

# 2 Corinthians 2

Sunday 2/5/2012

Thank you, William. As you can all see, keep William on your prayer list. He has a bad leg; he tore the bicep in his leg last week. I am not sure what he tore, but it is bad, so we need to pray for him. He is too valuable to have gimping around here.

If you have your Bible this morning, I would like to invite you to turn back to 2 Corinthians 2. You should be well aware that we are really going after the book of 2 Corinthians. We have talked about where our church is at and just the many things that God is doing with many of you, and how you are growing, and the ministries that God has opened up for us. It was God's time to go into the greatest book in the Bible that teaches us about ministry, and that would be the book of 2 Corinthians.

I told you that every chapter is a key chapter and something that we need to learn about dealing with people, because the ministry is people. Most churches, many pastors, and most Christians, they get the idea that ministry is ministering to inanimate objects, and that is not true. The ministry is people, one on one with your life, with the life of somebody else.

Last week we saw basically an introduction to this chapter, and I always like to kind of give a background of the chapter, so once we get into it, for those of you that are really paying attention, it kind of gives you a better base to work from. I told you last week how chapter 1 really defines for us what ministry is, and we went through chapter 1; it took us four or five weeks to get through it. We talked about how the ministry is defined in chapter 1.

Then last week in the introduction I told you that where chapter 1 defines the ministry, chapter 2 defines the minister. That great chapter has to do with the forgiving spirit that God's people should have and that you need to have if you are going to be involved in ministry.

## I. Key Principles of Ministry

We talked about some vital key principles, and each week, as you notice, we are adding to them and helping you get more understanding of some of these key principles. I call them the absolutes in ministry, and for where we are at and where we are going, and maybe after today or throughout this process, some of you will really want to get to that point where you really give God all of yourself and really do what He wants you to do and what He saved you for, these are invaluable.

We talked about forgiving and forgetting, the greatest characteristic that God has. That characteristic, as we become more Christ-like, should be in our own lives. We talked about the ability of not taking it personal. When you deal in ministry, you get your emotions involved, and not everybody is going to be happy with every decision you have to make or when you deal with things. We are going to talk about some of that today. So you have to realize not to take it personal.

Of course, the other principle we talked about is the way that you do that is you always remember who you are working for, who you are doing this for. You are not doing it for yourself;

you are doing it for the Lord Jesus based on what He did for you. That brought us to the next principle that we talked about, which was understanding who you are in Christ. Once you are secure of who you are in Christ, then you learn not to take things personal.

Then we talked about responding versus reacting. Reacting is the knee-jerk. When somebody says something, you act back. Responding is basically taking the time to process what is being said, what you are dealing with, and then laying it out through the principles of the Word of God. We talked about a principled life, and that would be talking to yourself. When you speak to yourself, you talk to yourself, as Paul did here; he says, "I have reasoned within myself." You filter things out. You process it before you say something.

I told you that the older you get in the Lord and the more you learn these principles, the faster it comes, and pretty soon it is second nature to you. When somebody says something, almost in a split second, it is a lot like preaching. Preaching is an art where you stand up in front of people, and you maybe have some notes prepared, but while you are speaking, you are always thinking. You are not always thinking about what you just said, what you are saying now, and what you want to say, and how you want to tie it all together. Of course, that is an ability that you develop in time, that you can be laying out what you have to lay out, but at the same time, I am speaking right now, I am thinking in the next instant what I want to say and then how I want to tie it into what I just said, and then always keep the goal of what I want to tie it into the overall theme of what we are trying to accomplish. That just comes in time. That is why you can learn in any given situation to respond instantaneously in a split microsecond, and then before you say what you should say, then you process it through there. There is something that you learn.

You will see that this whole chapter is built around that theme of our ability to forgive and to forget. So today, let us begin to develop this great chapter, and maybe we can better understand these great principles. Let us pick it up in chapter 2, verse 1, and we will read this first section here.

*But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.*

*For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?*

*And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.*

*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.*

*But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I might not overcharge you all.*

*Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.*

*So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.*

*Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.*

*For this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.*

Now, Father, help us today to glean from this passage all that You have for us. Lord, these are good people here, and most of these people, Father, really want to do something with their life. I really believe that. I pray, Father, that You will select out of this church men and women who will be willing to learn and to change about themselves what they have to change, to learn these great principles, that as this church goes on, we can continue to reach people and help them and help them in a biblical way. Lord, we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

## II. The Church's Threefold Job: Perfecting, Ministry, Edifying

Now today we are not going to get through this whole passage; there is just so much here. But as I said, we will start to develop some principles, and as this chapter, and I suggest to you, and I am going to talk about this next week, but I suggest that as we come down through here in this passage, as the first chapter and the second chapter also, that some of these difficult passages that you look at and you are saying, like verse 2, where he says, "For if I make you sorry, who is he that maketh me glad but the same which is made sorry by me?" What is that talking about? Well, I am going to explain these to you today as we go through, as we do every book of the Bible, and it is very important that you get this in your wide margin Bible, that you have a kind of a running commentary in what we are doing here.

