It is a concept of, and most people get it wrong. They think that we are to stand on a watch on a tower to watch the enemy coming. Well, that is in the Bible. They did do that in the Old Testament, but that is not what it is talking about here. No, here it is talking about leaders standing upon a watch on a wall looking to see what God will say unto them and then what God wants them to do. It is about paying attention to God's detail in your life and my life.

You know what? We need Christian leaders that stand on their watch in a high tower. See, that tower gets you up above all the things of this life and this world. The greatest example of that is we just finished deer season. I think it is on in Kansas that just finished in Missouri. Most guys who hunt deer will get in a deer stand. The reason why they do that is because if you hunt deer on the ground, it is all one-dimensional. They will smell you long before you see them. But when you get up in a deer stand, even 10 or 15 feet off the ground, the dimensions of it change. Now you have a three-dimensional aspect to it. Now you are not just looking on a plain level. You are looking up and you are looking down in a panoramic view, and you can see much clearer. You know why? Because when you are down on the ground, you have got to look through the brush, the trees, the weeds. When you are on the deer stand, you are above all of that. Right now, in a one-dimensional Christianity, you look at life, all you see is the weeds, the clutter, the trees, and the trash. You have got to get up higher than that, above the clutter where you can see clearly what God wants to say to you. In other words, you have got to separate yourself from the world. You have got to get yourself up away from all of this stuff that you can see the things of God and what He has for you without all the clutter of this life.

Ever been in an airplane at nighttime or even during the day, and you are flying, and those jetliners fly at about 35,000 feet? Ever been up there at night and said, "I have a window seat," and you turn all the lights out, everybody is sleeping, boy, you put that thing down, look out there. I mean, the brilliance of those stars are just absolutely knock your eyeballs out. You get up in the daytime, you almost have got to have sunglasses on. The sun is so brilliant. You know why? Because at 35,000 feet, you are much higher than all the dirt and grime you have got to look through when you walk down here. That is the high tower He wants you on. That is the Tower of David. That is where He wants you to stand your watch, not to look for the enemy, but that you can get away from the clutter of this life to see and hear what God wants to say to you. Oh, it is incredible stuff.

Israel's leaders failed their people. They failed to stand and watch on the Tower of what God wanted them to see and what He wanted to say to them. Today, it is the same way with most

churches, and that is why there is no leadership. Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." This is the problem that we have. It is the same thing with families. Fathers have failed to provide a vision for their families, for their wife, their children, not standing on a tower, listening to what God says, and then translating it down to their own family, giving them the vision of God in their life. You ought to have a vision for your child. You ought to have a vision for your wife and your family. I do not mean the vision is that she just does whatever you tell her to do. You ought to have a vision as a leader in your family for your children. You ought to take the things in their life that are problems and help use that as a good learning tool in their schoolwork, in their social environment, in disciplining them, in sports or whatever they do, and certainly in their failures in life, and certainly in what God has for them. Most parents are oblivious to what it even means to be leaders and provide for their children a vision. It is true in churches, it is true in families, it is true in this country, and it was true in the nation of Israel. That is why Habakkuk laid it out what he did.

