

## 2 Corinthians 1:12-16

Sunday 1/8/2012

Back to the book of 2 Corinthians. We had been in the book of 2 Corinthians, started it a couple of months ago, and then we had to get out of it for Christmas. We had a special thing at Christmas we talked about, and then last week we had a message that I wanted to bring to you about the New Year and try to encourage and challenge you on that. Today, we want to get back into this book. I don't know of a book that I've taught that I've been more excited about.

I think it's because of what I've already told you of where we're at as a church, learning how to minister to people, taking the examples that God has put right in front of us, and then showing you the principles of how it applies. We have learned so far that true Bible ministry—and that's a big thing today. All churches talk about ministry. All pastors are supposed to be ministers. All Christians are supposed to be ministers. What we have learned so far is that the definition of ministry is going through the sufferings of people that God has put into your life and going through the tough times that they have.

Many times we go through the things that we go through in life. I told you how that even the dumb things that we do in life, even the bad mistakes that we made in life, if a person wants to do what's right and change their life, God will take those things and let you help somebody else down the line. Sometimes you go through the suffering just for being what God wants you to be. Our suffering gives us the ability to help somebody else, to identify with their suffering.

Boy, I think the greatest verse that will ever come out of this book and the greatest concept that we'll ever use in ministry was the defining verse of ministry in 2 Corinthians 1:4, where it says:

*2 Corinthians 1:4*

*Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*

That's a great principle and a great verse. It really says everything about what ministry is. If someday, guys, if you ever step out and you pastor a church, or you get into a place where you're working in a ministry on a level of being a deacon or an elder, or whatever you go in any church, this one or whatever one, there's no better plan for a Christian, certainly no better plan for a pastor who wants to build a church and to reach people, than to become one with the people that you have through their suffering and through their tough times.

### I. The Problem with Modern Ministry

So many preachers, and I've seen this all my life, stand at the top of the stairs and yell down at everybody on the bottom landing to get up here where they're at. That's basically what most churches do and most pastors do. But the Bible teaches that the way to reach people is not to stand up there and yell at them to get up where you're at, but rather go down those stairs and put your arm around them and walk them up the stairs one step at a time. That's exactly what you have to do.

Many pastors preach you should give up some things in your life, and probably that's very true in many cases. There are some things in our life that we need to give up. Pastors are famous for preaching to people about getting rid of this, getting rid of this, dumping this, getting away from this, walking away from this, stopping this, stopping that. But the problem is that you can preach that all day long, and people probably need to give up many things in their life, but the word pastors and churches fail today is they don't have anything to give them to replace what they give up.

Oh, we talk about the Bible, we talk about a relationship with God, but you're taking somebody just coming out of the world, somebody who maybe just got saved, and just slap them on the back. I remember years ago, I was in Rochester, New York, preaching with Dr. Ruckman, in fact, in a Bible conference, and there was a number of pastors there. Back then, I was still pretty young at all this, and I learned to listen back then. I was driving someplace, and I forget, Dr. Ruckman was sitting over here, I was sitting in the back seat with him, and there were a couple of other guys up front, and they were big-time pastors. They were talking about things, and they were talking about problems in their churches.

One guy, and he was a very famous guy in fundamental circles at that time, was talking to the other pastor, and they were talking about solving problems in their church. This guy actually said, and this is the mentality back then, and it's not the mentality today, he looked at the pastor and he said, "Well, here's what I believe. I believe that if a person will just do three things, that they'll solve all the problems in their life." The pastor said, "Well, what are those three things?" And he said, "Well, it's easy. First, if they'll just come to church, if they'll start to tithe, and they'll get involved in ministry, they can solve every problem in their life."

I thought to myself as I heard him say that, I looked over to Dr. Ruckman, he just kind of winked at me. I thought, "That's the mindset today." There's nothing in there about getting into somebody's life and helping them. I can throw out a mandate about everything and say, "If you make this mandate, if you do what I'm telling you to do, you're going to really be spiritual." But that's not going to make you spiritual. I wish it was that easy. I wish you could just do three things and become spiritual, but it doesn't work that way. It never has worked that way.

The tragedy today is that most pastors really don't have a clue. They don't have a plan. I've had many of you come into my office, and you've had problems in your life and things that you were struggling with. I knew at that point when you came over that there was no way that we were going to solve your problem by just coming over and telling me what your problem is. Many of you, I've told you that when you came in, you came in with a doom and a gloom of what you're struggling with, and when you left, it was like you were a different person. Not because your problem was gone, but what you got in that hour that we sat down there is we worked out a plan that you and I, together with the people in this church, could step by step get you through that problem.

Pastors don't have plans for people today. They just want people. They want their money. They want everything they bring in, but they don't have time for them when the crunch really comes. I don't have a lot of pastor friends. Kevin and I were talking about this week when he came over. I

don't have a lot of pastor friends. Most pastors have a group that they hang out with, a little contingency of guys, to get away from it all. They get together maybe every month, two, three months.

In fact, we had a young guy that left our church here to start a church, and he called me a couple months ago and he said, "Hey, do you know this guy and this guy?" I said, "Yeah, I know those guys." He said, "Well, they're kind of driving from two different places, and we meet together, and they have invited me to come, and we just have some time when we kind of encourage each other and just kind of really get our head straight on what we're doing and just kind of really help each other and encourage each other and all of that." I didn't say anything to him, but I've been in this business for a while, and I know what those things are. I know how they work. You get together to get away from it all. Really? Get away from what? You encourage each other. No, what you do is just cry in each other's beer. That's all you do. In reality, those little sessions are just to encourage each other in their respective failures in building a church.

A couple of years ago in Kansas City, the Southern Baptist Convention had their national fellowship here in Kansas City. I remember I went down because I wanted to hear what was going on and just what they had to say, and just for nothing else better to do. They had their meeting here in Kansas City, and they all do it. They have what they call statewide fellowships where all the pastors in the state get together, and then they have a national fellowship once a year where they come from all over the country. You probably don't know this, and this is good for you not to know, because a lot of things that go on in Christianity, I'm really happy you know nothing about.

What they do is they have these little fellowship groups. The area here, and I grew up in this fellowship, no longer connected with it in any way, shape, or form, but what was commonly called a Baptist Bible Fellowship. The Baptist Bible Fellowship headquarters is in Springfield, Missouri. Baptist Bible Fellowship came into being because of the split between J. Frank Norris and Beech and Vic many, many, many years ago, and out of that came the Baptist Bible Fellowship. But there are many of them: the south side, there's north side, there's east, west, by east side, and everywhere. What they are are groups of Baptist churches, and they all, every year or a couple of times a year, get together and have their state or their national fellowship meeting.

So I went down there, and there were at least three thousand pastors here from all over the country. They came to deal with the issues that they're facing in churches today. It's kind of like the Council of Nicaea in 325, where 300 preachers showed up to determine what Christianity was going to be for all the rest of Christians. So I went down there that night because I wanted to hear this guy speak, and basically his theme was, and it was the theme of the whole week, "Why Our Churches Are Failing." So I thought, "Man, I'll get some good stuff out of this because evidently this guy is going to drop the hammer on them, and it's a big hammer, and this is going to be some good stuff."