The Bible teaches that the job of the church is really laid out in Ephesians 4:11-12, and it is a threefold job, very simple in its format. The Bible says that He gave to the church pastors and teachers. Then He says these are the three reasons, and I know you know this, these are the three reasons that He did it:

1. The perfecting of the saints.
2. The work of the ministry.
3. The edifying of the body of Christ.

Perfecting the saints deals with the aspect that when you come in here, we all have baggage, we all have things we have to work through, and so the process is perfecting you, getting you ready for the work of the ministry, because that is why God saved you. Then once you get those two things accomplished in your life, then the job from that point on is to continue to edify. Edify is to give you what you need to help you see who you are, and once you accomplish that, and you accomplish that by preaching and teaching, that is the pastor's job, and you accomplish that through a local New Testament church.

Then the Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:16, once the Word of God is applied to your life, then here is what the Word of God does back for you, and this again is a familiar passage, but I want to put it

in the context of what we are going to talk about today. In 2 Timothy 3:16, we see the effect of the Word of God once the church does its job.

Now, my job is clearly just threefold, and there are a lot of different things within that we could talk about it for days, but my job basically as a pastor is just threefold:

4. To perfect you. I perfect you for the work of the ministry.
5. Then my job is to edify you.

Once that is accomplished in your life and you get a handle on the Word of God, then the Bible says:

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*

*That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

Then it says that once the Word of God is applied to your life, it is profitable for four things. The first thing it is profitable for is doctrine. We know what that means. We have talked about it many times. This is a very familiar passage if you have stayed around here very long. Doctrine is the teaching of what is right in the Bible. You are going to find people who are messed up on different things in the Bible. They are messed up on doctrine. The Bible teaches you what is right.

Then you have the second thing is reproof. The third thing is correction, and the fourth thing is instruction in righteousness. I like to make little outlines out of things that help me not only remember it but always give me a little, if you are doing a devotion sometime in volleyball or something or softball, these are the ones. I always looked at it this way: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." I always say that the Bible first of all shows you what is right, then the Bible shows you reproof, what is wrong, then it shows you correction, that is how to fix what is wrong, then instructions in righteousness, that is how to keep it fixed after you get it fixed. You see, that is what it does for you. Just that simple.

Then he says that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work. Now that "perfect" there does not mean seamless perfection. That "perfect" there goes back to what he is talking about where he is talking about perfect for the work of God, the work of the ministry. That is what you are perfected for.

Now today, the two things we are going to look at is number two and number three. We are going to look at correction and reproof, or I should say reproof and correction, and that is what we want to look at today as through Paul's example of this church.

### III. The Motive Behind Correction

In our lives, and I am sure you know this is true, this is not new. In our lives, there are times that we need to be reproved and we need to be corrected. Just that simple. It is part of the learning process for the work of God. You and I go through our times in life when we do things that are

wrong, we do things that are not right, or we get into situations that we should not, and reproof and the correction is just as much a process in the Bible as the admonishing and the teaching and the doctrine.

Paul, we know, is our model, and what he is doing in this church is exactly what he is supposed to be doing. He is fulfilling through these four aspects the teaching and the preaching of the Bible to keep this church right online. He says in verses 2, 3, and 4 here:

*For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?*

*And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.*

*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.*

Verse 2, as I said, you look at it and you think, "What is he saying? For if I make you sorry, who is then it maketh me glad but the same which made sorry by me?" Let me explain that. What he is saying is this: If I made you sad by the things that I said to you, and he said some very hard things, if I holding you accountable, if I correcting you or reproofing you made you sad, then I am glad. That is what he is saying. But then he is saying, "I am not glad because I enjoy making you sad, but I am glad because my telling you the truth and you feeling sorry will lead to you getting right with God and repentance and then start doing what God wants you to do, and for that I am glad." See, that is what he is saying. It is just that simple.

We see that in verse 1 we saw the heaviness of Paul's heart when he started to open up this chapter. We saw it last week, and this was due to his burden and grief for them to do the right thing as a church, and it is an incredible passage here. We see here coming out of this another great aspect of the ministry, and this is very key. Nikki Brown asked a question last Thursday night on the Judgement Seat of Christ, a connection with rewards and what God looks at, and we had a great time with that. This dovetails right into this because what we see now coming out of this chapter, this next great principle through Paul's life and getting with this church, is the concept of our motive behind our ministry.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4, we have not gotten there yet, but we will shortly, it says that the ministry has to be open and honest, no hidden agendas. The ministry or the minister has to be open and honest with everything that they do. You have to be able to have confidence in what is going on, and there should be no hidden agendas, and everything should be commended. The Bible says to a man's conscience, that means that you feel good about it because it is open and honest. You see everything, you can ask any questions without getting your hands slapped, and that is the key because the right motive in ministry or dealing with people will absolutely be one of the key things that you do.

Your motive in doing what is right in ministry, and when your motive is right in ministry, then forgiveness and forgetting will never be an issue. It will never be an issue. It is only an issue when your motive is not what it is supposed to be. When you and I in ministry, when our motive

is the right motive, and we are doing what we are doing because we love people, and that does not mean you do not correct people. We live in a world today where if you correct your children, everybody thinks you do not love them, and of course that is simply not true. You will find that Paul said some very heavy things to these people, but because he loved them, and when you understand that, you see his motive behind the concept of ministry, and when your motive is right, your forgiving and forgetting situations will never come into the picture.