You know, I thank God every day, I really do, for the men and the women in this church that have seen God's burden with me and caught the vision of what we are supposed to do. I really do. I put up with a lot of things, but I will tell you one thing I always have a tough time with. I was preaching years ago, many, many years ago, and I was preaching, and a guy came to church every Sunday, every night I was preaching, and he was an NCO, he was in the Army, it was down by Fort Leavenworth someplace, and he would come every night, and he would go right off the base, and he would come over. He sat down through there, and he sat right in the front row. I preached my heart out every night. I have always had a burden for guys like that. I figure they give so much to the country, and they sacrifice so much. Boy, what a thing to be somebody like that and a sacrifice, all that you do for your country, and then miss out on the greatest sacrifice God ever made for mankind. I mean, it burdened my heart. I preached my heart out. I have got to confess to you, I tell you all the time when I preach, I just preach to everybody, but that was not true that week. I put that old boy in my heart, and I preached to him. He did not know it or maybe did not know it, I do not know, I preached to him. Every night I did, I put it to him, boy, without ever putting it to him. I just asked God to let him have it, and he was getting under conviction. I watched it go Monday night or Sunday night, and nothing. Monday night, I really got a burden for him, and I preached nothing. I preached on a letter from hell on Tuesday night, and I talked a lot of military stuff about Audie Murphy and all that thing back there in his movie, **To Hell and Back**, and he made the correlation, you know, that is a great movie, but you do not get to hell and back. When you go to hell, you say, "Well, I put it to him." I told about the guy that was flying, that worked down at Pensacola Air Station years ago, and an F-111 was coming into our landing, and it crashed, and the fire crews went out, and this kid worked on the fire crew, and he was at a fellowship, Christian, saved at a fellowship, and he ran out there, and that plane was engulfed, and all the magnesium and the rockets were going off, and it was fully armed, and a 40 millimeter and twin men were popping off everywhere, and he said, "We got 200 yards to that. We got 100 yards, we could not get any closer," and he said, "We started arcing that spray up over there," and he said, "Over the roar and the fire and the popping, you could hear a guy screaming, 'Cut off my legs, cut off my legs!'" He said, "We could not get to him, he burned to death." And I told the old story down there, and I said, "Now let me ask you a question. If a 20th century educated man who flies F-111 jets would be in a situation where he is

burning to death and would scream his lungs out for you to cut his legs off to keep him from burning, what do you be doing to keep him going that place called hell?" I put it to him. Nothing happened on Tuesday night. I felt like I preached a letter from hell again the rest of the week, but I did not.

Finally, on Friday night, the last night, I gave the invitation. That old boy came down, and I got a, I come down there, and I did not really pay much attention to it before that, but the left side of his chest looked like an Army Navy store. He had a combat infantry badge, he had parachute jump master wings on. He had been in Korea, he had been in Vietnam, he had seen some stuff. I took him aside back there, we got in a room back there, and I wanted to deal with this with myself. I said, "I said, pal, I have been praying for you every night." He said, "I know you have." He just broke it down. I said, "I have got to ask you a question." He said, "I need to get saved." I said, "I am going to lead you to Christ here in a minute." I said, "I know." He said, "Oh, I want to get saved right now." I said, "All right." So I led him to Christ first. He was afraid that rapture was going to come while I was talking to him, he would not make it when he got this close. So I said, "All right." I said, "Sorry," I said, "Let me ask you a question." I said, "I watched you every night. And I said, you were shaking a couple of those nights. Why did you wait till the last night?" He said, "Brother Bob," he says, "I will tell you, man." He said, "I have been into combat." He said, "I took out machine gun nests with hand grenades." He said, "I have attacked things, and I have led guys all my life." He said, "But the thought of coming down in front of all those women and children just unnerved me, I could not do it." I said, "Well, I am glad you did." You know what it takes? It takes courage. You know what impresses me? Men who have courage to stand for God. It takes a lot to impress me. I do not need to be impressed, and you should not worry about impressing me, but I am just telling you. I love men who, I like men who are not cowards. I do. I do not leave the women out. I like gutsy women. I do not like feminine women. I mean, you know what I mean? You have got to look nice, you know? You have got to look beautiful. But, I mean, you ought to be able to swing a rifle with a bayonet on it and put the guy to the ground, you know? I mean, "Wah, wah, wah, wah. Do you like some cookies and milk for that?" No, that is what I am talking about, you know? I think you have got to have courage to stand for God.

You know, you are laboring a church and a ministry for a long time, years, you know, like we have been here now almost eight. You get to see the fruit of some things. I will tell you, I see the, in many of your lives, not most of your lives, many of your lives, I see it pay off. I see some of you people that you are not fooled by anybody. Boy, you can read a phony just like that. I get people who are working with people, you know, and you call me up on the phone, and you are working with somebody, and I am going to, I am formalizing in my head, and I am going to tell you what you are doing, and you tell me what you did, and it is exactly what I had told you to do. You are learning the principles, you see? There is nothing more gratifying to any pastor to know that what he is doing, even though it does not seem like it sometimes, is paying off to the point where you are growing and you are understanding the concept of leadership. Yet I understand you are human, and you make mistakes. I mean, I start naming off names, which I would never do, but if I just start naming out names, sure afterwards somebody will come up and say, "Well, let me tell you about her," and "Let me tell you about them," and, "You know, they are not who

you think they are." And I understand they are all human. I really do. I had a buddy in the ministry one time who made a wonderful comment about some guy who was doing something in the bus ministry and gave him recognition, and somebody came up afterwards and said, "Well, let me tell you about him, pastor." And you know what the pastor said? He said, "Well, let me just tell you something. I do not know about that. I just like, I just know I like what he does for the Lord better than what you do not do." That is what it is. We all put our pants on the same way. We are all human. We all make mistakes. The bottom line is, where is your burden at? What do you see today?