So I went down there, and I was never more disappointed in my life. The guy got up there, and for 45 minutes—you got to be done in 45 minutes because you all got to go eat—in 45 minutes, he basically told them that the reason why churches were not growing today, and our churches

and our group were not growing today, is because nobody wants to go to church anymore. That nobody gets saved today like they used to get saved. Then he went on and he talked about how that it's not any of you guys' faults, not our fault, but the bottom line is that across this country, church attendance and churches are in decline. So even though we're feeling it now, it's okay to be that way because it's happening all over the world.

I thought to myself, "Man, what a waste of 45 minutes." You give me that 45 minutes. What a waste of 45 minutes. But that's really all they ever do. That's when little pastors get together in little groups, that's what they do. They blame their problems on the people. They'll say, "Well, it's your fault our church is not growing. It's your fault we don't have any money. It's your fault people are leaving our church." That's exactly how they operate.

I've told you many times, I'm old school in one thing, and I believe simply that everything rises and falls on leadership. I believe that with every fiber of my body. I believe that pastoring a church is a very unique thing. I think that if your church is successful, and you get growing, and you have a great, everything is going the way it's supposed to go, and people are getting saved, and people are growing, and the Spirit of God is all over the place, then if it's that kind of a success, then the pastor has really nothing to do with it. But if it's a failure, if it's absolutely a failure, then a pastor has everything to do with it. You take what I just said and chew on that for about 30 years, and maybe you'll come out a little wiser than you are today, because everything rises and falls on leadership.

Building a church today will be either the easiest thing you ever do, or it'll be the worst thing you ever do, but God lets you choose which way it's going to go. I stay as far away from that stuff as I can. My fellowship, my friends, my friends in ministry are you folks right here. It's you, my co-laborers. I'm like Paul and his boys and the people that he lists over and over and over again. We have a great time together. I don't know where on planet Earth could I go that would be more exciting than we are at and what God is doing with us right now. Every time we go to Restart, every time we do something, every time we have a volleyball, my God, a funeral yesterday turned into the most exciting evangelistic movement that I've seen in my ministry for a long time.

Everything. Why would you want to be disassociated as a pastor from what that is? Why would you want to go and mope and complain about what you don't have? The reason why they do is because there's nothing going on. I told you that, and I told you this many, many times, I told it to you some time ago, is the fact that one guy can't do it all in any church. A smart pastor will realize that, and he'll understand that the number one job of a pastor is simply to reproduce himself in his people, in his church.

You've heard me say it many, many times that a family will be exactly what the father is, and a church will be exactly what the pastor is. You want to know what kind of a man is with his relationship with God? Look at his family. You want to see what kind of a church a man has, what kind of, you want to see what kind of a pastor you have? Look at the church. It's just that simple. Why? Because everything rises and falls on leadership. Leadership is the key. But a

pastor, a smart guy that understands it, he realizes he can't do everything himself. There's no way that he's going to be able to do that. So what he does, he reproduces himself into people.

He realizes that you build a church one person at a time, one couple at a time. So he gets 30 or 40 people doing the ministry exactly the same way that he does by the book. Then in time, it grows to 60 and 70 people. The key to church growth, the key to church growth, is to get 60 to 70, or as many as you can, people who are dealing with people one on one and doing exactly what the job of the pastor should be. When you see the hand of God, you see that happening, then you see the hand of God go to work.

A couple of Thursday nights ago, somebody got a great verse out of Proverbs 11 and asked the question, verse 25. I forget who it was, but it was probably one of the greatest questions been asked in a long time. That verse in Proverbs 11:25 says:

*Proverbs 11:25*

*The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.*

I took that verse and I told you it's one of the greatest verses on ministry anywhere in the Bible, and it simply talks about the fact that the liberal soul shall be made fat. Oh, I knew it was Darren asked that question because he wanted a definition of a liberal, and I told him that that liberal definition there is not the same as a liberal that we think about in our country. The liberal soul here is somebody who gives himself to everything that God wants him to do, and when you do that, you become fat. Fat in the Bible in that sense is a good thing. It's the fatness of God. It's like having the best in your vineyard, having the best fruit, the best everything you can have, filled with a fatness of all of the blessings that God has.

Then the verse says, and it's a great verse, "and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." I talked about how watering is putting out the word of God. The thing that will make you grow, the thing that will bring you to the point where you really, really, really understand the aspect of ministry and will bring you from level to level to level in your life, is when you start teaching and putting out the word of God. You can't water without being watered yourself.

I see it all the time. The single most satisfying thing for me as a pastor is to watch you grow, as how you learn to deal with people. I have people that are working with people, and they're dealing with people, and they'll call me up on the phone and they'll say, "Hey, we got a scenario here, and this is what I did, and this is how I handled it. I just wanted to run it by you so you would know where we're at, keep you in the loop, and this is what I did, and I hope it's okay that I said it." I'd say to them, and I think to myself, "That's exactly what I would have said. That's exactly textbook the way I handled it." There's nothing else in this world that proves to me that a little bit of what I'm saying is getting into your ears and affecting your life. It's how you learn to deal with people and circumstances.

I see you taking the biblical principles and using them in the way that you're dealing with the situations that you're in, and you're seeing that now develop the second and third level people. There's always room for improvement. There'll never be a time in your life or my life when we can say, "Well, we're here now, we don't have to go any farther." No, that'll never happen. But

what happens and makes a healthy church is when God's people start actually taking what God is giving them and they start watering somebody else with that, giving them the word of God. Nothing will, I'm going to say it again, nothing will grow you faster or quicker than getting your life and your attitude focused on the word of God and then giving out the word of God and letting God grow you and teach you by what you're doing with somebody else.

When you get to this place in your life or your church, you don't have to schedule revival. You drive down the road and you say, "Revival, October 21st to November 8th." You don't have to do that because real revival is not done by scheduling. Real revival, every church that is a Bible-believing church that's on fire for God, should live in a constant state of revival. There should be so much going on and so much excitement of what God is doing, so many people and lives being changed and getting saved, that you just virtually live in a complete constant state of revival of what God is doing. But revival always starts in our hearts. Revival doesn't start by penciling in on a calendar when you write it in as a pastor in your notebook and make up your signs. God doesn't pencil in his, "Alright, in November 12th, let's send the Holy Spirit of God down there and shake them up." It doesn't work that way. But that's where we've come to in Christianity. That's what our understanding is of ministry today.

## II. Our Church's Ministry in Action

I'm telling you, I talk about the miracle of what God gave us down in our homeless ministry and our Restart. I told you that when we started that, in a year's time, that we would basically be able to do whatever He wanted to do down there. I didn't mean that boastfully. I just meant that I know how God operates in scenarios like this. Little did I know, and now it's coming out, some of the things that were behind the scenes that you hear about.

The pastor's job is to get the vision from God. That's not the deacon's job. It's not the elder's job. It's not the finance committee's job. It's the pastor's job. The pastor should have a relationship with God that God shows that man exactly what He wants that man to do. It's the pastor's job to make that vision clear to the people. Then it's the people's job to get behind a pastor and grasp that vision and fulfill that vision. It's just that simple.

Somebody asked me last week, we had our deacons on Thursday night, and somebody asked me, "What is one of the main qualifications that you look for in a deacon?" Obviously, the qualifications are found in 1 Timothy, and you use those as a general guideline. But I'll tell you, even more than that, the number one thing that I look for in men who are going to be with me in ministry, one-on-one, and help me to that level, is simply one thing: Do they see the vision that God has given me, and do they understand what that vision is? You can be a deacon and anything else in the world, and you not have the vision, and they ain't going anywhere. My job, everything rises and falls on leadership. My job is to get the vision and go with it and show you what it is. Your job is to decide if it is the right vision for you, and if it is, get on board. If it isn't, find some place where it is your vision, whether it be a 52-inch or a 60-inch or whatever the case may be.

Last Sunday night, after the last time we were at Restart, Katherine, who is the head of all the volunteer stuff, this is the second time now that she's come out to eat with us afterwards. You

guys have done a phenomenal job down there. It's a thing where we're going to even make it better, but I had no idea things were moving along so quickly. Our overall goal is, they have, and the wonder, we could have went to any place. We went to a place that has no affiliation with any religion, any church, anything at all. I said, "Here's who we want to help."

Now, we've all been connected with the City Union Mission for many, many years, and we still go down there over the third Sunday. But could you imagine going into the City Union Mission and trying to do what we do? You have to argue about losing your salvation. You have to argue about speaking in tongues. When John Baskett and I were down there trying to work out some things with them, they had us hooked up with guys that were on the street laying hands on people and casting out demons. They wanted to hook us up with that. You see, we don't have any of that fight. We have a group of people that didn't care anything about God, didn't know anything about the Bible, didn't want anything to do with church. So when God gave them to us and us to them, it was a clean slate right down the line. It was the purest field to work in because you don't have a... I'll take just good old-fashioned garden variety sinners every day over the Christian junk, but they ain't nearly as complicated.

So we went down there for a meeting, and they had a woman who was in that meeting with three or four of them. She pulled her ladies into the office before we came there, and I found this out last week, and she said, "Now look, we ain't changing nothing for this church. They're just like every other church. We ain't changing our schedule. We're not doing the thing. We're just going to keep what we're doing. They want to fit in, fine. If they don't, fine. We know how it works with churches. They come, they say they're going to do this, and we never see them again." We met with them for about an hour. After the meeting, she called those same ladies back in and she said, "Oh, give them anything they want. I think we really got something here."

So Katherine is over there, and she's eating with Jamie last Sunday night, and she says, "Whoa, you guys are certainly doing some real recruiting down here, aren't you, for your church?" Jamie says, "What are you talking about?" And she's telling me this story, and I'm thinking, "Oh boy, I already got visions of somebody in my head going around and passing out tracts, 'Come to church!'" and doing exactly what we don't want anybody to do down there. I'm sure Jamie's thinking the same thing. Jamie said, "Well, I'm not, we're not making any..." She said, "Oh yes, you are." And she said, "Well, what do you mean?" And she says, "Three or four," she named them off, "three or four, and they're high-level people, they want to come and join your church. They want to be part of your church. One of them is Jimmy that works in the kitchen." Your husband, they just, you guys have made such an impact down there, and now they're talking about, "That's the church we want to go to."

Now, this is the place that had no church just two months ago, wanted nothing to do with the Bible, had no religion. But they're not saying, "We want to go to this church, but we got to find out if they believe in speaking..." They don't know any of that stuff. They just know because they saw a bunch of people come down, not ask for a thing, and made themselves part of their suffering and what they're going through to go down and take the load off of them, to go down and feed them, to go down and be consistent with everything that we do.

Now, bottom line is this: Do I care if they come to church here? Absolutely not. Am I going to go down there and ferret them out and say, "When you come into church..."? If they never come to church, I don't care. That's not my goal. It'll happen. They'll come to the place where it'll keep moving. Now, this is only in three or four months. It'll keep moving. It'll keep going. It'll keep developing, and more people will want to come. One side down the line, maybe six months from now, a year from now, people will maybe come and can't come and try to come. It's too far. They can't make it all the time, and they really want it. You keep making an impact, and then somebody will say, "Well, really, I really like to come to your church, but we know it's a long way, and we don't have a way to get there, and but we really like what you guys do, and boy, we'd love to be part of that."

The obvious thing is going to be, "Okay, you can't come out here to us. How about if we send a group down to you?" We're already seeing it happen. You're already making a difference, an impact into their lives. You're already coming to the point where the people there who are in charge are seeing a difference. We've asked nothing from them. We've asked nothing from them. We will not ask nothing for them. Even when the people want a Bible, my goodness, they asked for a King James Bible. We have done nothing down there to promote that. We've done nothing down there to incite that. That is God's Holy Spirit working through a bunch of people who grasp the concept that ministry is giving and not getting. It is you making the personal sacrifices of your life, of going down there when you got to go to work that night, or maybe you're tired, or maybe you don't feel good, but you realize that that is the open door that God has given, and you're not going to miss it. You go into that thing, and God uses you.

We got our group, Shawn's group, that works down along the river. We had heard of the homeless camps but could not find them. Well, we have a group, and I dub them the "river rats" because that's all they do, and they have in the last four or five weeks developed a ministry down there. Folks, Shawn's got some pictures he's going to show you. He's going to get them together, and we're going to do a PowerPoint on them. But you cannot believe it. It's like stepping back into the 1800s, and we're only a mile from the city center. They're building log cabins down there. They're having little communities down there, and they're self-sufficient. You ought to see how they get their water in and how they do this and how they do that, how they heat their place. It's unbelievable. And yet it's only a mile, maybe not even a mile. It's like stepping back into the 1800s. Nobody even knows they exist, and they're all along that river area.

One of the guys that God has tied that group into was a saved man. He calls his cabin "Hope House." He does what he can to try to do, and he's one of the night, he invited us down to go fishing in the river. I'm telling you right now, six months from now, you talk about an old circuit riding ministry, when we're done with church, we'll send some teams down there and hold church services right down inside those camps. That guy will be the key. I'm telling you, just as I told you that Restart was the key to getting us into the city, guys like that, when we go down and help them, we get them what they need, we help them as best we can, we do the things for them to help them, and God develops that. This guy hears about it, this guy hears about it.

You take food down through there, and all the teams are incredible, but you guys are really developing the inward where you're just making your own things happen. Shawn called

somebody, he hasn't got a hundred rotisserie chickens last week. I looked at him, I wanted to eat one of them. Going down there and doing those kind of things and stepping outside the box, God always will bless that. Jim said it last Sunday night when he gave his testimony about him and his wife joining this church. He laid it out so clearly when he talked about that it was simply for him getting out of his comfort zone. If somebody would have told him that six months ago that he would be down there feeding the homeless and passing out this and doing that, he'd have said he was nuts.

But he's learned, he's learned through a New Testament ministry that the ministry is giving. It is reaching out. It is going down, not just screaming down there with a loudspeaker, "You guys need to get cleaned up your life and get right!" Who doesn't already know that? Somebody's got to go down there and walk them out and show them. Maybe they'll never come out of that lifestyle. Some of them have chosen that lifestyle, and that's how they want to live. Nothing wrong with that. A hundred years ago, everybody was living that way. But that doesn't mean they don't need the gospel, and that doesn't mean that we can't use any given circumstance or situation that God presents us, if we are willing to bend and yield to be able to do those things that God wants us to do. We can have an impact. We can have an impact. We can have an impact.

I watch the street teams, you guys that work down there at 16th and Sherry with those 80 some guys standing down. I drove in the other time last week and down there to see, check on things and see what was going on, and I saw the ladies over here with their tables up doing the food and the coats and all that stuff. There were our guys all stretched out along that wall just sitting there talking to those guys, making sure they had what they needed, just talking with them, just spending time with them. It wasn't, "Here, here's a hotdog, we're on our way." It was the thing that you actually sit down with them and talk to them. You dialogue with them. After a week, after a week, you get to know them by name. They get to know you.