I told you a couple of weeks ago, there are three types of Christians in every church. You have them.

3. You have those who know what is happening. They make things happen. They have God's burden, God's vision.
4. You have those who stand around and watch what is happening. They do not have any clue what is going on.
5. Then you have those that stand around and complain about what is happening.

You say, "Now, that is just the way it goes. That is just the way it is." God, hey, God does not put you into one of those categories. You know that? You put yourself in it. Look around you. Get your head squared away. This is not some social club. This is not some fellowship where we all just get together. You know what this is? It is a fight. We are in a fight. Why will you not get in the fight?

Now, I do not believe for a second if you went home for Thanksgiving or Christmas, and you took your mom and your dad out for some place, you know, and you are walking down the street, and somebody comes up and knocks your dad down and starts to pound him into the ground. I have a hard time believing that you are going to stand there and just watch that happen. You know what you are going to do? You are going to get in the fight. You may die in the process. He may be bigger than you. He may have a gun. He may have a knife, but you are going to get in the fight. Well, I have got some news for you. The world is dumping on your Father spiritually. They are making fun of Him. They are laughing at Him. They are denying Him. Get in the fight. We are in a fight. This is not some social club. Oh, we have a lot of fun. We do a lot of fun things. Never lose sight. We are in a fight about our Father. The world wants to spit in His face, and I, for one, am not going to let it happen without getting in the fight. That is what we are in, folks.

Boy, do I like the rest of Habakkuk 2:1.

Habakkuk 2:1

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

Wow, what a great truth. You see, this burden and the grasp, this vision, there will have to be some things God has to change about us. You have to be transformed into a leader. You redefine yourself, and there will be things in your life that you, through the preaching and through your own personal time with God, He will reprove you on. I tell you all the time, you want to change

your family? Change yourself. You want to change anything about your church? Change yourself because everything rises and falls on leadership. Nothing, and I mean nothing, defines us as God's children and our relationship with Him better than when we get reprov'd and how we respond to it.

In ministry all of my life, most of God's people will love you, will love you, and love you. "Oh, pastor, I love you," right up to the point when you have got to deal with them on an issue. That is as phony as a \$3 bill. Nothing defines you and me as God's child in our relationship with Him better than we have to respond and how we get reprov'd. The unwillingness to make effective changes in our life. That is why pastors can never have superstar status. They get to the point where they get everything they want, and they live beyond their people. They live higher than their people. You cannot get to them anymore. They lose the concept that we are in a fight. They lose the concept that we are not supposed to have some Taj Mahal. We are going to have a barracks. We are in a fight. We are a frontline infantry company. We are in a fight.

Hal Moore said when he gave his speech before they went into combat, he called that company together, and he said this. He said, "You know what? It is in the movie, but it is in the book." He said this. He says, "I cannot promise that not only all of you will come back home." He says, "I cannot promise that I can bring you all back alive. Some of us are going to have to die." But he says, "I promise you as your commander in chief, my boots will be the first on the ground and the last to leave." That is leadership. You guys would follow him into hell with a squirt gun without any water. That is leadership.

I am telling you right now in ministry, God's people will love you right up to the point where you have got to deal with them on an issue, and then boy, you will find out what they are made of. Now he says, you stand on a watch on a wall, not just to hear what God is going to say. You get on that tower up from the world to find out what you have got to change about yourself and still be a leader. Oh, there is the top part right there. "Oh, I will be a leader as long as I do not have to change anything." "Oh, I will be a leader. I just will not minister to my wife or minister to my kids, but I will let everybody else see how great I am." That will not work. The unwillingness to make effective changes in our lives.