I see it in our Wheels team there at the park, where they're week after week, and the people are coming by. In the summertime, that was a hot spot because all the homeless camps, some of them for the city, were up along the freeway. Then the groups that worked from Front Street all the way up to the Grand and down the central corridor. Add to that the prayer teams and the marital counseling and the discipleship and the one-on-one that has developed out of the prayer teams and everything that God has given us. Then we're going to get into volleyball, and that's always an impacting time with what goes on.

You see, I'm telling you, this is why I told you that 2 Corinthians is the right book to go through for where we are at as a church and what we're doing, taking what God has put right in front of us and what God has given us and using it.

### III. Paul's Example of Ministry

There was a miniseries out that I think probably back in the 90s, Tom Hanks and Spielberg put out. Many of you have seen it. It's something that I think is one of the greatest things that really ignited a great spark with people going back to World War II and their heritage and all of those things. It was a miniseries called Band of Brothers, and it showed how that men who were in

combat together, that went through some really tough times, no matter what happened, they were forged together in a way that they can never be separated.

I look at things like that and I think that's why I would rather spend time with you, be with you, that you are my, you are the people that I fellowship with. You are the ones that I want to hang out with. Why would I want to go around and mope and dope about all of these stupid things when what God is doing and how He's opening up the doors? You are my pastor friends. You are my teacher friends. You are my co-laborers together.

I think Paul said it in 1 Thessalonians 2:8. This has always been a verse that's been absolutely in my mind about what I do in ministry, where he said there to the Thessalonians:

*1 Thessalonians 2:8*

*So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

What a great verse. You see it again when Paul wrote to the Philippian church in the book of Philippians. This is the church where, on all the other churches, he has to deal with issues that they're struggling with. He doesn't do that. The thing that sets the book of Philippians apart, and I told you before that Philippians has 10 of the greatest concepts that if you didn't have anything else in the Bible, you could exist as a Christian on those 10 concepts, and they're found in the book of Philippians. They're found in the book of Philippians because the book of Philippians is unique to any other book in the Bible. It's the only book that, and the only church that Paul writes to, that he doesn't have to deal with them on some kind of issue or deal with them on some kind of problem.

Here lies the difference. This is what makes the difference, and to understand ministry, you got to understand what I'm saying today. There are churches that are different. The Philippian church was different. Paul had a closer relationship with that church and those Christians more than any other church. Yes, he loved them all. He did whatever he needed to do. But here was a church, here was a church, and the difference between this church and all the other churches, that all the other churches Paul had to minister to. In this church, he ministered with. They were part of his ministry team. He ministered not only to them, he ministered with them and them with him. That's the key.

I look for Christians, and I know that my job will always be ministering to you in some fashion or the other, but I look for you to get to the place in your life where it's not just me ministering to you, but it's me and you ministering to others together. That's the key. That's where a church has to get to. That's where a pastor has to get his church to be, where it's not just a pastor always running around ministering to everybody, because that's impossible, but it's getting everybody with the pastor to minister to others. That's what it takes. That's what you have to get to, and that requires some things that do have to make a difference in your life.

## IV. Four Principles of Ministry

As we move along today, I want to remind you again of our four-point little outline here that we're using all the way through this. I told you that as we come through this book and we compare it to what we're doing and we look at the new lessons, we're going to learn about ministering to people.

1. Examine yourself. Don't examine a person next to you. Don't complain about the person next to you or what you like or don't like about them. You examine yourself.
2. Know yourself. Be honest with who you are. Be honest with the things that you got to change about your life. I tell married couples all the time, the reason why married couples are solving so many problems, it's so simple. I've never met a complicated problem in dealing with people in all of my life. It's always a simple thing. People make it much more complicated. I tell married couples all the time, "Look, you're yelling at him to be what he wants to be. He's yelling at you to be what he wants you to be. If you two would just stop worrying about each other, and you, sir, would start being everything you need to be, and you would start being everything you need to be, your problem would go away." You can't change her. You can't change him. The only people you can change is yourself. But it's easier to try to work on changing somebody else because in reality, we really don't want to change who we are in many cases, and that's where problems come in. It's easy. It's not hard. You just got to understand this concept.
3. Take heed to yourself.
4. Prove yourself. Last time we saw a great Bible principle to get us through any situation, if you remember in verse 10, we spent some time on this, but boy, I hope you marked it in your Bible: "Who delivered us, and doth deliver us, and in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." We talked about how that when it talks about "who delivered us," when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He set you free from the penalty of sin. "And doth deliver us" today, as you and I live, because you are saved, God has delivered you from the power of sin. Then the third one, "in whom we yet do trust," when God comes back and sets up His kingdom, He's going to deliver us from the presence of sin. What a great three-point outline and concept.

With that in mind today, we're going to pick it up in verses 12 through 16 and very quickly here look at some great concepts that I think will help us now that we kind of got our heads back in what we have been talking about. But here's what he says in verse 12:

*2 Corinthians 1:12-16*

*For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*

*For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;*

*As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

*And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;*

*And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.*

Now Father, we ask You to bless us today as we come to Your word. Take these great truths and help us be better in what we do. Help us to realize that You've given us something so special here, so unique. You actually have allowed us to reach in and do things, Father, that are so fantastic. Lord, it's because of these good people. It's because that people are reproducing themselves, and they've got the world out of their life, and they want to do what God wants them to do, and they're doing it by the book, not by flying by the seat of their pants and making up the rules as they go along. Help us today, Father, to learn, and we'll thank You and praise in Jesus' name. For His sake, we ask it. Amen.

## V. The Testimony of a Good Conscience

There are a couple of things here today, some lessons to learn. I teach people all the time that in any given situation—and situations vary, it can be just a situation you got to deal with, it can be a person you got to deal with, it may be a problem that people have or somebody you're working with—I always tell people that work with me, and I keep pounding it into their ears, and you hear me say it a lot, that the key to really helping people is simply one thing: being smarter than the situation you're dealing with. You can't allow your emotion to get caught up in it. The moment you do, then you're at a disadvantage.

One of the great keys, I think, to being a successful preacher and a successful communicator is being able to keep your own spirit under control. There'll be times in your life that you're faced with a great thing you got to do, and if you really stopped and took the face off of it and looked at it, it was scary to death. When you stop and realize how much responsibility lies on you to do the right thing, to say the right thing, to make sure everything pulls together. The key to being able to do that is to have the confidence in the Word of God, but to keep your own spirit under control. You don't get emotionally charged with it. You don't get nervous. You don't let things get you off track. You have your spirit in such control by the principles of the Word of God that when you step up to the pulpit or you step up to whatever job you got to do, that you know exactly what the task is. You're focused on exactly what you got to get done, and it's the biblical principles that dictate how you get it done.

There's no nervousness to it. There's no anxiety to it. Oh, there might be excitement to get in there and tear it out. I preached in places where there were 5,000 people. Most guys, many guys would, and you can always tell a pastor when he gets up if he's nervous by the stupid things that he says. He'll get up and he'll talk about, "Well, I've never preached in this crowd before," and all of those things. Somebody else will say, "Well, you know, I really, I didn't really prepare good this week." My thing is, sit down and shut up. If you don't recognize the opportunity God gave you, and you're not like a lion chomping at the bit back there to get up there and give them what God said and get out of the way and let somebody else do it, you got to have a confidence that

you know that, and you got to have your own spirit under control. That simply comes down to being smarter than the situation, realizing that the problem is always covered in the principles of the Word of God. You stay with those principles. You know those principles.