Now the third and final thing, you say, "Amen, final." I love that word. So far it has been real simple. You see God's burden, then you translate it into God's vision, and then the pastor affects as many people with it in his church as he can through the preaching of the Word of God, the God of our salvation. That is the theme. What does that mean? It means that He is the God of our salvation. It means it does not stop when you get saved. He has a mission. He has a message. He has a burden and a vision. He has something that He wants you to do.

Look at Habakkuk 2:2-3.

Habakkuk 2:2-3

2 And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

"Write the vision." I think that is one of the failures of our modern-day politicians. Obama in particular, and I have no axe to grind against Barack Obama. I really do not. I mean, I really could care less. I know that no matter what anybody does who was in president, this thing is over. The rapture is about to take place any second. I am ready to get out of here. You say, "Who are you going to vote for?" I am going to write in Jesus in big letters next year. That is who I am going to vote for. I am with a little kid in elementary. "Kill them all, and God sort them out." I am with you, pal. I am with you.

You know, that is the problem. You know what they, Obama has had more press conferences than any other president in recent history. You know what his number one complaint people have with him? They still do not understand what he is trying to do. I am not sure he understands what he is trying to do. But my point is a leader has to communicate. When you get up in front of somebody, you know what, you may not like me personally. You know, you may not like my style. I kid people all the time. I say, "People either love me or they hate me." And some people love to hate me. But that is the way it is. But I will tell you one problem you will never have hearing me preach anytime, anyplace. You will not hear me 15 seconds before you know exactly where I am at. Because I do not want anybody wondering. You will not leave here and say, "Gee, I wonder what he thinks about things." You know. But a guy came up three or four weeks ago, and we really railed on him. He said, "You know what, Bob? I am going to death." And he said, "You are just a great guy, and I really enjoy you. But you need to really work on something." I said, "What is that?" He said, "I think you are going to have a lot of problems in life if you keep holding back and suppressing what you are really feeling."

Hey, you know the difference between some of you? Not all of you. Not most of you. But you know what difference between? I got saved 40 some years ago, and I never got over it. You got over your salvation. Some of you got over it very quickly. Somebody in a year's time, you were past it, boy. You are right back to it. I will tell you what, I have a lot of problems. I have a lot of faults. And I am not putting myself on any pedestal, never would in any way, shape, or form. Because I will tell you what, I have a lot of issues in my life. But I will tell you one thing I never fell into. I do not care how bad it was. I never, never got over. I never got over the day He reached down and pulled my soul out of the depths of hell. Now maybe you did. I did not, and I am not going to. That is just the way it is. I have a lot of faults, but ingratitude is not one of them.

I am telling you, He says, "Write the vision." You have got to communicate it. Pastors have to do the same thing with the Word of God. They have to communicate to their people. They have to understand what it is. They have to paint it out every Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, whenever you do it. Fathers and mothers need to write the vision out for your children and your family. Pastors need to do it. The only issue you have is maybe you do not want to do it.

Then it says, "make it plain." I like this. "Make it plain upon the tables." That reminds me every Thursday night. That reminds me of setting up those tables on New Year's Eve and every time that we do it to just write those notes in your Bible, get those things done. Listen, folks, to grasp

what God is doing and wants to do, you have to make it plain. Let me just say this to you. If you have not heard anything else I have said, hear this. People grasp what God is doing and what He wants them to do, not when you just stand up here and yell at them, not when you just get up and talk about it. They have to see it in the leader's life first. If I am not in love with that Book, you will never fall in love with it. If that Book is not the number one thing in my life, I will never get it to be the number one thing in your life. In spite of that, I will probably not get it in most days. I love it. But you know what? It has to start because everything rises and falls on leadership. If I do not have the burden of God and see it, I will never communicate it to you. If I am not excited about working with people, how are you going to get it? Would you come to Sunday morning and Thursday night that if three times out of the month you came here, I am out of the golf course, and I had somebody else teach it because I had better things to do? I think not. The only way I can convey the excitement and the burden is not just to get up here and do it. It has to be in my life first. It has to be when I eat, when I sleep, when I drink, when I invest my life in, or it will never translate into yours. Even then, in the day and age that we live in, it will not get to most of you. I am not interested in most of you. I am just interested in the ones I get. That is what you build it with. I cannot change who you are. I cannot change the way you think. But brother, I know this: passion, purpose, and perspective. I cannot expect you to be excited about the Word of God if I am not doing it myself. I cannot expect you to have passion and purpose and perspective about the things of God if I do not have it first.