As it says down here in verse 12, "not with fleshly wisdom." That's exactly what your emotions are. It's of the flesh, and you operate by what your flesh thinks, and every time your flesh gets involved, it's going to be a problem. Most Christians have their own homespun theology how to fix any problem, and it's usually wrong. It's like grandma's concoction for fixing the common cold: a little lemon juice, a little bit of corn syrup, and a half a bottle of Jack Daniels. Yeah, you just get so drunk you don't even know you're sick.

But anyway, it's a thing where you've got to be able to use the principles. You got to be able to learn how in any given situation you have to respond and not react. Ministry is twofold. Ministry, and you've heard me say it before, ministry is inward and then it's outward. Ministry transforms you internally. When you start to change who you are through an internal transformation, then the other aspect of ministry is outward, and that'll be an outward manifestation of the inner transformation. That's exactly how it works in our lives.

Now, the first thing he says here is something he calls in ministry, and I think dealing with people, and I think it's vital, and it goes with what I've just told you about being smarter than a problem, and it's talked about here. He says this, and here's our first phrase we want to look at: "the testimony of our conscience." Now that is a great thing if you can ever grasp it in any situation. Nothing beats a good conscience toward God in what you're doing. He's telling them that in his dealing with them, he has a good testimony of a good conscience before God, even though he said some harsh things to them and he said some hard things to them. As God's man, he told them the truth and what they needed to hear that would help them.

In dealing with people, in dealing with circumstances, sometimes you have to say some hard things. Sometimes you have to say some harsh things. But you've always got to look back in your life and ask yourself the motive behind what you did. Nothing will beat the testimony of our conscience. Proverbs 27:7 is a great principle, and it's a great verse, and it simply says:

*Proverbs 27:7*

*The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*

Boy, that is a great verse. I learned that verse many, many years ago because, boy, you talk about somebody who could take the hide off the wall, my father and Lord, Mel Shabbatah, he could tear the paint off the hide off and just about everything and scrape it down to nothing when he preached, and he didn't mix any words. He called it exactly what it was and laid it out exactly the way it was. Many, many years ago, I realized that God had put that man into my life, that if I was ever going to go anywhere, it was going to be that I learned what that man had already known, and I knew that I couldn't learn it all, but boy, I wanted to glean everything that I could.

One of the things that I had to get to in my life was this: the full soul. When you get filled with the things of the world, when you have more in you that's worldly than you do that's godly, that when somebody drops the hammer on you and preaches the word of God, you're going to take

offense to it. You're going to take it personal. You're going to get your nose bent out of joint. You're going to get upset about it because of the fact that your soul is full of the things of this world. But to the hungry soul, and oh, that was me, I wanted everything he had to say. I wanted to know everything he knew. I realized that there was a man that had God's hand on his life, and God was using him, and I wanted to learn everything he could. He had the right to say whatever he wanted to say, however he wanted to say it. It never bothered me because I realized that I was a hungry soul, and to a hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet. Amen.

Christianity and God's people are no different today than they were in Paul's time. They never are. Getting down a great principle that you need to understand in ministry is simply this: You can't save everybody that needs to be saved. I wish we could. You can't fix every marriage that needs to be fixed. I think that's one of the most, these are the things that are the hardest things to deal with when you deal with people, especially if you love people, because you see how simple it is. You see how easy it is. You see how if these people would just do this, if this guy would just do this, he would get saved. If this couple would just do this, they could put their marriage together. And you want it for them, and you pray for that, and you work and diligently labor for that. But at the end of the day, you can't fix every marriage. You cannot fix every marriage. You cannot get everybody saved.

At the end of the day, in ministry, you need to realize you can't get everybody to do the right thing. But in ministry, you have to be able to look back and always realize who you're working for. You have to be able to look back and you'd have to be able to not take it personal. I think one of the greatest concepts in all of the Bible on ministry and people is found back there in 1 Samuel 8:6-7. It's a passage that has always been kept in my mind ever since I saw it many, many years ago because it is exactly where I'm at in my world and exactly where you need to be in your world.

It's a story of how the nation of Israel wanted to pick a king, and they wanted Saul. Now Samuel was the prophet, and Samuel knew that Saul was the wrong guy, and he was troubled by the fact that God's people wanted a king like Saul instead of a king that God had for them. Put yourself in his situation. You're going to deal with people who want to make bad choices. They're going to continue to make bad choices. You know what the right choice is, and you get burdened and grieved because they make the wrong choice, and it affects you. It ruins your day. It brings you to the point where you may lose your focus. You may come to the point where you get so enthralled in all that's going on like Samuel did.

Samuel argued with them. Samuel said, "This is the kind of king you're going to get." They said, "We don't care, give us a king like all the other nations." Samuel said, "Hey guys, you're not supposed to be like the other nations." How many times I've seen myself in that scenario with God's people. How many times I've sat in my office and tried to tell somebody the road they were going down was the wrong road. How many times I've stood in this pulpit and preached messages that you knew that was absolutely where, whether it was designed by me or not, it was right where you were at, and you knew what you needed to do, but you simply won't do that. Nothing in ministry, nothing in ministry is more frustrating than that for somebody who ministers the word of God.

Samuel found himself in that scenario, so Samuel did what I did one time: he whined to God. Lesson one: never whine to God. Samuel goes to God and he said, "Well, God," he said, "I don't know what to tell You. I just," he said, "I'm really bummed, man. I'll tell you, I had all that You want to do from them, and I've tried to tell them, and they still don't want to do this, and I'll tell you what, I just, this thing really shook me up. I don't..." And God said, "Well, you snivel little punk, what's your deal?" He says, "Samuel, learn a lesson in ministry: they haven't rejected you, they've rejected Me."

When you grasp that concept, that when somebody doesn't like when you tell them the truth, when somebody doesn't like when you lay out what the Bible says, the good conscience and a testimony of a good conscience is simply this: Who are you working for? Who are you doing this for? Are you doing it to win a personality contest? Are you doing it so you can win friends and influence enemies? Are you doing it so you can be the most popular person? No, you preach the truth, and when you have the good conscience toward God, you realize that the full soul loatheth the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul, that's what you're looking for: hungry souls.

If you're not hungry today, then I can't feed you. You're already filled up with something else. I deal in hungry souls at Restart. How many times have you passed out a hot dog? A guy said, "I just ate, don't want it." "Well, what do you mean you don't want it? It's free. We brought it down here. We cooked these. We got these for you." "I don't want it, I'm full." When a child of God gets full of the world, full of self, full of the things of the world, then they're no longer a hungry soul. I'm telling you guys, I have nothing for full souls to eat. I deal in hungry souls, and that's how you got to look at it.

When you find people, you can't fix every man. You can't get everybody to do right. You can do it till the cows come home. You can try your best. Somebody is always going to have a bad attitude about something because they don't want to do what's right. The only thing that will save you in all of that is a good conscience toward God in the testimony you did what God wanted you to do. The truth, and that's just the way it is. As long as you look back and you know you did what you did to help them and not to hurt them, and you did what God wanted you to do based on what the Bible principle, it doesn't matter whether they see it or not. It doesn't matter if they accept it or not. If they got an attitude, there's nothing in life going to be right for them. You got to learn that when people are at a fellowship with God, it doesn't matter what they read or what they see. It's all about where their attitude is.

In World War II, the men who survived great battles, and it was also true in Vietnam, the men that survived great, tragic, horrific battles in the early days of World War II that lost many of their friends and many of their buddies that they had trained with in basic and went on into Europe or the Pacific and then went into combat, guys that they had had friendships with, when they saw those their friends blown apart or dying a agonizing death, or they had to come back with all the pressure of war, would not have their buddy to talk to because he was killed that day, and they had to deal with that agony. There were no funerals. Their bodies laid out and rotted. There was no place to get closure to it. It was just one day after another where you lost this guy today and you lost your other friend tomorrow, and tomorrow you might be the one that goes.

They got to the point where when the new replacements came in, they didn't want anything to do with them. Somebody would come up and say, "Hi, I'm so-and-so, I'm from Ohio." They said, "I don't even want to know who you are. I don't want to talk to you. Don't tell me, 'Well, I got, are you married? I got...'" I don't want to know if you're married. Just stay away from me." Many young recruits thought that was a terrible thing, and they thought, "Wow, what's going on here?" But they never understood. You see, those guys were so filled up with losing their friends, they just could not stand to lose another one, and it was easy for them to push them away and say, "I don't want to know you. I don't want to know anything about you because when you get killed, it'll be easier for me because I cannot go through looking at another dead friend's face with his guts hanging out all over the place. I just can't do that." And they pushed away every emotion they had and they said, "I don't want to know who you are because when you die and you get killed, I don't have any more emotions to spend. I don't have any more tears to put out." That happened in World War II. It happened a lot in Vietnam.

We don't have that luxury in Christianity, folks. In the world that we live in, in Christianity and doing the ministry, not everybody's going to make it. We don't have the ability because five, six people didn't do what's right and quit coming to church to hold off everybody and say, "We don't want to deal with you because I can't emotionally deal with this anymore." We don't have that option. We have to take them all. We have to give everybody the best chance. We have to realize that everybody gets a free shot, and if five people fail and don't do it, if 20 people don't make it, if a marriage fails, or this person goes back to the world, or they don't do what's right, we got to realize that every time the ramp goes down on the door and you assault that beachhead, guys on the left and the right went down, and people die, and people die spiritually.

Some of them commit suicide spiritually. Some of them put God away. They do their own thing, and they wind up in a spiritual mental asylum someplace. Their life is shot. Some of them do all kinds of things that kills them, not physically, spiritually, and it's just as hard to deal with that as it is to deal with somebody getting killed coming into a beachhead that was your buddy from basic training. The difference between that and this is simply this: This is how you don't take it personal. This is how you realize who are you working for? Who are you doing this for? Who do you serve? Who's the one that is it isn't you that they reject, it's Him that they reject. Get it down. It isn't anything personal. It isn't against you. It's against Him. They can't see Him. They can't cuss Him out. They can't do anything to Him, so they'll take it out on you.

Learn it. Understand who you're doing this for. Realize that you are working for somebody else and be able to look back into your life and realize and see no matter what their response is, it's not my problem. I'm not responsible for your spirituality. I'm not responsible for you doing what's right. I'm only responsible for me doing what's right. I'm responsible for giving you the truth, and then you do with it what you want to do. But I got a good testimony of a conscience before God. That's all I need. I want you all to make it. I want you all to be there. I want you all to be part of it. But I know that's not a reality, and I'm not going to lose my focus and worry about the people who don't want to do what's right when I got a whole bunch of people that do want to do what's right. You got to keep it straight, folks. This is the ministry. This is the ministry. This is the way it works.

I say all of that simply because he says down here in verse 14, "because also ye have acknowledged us in part." See, not everybody was happy with what Paul was doing. Not everybody was happy. He says, "You have acknowledged us in part." There's some people who didn't acknowledge them, and you need to learn in dealing with people in ministry, they won't always be happy with what you do. They're not always going to be happy with what I do. There's some people, verse 14, look at it down there, for some people you will be a rejoicing, other people you will be a cursing. You have to quickly learn, and learn very quickly, that in the ministry, not everybody wants to do what's right.

There's a great principle in Galatians 4. If you don't have it marked, you ought to mark it because it's a great one. Paul says that a church at Galatia, now here's a church that he had to deal with. They're probably right on the ladder close to the church at Corinth before they got right, and they're not happy with Paul. They're not, they're upset with. He's rattled their world. He's called them on the carpet because of something they're doing that's not biblically based, and they're not happy with him. He asked this question, and it's a question that you better get it down because this is the question in Galatians 4:16:

*Galatians 4:16*

*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*

Now let me answer that for you. The answer is yes, you will. Yes, you will. Last week I preached that in Zechariah 7, and I about 11 down through there, and I told you about the nation of Israel, how in verses 11 down through there and 12, I think it was, how they refused to hearken and they pulled away their shoulder, they stopped their ears that they were not hear. Yeah, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and the words of the Lord.

We were driving home, and my wife said, "I never saw that verse." She said, "That is one of the greatest." She says, "You know what, when our daughters were growing up, that is the thing that they always got a spanking for." And I'm talking about what? And she said that thing where they pulled away the shoulder, you know, you go up and you put your arm on somebody to try to talk to them, and they pull it away. And she said, "Because that was an act of defiance." When you, I can deal with whatever problem a person has, just like she could deal with the kids, but when you go up to somebody who you want to help them, that you know what's best, and you put your arm, and it may not be physically putting your arm on them, it may be saying something to them that they need to hear, but they really don't want to hear it, and the reaction, maybe not physically, but the reaction inside is, "I don't want to hear it. I got an attitude. Don't correct me about my being wrong." Pull that shoulder away. That's exactly what God's people do. That's what Israel did. You actually think that two billion people back there in Israel at that time all in command pulled the shoulder? Really? He's showing you a picture of God's people's attitude about the word of God and what it does and its effect.

You see, real leadership has to see an understanding that the vision gets set. God has some things that He wants to be done, and in Paul's day, not everybody was on board with him. It's no different today. Don't you think for a moment with all that God is doing down in Restart, everybody's happy with Restart? We had a New Year's Eve deal a couple of weeks back, and to

me, they're always the greatest thing we do. But I guarantee you there were people in this church that thought it was stupid, that think Restart is stupid. Well, we got together and voted, "We think you're stupid." You never, never, never let that element affect what you're doing. As long as God is blessing it and He's pleased, that's all that matters. If you can look back in your life and you've done it by the book, and there's no sin in it, and it's absolutely by the word of God, what do you care what somebody thinks? If God is pleased and God is happy, and you've been between the pages of the book and you're doing it by the book, what do you care? That's where the conscience of a testimony before God comes from. You can look back because I'm telling you what, if you don't, if you don't keep in mind and learn these lessons, that the ministry is not just helping people by going through them with what they're experiencing, it's also happening to deal with God's people who resent you doing it because it exposes them and what they're not doing. Like last week, they took two months a year and gave it all to God and lived like they wanted to the other 10 months.

## VI. The Judgment Seat of Christ

Now here's what you always stay focused on and why you have to keep the right heart, the right motive, and a good conscience toward God. He says in 2 Corinthians 1:14, "even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." Now in your Bible, you've heard me talk about it before, you talk about "the day," "that day," "the day of the Lord" is the second coming of Christ. Then you've heard me talk about "the day of Christ." You've heard me talk about "the day of Jesus of the Christ," and now here we have "the day of the Lord Jesus," and that's simply, my friend, will always be a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

You see, in ministry, the Christian has to clearly establish who he's doing this for and why, because of the Judgment Seat of Christ. Everything we do, every person we date, every relationship we have, everybody we marry, every decision we make, every attitude and every thought has to be viewed in the light of the Judgment Seat of Christ. The day of the Lord Jesus.