Then it says, "wait for it to come." Patience and long-suffering. Rome was not built in a day, and neither will you or any church that you try to build. Building strong, mature leadership will take some time. It took six years to get us where we were last New Year's Eve. I told you earlier on, this year has been a transforming year in our life. I told you, I told you last New Year's Eve that there would be people that would not be here next New Year's Eve that were here that night. I told you that as clear as anything. You know what? Because I know what happens when you take a church to the next level. But that is where we have got to go. That is what leadership does. That is what has to happen. That is why New Year's Eve, we are going to take this one. I will be very upfront with you. You know what? If you have got friends that want to invite you to one of their little worldly wine-drinking cheese tasting parties, you go right ahead because that is not the bad attitude I am looking for to have here that night. I am looking for people with a bad attitude about sin, about the people in that Book. I am looking for people that want to get in a fight because somebody is beating up on their Father, and we are going to take that night and thank God one night, one New Year's Eve. We are going to look back, and we are going to have the young men that are coming up to preach. We are going to lift the roof off this place and sing. We are going to have some testimonies, and we are basically going to give that night to God and say, "It is Yours. Praise the Lord. Thank You for what You have given us. We have taken enough from Him. Now we are going to give Him something back." It is going to be all His. All His. I would beg and whine to try to get everybody to come to Bible studies because I worked the Word of God. Let me tell you, I will just beg the opposite. Find someplace else to go if you do not have it in your heart. I would rather have four people here that are thankful to God of what He has done than a bunch of phonies just playing the deal. That is just where I am at.

"Wait for it to come." God takes a man, puts a burden in his heart, translates that burden into a vision. Then through the passion, the perspective, and the purpose and the power that God gives him, the follow the light that God gave him, God brings people to him. He knits their hearts together, not through fellowship, not through relationships, not through comradeship. Those are all important, not even through ministry. Yet they are all important. They are all part of it, but through a common unchanging theme that the burden that we see together, the burden of God and the vision that God wants us to be and do in His church.

VII. Qualities of a True Leader

You know, I have looked a lot at leadership in the Bible. I look at it differently than maybe some of you do. I look at it from a pastor standpoint. I found two men in the Bible that really picture what I call the perfect leader, but more so in my own world, perfect pastor. I do not know if you ever saw it or not. One of them is King Saul. The other one is King David.

In Isaiah 65:5, when you study Saul's life, you see this is exactly the kind of person he was. For it says in Isaiah 65:3-5:

Isaiah 65:3-5

3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

4 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

That was Saul. Saul wanted to be the king, but he did not want to be bothered with the people. Most Christians want to go to heaven. They do not want to be bothered with people.

Then David in Jeremiah 3:14-15, it says:

Jeremiah 3:14-15

14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Now there are the two kinds of leaders. There are the two kinds of pastors. I have got a, I am going to be finished here in a minute. I have got a book at home that probably have an ongoing thing for probably 20 years. Every time I read a book, I hear something, I see something, or I hear somebody preach, and it strikes me. I put it in what I call my leadership book. It has got over 300 principles in it that I have jotted down over the last 20 years, that I read it two or three times a year, that I think are principles that hold me accountable. I never make them all, but it is

a book that shows me what a leader is that I never forget. It is an incredible thing that God showed me to do many, many years ago. I just jot things down. I jotted down about 15 or 20 of them out of the book, just went through it, because I was going through it toward the end of the year this year. I will just give you a couple of them.

It says this, a leader:

- A leader has to have the ability to bear the weight of the world on his shoulders without complaining, without whining, or letting anybody know. He just leads because he is a leader. He leads strongly, but he leads silently.
- A leader leads when nobody else can or will keep going. This is a lot why I believe Habakkuk had no family background. Nothing is given on him because a leader can be a very lonely place.
- A leader makes hard decisions when they are not popular or politically correct. Sometimes you have to make decisions as a leader that affects your friends, affects relationships, or affects your own family. There is an old saying that is very popular, "The blood is thicker than water." We use that, I think, in the wrong term. I think originally that was a biblical phrase that the world turned around, because water in the Bible is a picture of your first birth. But blood in the Bible is a picture of Christ's second birth that He died on the cross for you. I really believe that Christ's blood ought to override any personal friendship, family decision that has to be made when it is the biblical right decision. But that is leadership.
- A leader stands for God when nobody else will. In doing so, so some can see and find God's truth, the light that shines in a dark place.
- A leader is compassionate and caring, but always never wavering on the truth of the Word of God. This is where I got the little phrase that I gave you a while back, that it is never right to do wrong to get the chance to do right.
- A leader nevertheless the circumstances around him influence his decision. He makes them by principles.
- A leader never rebukes without the ability to restore, always following the pattern of God with the nation of Israel.
- A leader carries no grudges.
- A leader has no room for unforgiveness.
- A leader always only wants God to get the honor and glory out of everything in his life.
- A leader never blames the failures of what he is on other people. This is the failure that we have.

JFK said it in his great book. JFK got bamboozled into the Bay of Pigs. Now the Bay of Pigs was not the parking lot of Arthur Bryant. The Bay of Pigs is in Cuba. Back in the 60s, the CIA pulled together a coup to try to overthrow Castro in Cuba. They told JFK only enough that he wanted to know, he approved it, and then they went in. They did not tell him that it was going to be a full-scale war with the United States invading Cuba. Well, the pro-Castro forces went ashore into Cuba, and they got pinned down. The only thing that could save them was that if the president authorized the U.S. carriers to put their air support in and send Marines on shore. When JFK found out that he had been bamboozled, he refused to do it. All of those pro-Castro Cubans that

went in there that got taken prisoner and were captured and tortured and never seen again. CIA hated Kennedy for it. Kennedy did not blame anybody. I still have a copy. You can still see it on some of the newscasts. You know what he did? He gave a national speech that night, and he talked about the Bay of Pigs, and he said this. Greatest statement, one of the greatest I ever heard. He says, "Success has many fathers. But failure is always an orphan." Boy, that is true. You cannot blame your failures on anybody else. If your family fails, it is because you failed to be a leader. If my church fails, it is because I failed to be the leader. If this country fails, it is a failure of leadership.

- A leader never takes things personal because he understands. He is doing God's work in a world, Christian world, much like the prophets in Israel. That God's people really hate God and His Word, and they will make him the target.
- A leader leads by learned discretion and discernment and using the Word of God and using them. Never flying by the seat of his pants. Always in control. Using a principle for everything he does.
- A leader always operates on biblical models and biblical principles in all that he does.
- A leader never takes the credit for what other people do or what God does.
- A leader never loses his passion, his purpose, or his perspective.
- A leader always puts himself into position to get used and abused fully knowing that God evens it out at the judgment seat of Christ because we are to be a living sacrifice.
- A leader helps people whoever they are, wherever they come from, no matter what they have done, as long as they want to do what is right and follow the Book.
- A leader never thinks or looks at himself as higher than his people. He is not lord over them, but he is just one of them.
- A leader must be willing to stand alone, but also must make sure he stands as a biblical doctrine stand and not a personal conviction.
- A leader has to have the face of flint to take the abuse and the slander and the spitting in his face.
- A leader has to have the shoulders and the arms of steel to break the mighty bows of the enemies.
- A leader has to have the thighs and the legs of pillars of marble to stand unwavering on the Book.
- But a leader has to have a heart of gold filled with grace, mercy, tenderness, and compassion.
- A leader always looks to solve problems and never looks to cause them or inflame them.

Ladies and gentlemen, at the end of the day, the failure of Israel was their leadership. A church's failure will be caused by its leadership, and families fail because of a lack of leadership. For in life and in church and in history, everything, and I mean everything, rises and falls on leadership. That is why this church has to reproduce itself in leaders. It has to continually raise the bar that we step up. We have to stay on that tower not only to see what God wants us to do but what God wants us to change about ourselves and then be willing to do it.

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Father, we do thank You and praise You for the