Mel used to have a message that he preached, it was one of them loud, scary messages where the title was "Take Off That Mask," that God's people were hiding behind masks. He'd go a little farther and he'd preach, remember him preaching the Barbie, he'd go through a little farther and he'd preach, and then he'd stop and he'd walk around the pulpit, he'd say, "Take off that mask!" Well, by the end of the sermon, you're ripping your face off hoping that you could get off what he wants. He'd walk back and forth and nail you a little bit more, and he'd come back and talk about something, and he'd hit the other side, "Take off that mask!" What he was saying is that God's people put on masks to pretend they're something that they're not. But you see, the Judgment Seat of Christ is the day that we'll all take off the mask.

*Romans 2:16*

*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

*Matthew 10:26*

*Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

*Psalm 44:20-21*

*If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;*

*Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*

Boy, that's a great verse for a Christian today. You see that thing? You asked me a question, you asked me a question a couple of weeks ago, I think it was last week, one of the ladies in the church asked me a question about Numbers 7. I can't remember who it was. Oh, it was you. You asked me a question, Numbers 7, and her original question was how the setting up of the tribes, if what that meant and everything, and I told her, I said, "I'd have to look at it. I said, I can't recall it." So I got home, and I want you to think, when you ask me something, I don't just blow it off. I go home and look through. So I got into that, and I thought to myself, and I never, the tribe thing, it was not the issue. When I got into that chapter, I saw that chapter for what it is.

You know that chapter is one of the most boring chapters in the Bible. It lists the 12 princes, and it talks about what they gave, the sacrifices they made, how much they committed, and it's just one guy after another. It's like reading a ledger. It's absolutely the most boring thing you'll ever read in your life in the Bible. Nobody gets killed. No lions being eaten. Nobody throwing in lions' den. It's just a record, record, record, record, record, record. When I looked at that, Kathy, I stood back and I thought to myself, "My God, there again, in one of the boring chapters of the Bible, do you know what you have? You have a record in that boring, obscure chapter that nobody would ever read, the greatest principle that God takes an account of everything we give, every sacrifice we make, everything we bring to Him, everything we give Him." That chapter teaches that God keeps a record of everything we bring Him, and it's all going to go up against the day of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

"Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." He will see. You can hide it today. You can put it behind a mask. You forgot some things. You thought if the smoke was thick and the music was loud and the lights were dim that God couldn't see what went on, and that's just not true. In that day, the mask is going to come off. All the phoniness is going to be revealed. You're much better off just to deal with it now.

*Job 34:21*

*For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.*

*Job 34:22*

*There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.*

*Job 34:23*

*For he will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God.*

Oh, I'm going under this tremendous thing God has put me under. God will never put you under anything more than to do right. You want to get out from under the burden? You want to get out from under depression? You want to get out from under all the stuff that's holding you down? It's real easy. God will never put more on you other than to do what's right. The burden you're carrying today is because you won't do what's right. He'll never put more on you and I other than to do what is right. When you don't do what's right, that's where it comes in, brother. That's where it comes in because he says down there, "For he will not lay upon man more than right." All God wants us to do is what's right. That's all He wants. He just wants you and me to do the right thing.

Then he says this, "that he should enter into judgment with God." You see, you're going to enter into judgment with God one way or the other. You're already going to do it in a service like this or after a Bible study or sometime when God whacks you with what you're not doing right in your life, and you fall on your knees. That Bible says every tongue shall confess and every knee will bow to Jesus Christ the Lord, to the glory of God the Father. You're going to bow your knee to Him. It's only going to matter if it's here now in this life or at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It's not a matter if you will, it's just a matter of when you will. But every man is going to enter into that judgment. For the unsaved man, it is the Great White Throne Judgment. For you and me, the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Then a solemn and the wisest man that ever lived said in Ecclesiastes 12:

*Ecclesiastes 12:13*

*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*

*Ecclesiastes 12:14*

*For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

See, you can stand here today and tell me you're not doing this or you're doing this and lie through your teeth. That mask looks so good, pal. You got it on so well. It looks like it's your real face. But in the end of the day, God's going to take off that mask. He's going to take it off because there's coming a day that God will right every wrong, make every crooked thing straight. There's coming a day that God is going to take everything we do, everything we think, everything we get into, everything we get involved with. It should be viewed and evaluated in the light of two things: one, the word of God, which is the truth that God has given you, and secondly, the day that you're going to stand before God. Do they line up? In that, my friend, those two things form the basis of the testimony of a good conscience.

## VII. Not Taking Things Personally

That's why I keep pounding those Bible principles to you. That's why you can get into ministry when you understand this. That's why you can get into ministry and take it for God because it will come full circle. You realize that who you're working for, and you realize that right now you

got to pay the reproach and bear the shame of Him sometimes. Well, He did for you on the cross. But don't ever think there's a day He's not going to make it right. This is why you don't take the abuse. This is why you don't take the ridicule or their personal attacks. This is why you don't take the slander, the lies, the half-truth. You don't take them personal in ministry. You don't let those things get you off course, for it changes nothing. It changes absolutely nothing with what God is doing with you and for you. The more they hate you, the more God evens it out by blessing you and driving them crazy.

That's the greatest story in the Bible, don't you remember back there in Genesis 40, there with Joseph and his brethren? Don't you remember that story? I mean, it covers up the whole thing from Genesis 37 all the way up to chapter 50, if I remember right. Here's Joseph, who was his father's favorite, gave him a coat of many colors. The other brethren didn't care for it. They didn't like the fact that this guy was getting the blessing from the father, and they weren't getting any. Of course, they were corrupt. Now you understand. So they devised a plan to get rid of the one that the father loved. So they come up with a plan, a very unique plan. First, they were going to kill him. Then they thought, "No, that won't work. Let's just dig him in a hole and put him down there, and we'll let him starve to death." Then money came into it, and some Midianites came along, and they said, "You know what, it's better yet, let's sell him into slavery. That way we'll never have to see him again." They had the most elaborate, unique, great, thought-out, worked-out plan that you could ever think of getting rid of the one that God was blessing when God wasn't blessing them.

But as Dr. Phil said, "How'd that work for you?" It came full circle, didn't it? They tried to get rid of him. They sold him into Egypt. God protects him in Egypt. God brings him full circle. A great dearth and a great famine come in there, and then now he's second in command in Egypt, and now his brethren, who once hated him, who despised the fact that the father loved him, have to come back and grovel at his feet for a little bit of corn.

Now, you know what a great lesson here. David could have had an attitude. If anybody had a right to have an attitude after what had been done to him, he had the right attitude to have one. He could have cut their heads off. He could have put him in jail. He could have said, "Let me see how you like being in a pit. I'm going to sell you into slavery and let you be out there doing all those things." You see, David was smarter than that. David had the testimony of a good conscience toward God, and David never forgot who he was working for.

The greatest verse in the Bible, I think for me, that I never forget, it's something that has gotten me through this world and this life and all of the things in ministry, and it goes back to this great story. At the end of the day, when they're all restored back together, and they're fumbling over themselves saying, "I'm sorry. Oh, you should have killed us. We're so sorry." David never took it personal. David never got to the place in his life, listen to me now, he never got to the place in his life, no matter how bad it got, no matter how dark it became, no matter when it looked like he's in prison in Egypt and this part of his wife is lying about him and all of these things, he never got to the place where he lost the concept and the passion and the purpose of what God was doing in his life. At the end of the day, because he had that testimony of a conscience, when he looked back and they're saying, "We're sorry, we didn't mean to do this," he had no regrets. He

had no grudges. He had nothing to get even with because he understood what God had done, and he simply said in Genesis 50:20:

*Genesis 50:20*

*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

I'm telling you folks, you got to realize in ministry for this next year, God's going to take us all up a couple more levels in ministry. I'm telling you right now, I told you what would happen in Restart, it's already happening long before. I told you what would happen in a homeless ministry, it's already happening long before I thought it would. I'm telling you right now, in our church, with the way it's going and the people coming in and the people that want to get involved, this thing is going to take off, and people are going to go up the levels. I'm telling you right now, you better decide. You better get past your little selfish things. You better get past stuck on yourself. You better start worrying about what other people think, and you better start focusing on the fact, who are you doing this for? Why are you here today? In some of your cases, my suggestion to you would be a great sermon I heard many, many years ago: "Take Off The Mask." Take off the mask.

Listen, if I didn't believe that there was a day coming when God would set the record straight, I wouldn't put up with this crap in ministry for 10 seconds. But when you understand who you're doing it for, and you realize what that verse says in 2 Corinthians 1:14, it doesn't say "the day of Jesus Christ." It doesn't say "the day of Christ." This term is "the day of the Lord Jesus." Lord Jesus, the day you and I are faced to make Jesus our Lord. You're either going to do it now or you're going to do it then, but you are going to do it. You're either going to do it now and have the blessings of not only of this life of serving the greatest One who loved you, but the inheritance of the millennium and on into eternity, or you're going to have your own thing, have it your own way, put up with the failed marriages, the disasters of life, and the uncertainty of life, and all the heartaches of life, all to give up what God wanted you to have, and then after that, lose your inheritance for all of eternity. It's simply that way. The day you are forced to make Him Lord. The day the game stops. The day the record is made clear. The day you take off that mask.

In that day, only one thing will stand. It's the only thing that will stand. It'll be simply a testimony of our conscience before God. None of us are perfect. We're all going to make mistakes. We're all going to do dumb things. I never care about what a person has done, where they've been, or what they've done. I really don't. I only care about one thing: where you're at and where you want to go from this point on. That's the only thing that makes any difference to me. But I'm not under the illusion, nor should you be in ministry, because Paul said, "You have acknowledged us in part." Not everybody's going to do what's right. Not everybody is going to want to make God in their life the way they should. Not every marriage is going to make it. There are going to be people come here, and they're great people, but they're simply not going to do what they need to do individually to fix what they need to fix. There's going to be people that come in here that have relationship problems, and they're not going to be willing to do what they got to do. Their fact that they're so lonely or they want a boyfriend or a girlfriend so overrides the principles of

the word of God that they actually just put them aside and do what they want to do and pretend. Take off the mask. Take off the mask. When it comes to God, it's His way or the highway. There's no second ground. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. How can two walk together except they be agreed?

This next year, we're going to go to work on taking this church to the next level. You have before you the ministry and the opportunity to reach out and to grow and to actually see God using you. I went to our club meeting, my military club I belong to, last Monday night. I go down once a month. You guys have no idea in the goofy little things that we do how God uses it, impacts people. They were talking about March 3rd, which is a Saturday, is when they're going to have the Liberty Memorial thing we always have down there where they bring in all the collection and in World War II, World War I, all that stuff. They were talking about that, and the president looked over to me, and they call me Brother Bob now. This is the godliest, ungodly. They're all drinking beer. They're all down there with their meal. They're nice, a bunch of guys, and they're very careful what they say, and they're there, but they're unsaved. But to them, I'm Brother Bob.

He looks over and he says, "Brother Bob," he says, "I hope that your crew will come down and help set up next year. They remembered what you did." I think I told you that last year when you guys went down there on Friday and we worked all afternoon setting up the tables for it. They couldn't believe it. The guy that runs the treasury is one of the meanest old farts you ever met in your life. No, I'm kidding you, I love him to death, but you never know what you're going to get from him. He stood up in that meeting after we did that. He stood up in that meeting and he simply said, "I want to make a motion that we give Bob's church a donation to help his church for what they did to coming down there." Everybody, I almost said they said amen. I think a couple of them didn't say amen now that I'm thinking about it, but they all agreed to give Old Path Baptist Church a donation.

I stood up and I said, "Gentlemen, it means more to me that you guys would even think about that, and Chuck, thank you so much, but you know what, we're not going to take it. You know what, I got people in my church that served in the military and love this country, love God, and love what it's all about, and it's an honor for us to come down and do that." We got more mileage out of going down and setting up ridiculously stupid tables. But you see, that's what God uses, doesn't He?

Remember when Moses wanted to do, God wanted to do some great thing for him, and Moses, so many like God's people, was alibiing, he couldn't do it, and he said, "How am I going to do it? How am I going to?" Some of you are in that same boat. You wonder, "How am I going to do this?" Remember what God said to him? He didn't send him off to Bible college. He didn't say, "We'll get Bob's tapes back there on how to do it and make it do it better." He just simply looked down at Moses, he said, "Moses, what do you have in your hand?" And Moses said, "Well, I just got a shepherd's rod." And He said, "You know what, then we'll just start with that." And it was that very little, basic, obscure shepherd's rod that turned into God's rod of judgment that turned the waters to blood, that brought the fire down from heaven, and turned the whole thing inside out.

My point is simply this: God will just take, folks, whatever you have in your hand today. He's not asking you to be super knowledgeable at the Bible. He's not asking you to know all the things that you need to know. He just wants you to take what's in your hand. The great lesson out of that story of Moses is Moses said, "Lord, I'm just not able to do what You want me to do." And God looked at him and He said, "You know what, Moses, I don't ever remember asking you if you were able. All I want to know is, are you willing? Because Moses, if you're willing to use what you have right now in your hand, I'm able to use it for you."

That's where we're at today. None of us are able. The problem is that many of God's people today aren't willing. But if you are willing, He'll take you right where you're at, and that's why I accept you where you're at. That's why I never asked you to be anything other than who you really are. We can work through anything because you'll get to the point where you get the soul all empty from what's so full, and then you'll come to the word of God, that great honeycomb, and even the bitter things will be sweet. That's what God will do in your world and do in your life, and that's where we want to go.

I want to work with you teams and help you become more independent. I want to show you other ways that we can do some things and work on some things. In fact, I want to have a meeting at the end of Thursday night this next Bible study with just the team leaders, and if you have somebody that's your second in command, bring them along. I want to talk to you. If I can bring your teams, if you want, I don't care, but I want to begin to talk about how you do this thing even better than you already are. We've got to the first stage. The door is wide open. Now we've got to continue to be smarter than this problem we're dealing with, and the only way we do that is to stay online with the Bible and take as many people in as God wants to bring into us that we can use. That's how we'll get it done, and in the process, you'll learn ministry. You'll grow. But the things I told you today are vital because with ministry, it's not just about helping those who need help. It's about working around the ones who do not appreciate what you're doing and think it's stupid. Father,