Biblical correction will always have as its motive the love for the person and what you are dealing with, because you understand what God has for them and you want the person to do right. Over the years in ministry, and I am sure some of you can equate to this that have been dealing with people for a long time too, but dealing with Christians is just like dealing with your children. It really is. If you are good with your children, you will be good in dealing with people. It is just that simple.

Good parents will always correct their children. They will, and you correct them and reprove them because you love them, because you want them to grow up right and keep them safe. I talked about it Thursday night, I said if you, and I have seen this happen, we go someplace together, or you come to church, and your kids are excited about it, or you are going someplace to an amusement park or whatever, and they are really excited about it. So you pull in there and you get there, and you start to get one or a couple of other kids out of the car, and suddenly the ones you got out are excited, they see their friend across the way, they run right out on that street, right across the busy intersection, right across the moving parking lot, right across the whole thing, and they could be easily hit with a car. You gasp, you panic for a moment, you certainly do not respond, you react, and probably need to in that case. You throw your other kids in the car, lock them securely, the window is down a little bit so they can breathe, and you run over and you grab this child and you bring them over, and you absolutely rebuke them. You get in their world, and you get in their face, and you are not doing it because you are mad at them, you are not doing it because you are angry at them, you are doing it because you know that what they did was a stupid thing, and they could have been severely hurt if not killed. So you are rebuking him, you are reprovng him, you are correcting him, but your motive behind it is that you love him and you want to keep him safe.

Just like your kids, and my kids were the same way growing up, just like our kids, 95 percent of Christians do not respond well or react well to criticism or correction or reproof. They just do not. All my life I have seen parents that their kids, the parents really do not do what they are supposed to do with their kids when they are growing up, when they are little, and believe it or not, you can get away with it for nine, ten, twelve years, maybe eleven years. But one day, the kid hits that point where when they were three or four and you told them what to do and they did not like it, they just stuck their tongue at you when you turned your back. You see, you never really got into it because you were big, you were strong, and they knew that you could overpower them. But when a kid turns 12 or 13 or 14 years old, now he challenges or she challenges your authority, and they are going to go out and they are going to start to do some things, and now you have got to correct them.

I do not know how many parents have come in and talked to me and said, "I am not sure what happened to my kid. I do not know. All of a sudden now they are 12, 13, 14 years old, and they are sassing me back, they are doing all these things, they are hanging out with the wrong crowd. I do not know what happened to my kid." I am so sick and tired of going through the same boring segment of why, so I just tell them, and I have bought seven or eight copies of it, and I just give them out a copy of the great classic horror thriller Frankenstein from 1932, starred Boris Karloff, Basil Rathbone. Oh, what a fake guy he is. You know the story of Frankenstein, the original one, not these watered-down mamsy-pamsy ones that he looks like somebody that is your next-door neighbor. I am talking about this guy, the real original Frankenstein.

I say, "Watch this, and then come back." And I will say, "Did you see at the end of the movie how Frankenstein ran amok through the village, terrorizing, killing, maiming, hurting everybody?" "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." "What is that got to do with my kids?" "Well, why did he do that? Why did Frankenstein at the end of the movie run through the city killing people, terrorizing people? People would not come out at night, scared to death. Why did he do that?" I will tell you why he did that: because the guy created a monster. Are you getting my drift? When you create a monster, that is what monsters do; they terrorize people, they do not follow any rules. Now, I am not suggesting that you do what they did in the 1932 version and burn him in a windmill someplace, but it might help.

My point is this: when you deal with your people, you are dealing with just like with your kids. Your kids do not like to be rebuked, your kids do not like to be told and corrected, and most of God's people do not like it either. Yet the Bible, yet the Bible says in Hebrews 12:5, 11:

*And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*

You see, to God we are His children, and He says in verse 5, "My son, here comes, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."

*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

That is right. You see, God knows that we do not like to be rebuked and corrected any more than children do. But He says, "afterward," after the reproof, after the chastening, after what you have to go through, "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Now, what does that mean? What does it mean that afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness? You know what that means? It means then you do right, and that is the whole goal. God's love in chastising you, rebuking you and me, is based on His love for us. He says, "What child, what father is it that does not correct his child?" And what parent does not correct their children? And you do not do it because your motive is you are angry, or it should not be, or you hate them. The motive is, "I love you, and because I love you, I know there is something out there that will hurt you that you do not see for whatever reason," and that is the way it is.

You know, in my life right now, where I am at, I am having the greatest time of my life. If somebody would have told me 25 years ago that I was going to enjoy the ministry and what I do

the way that I do, I would not have understood it. But I tell you what, I love my relationship with all of you. Everybody look to the left, the person sitting to the left of your right. We have got, now look to the right. Okay, there are only two people in this church that I do not like. You have just looked at them. I am just kidding, I am just kidding.

You know what, personally, I do not think there is a loser in this church. I mean, I am not saying that you are not going to wind up losing, but I do not think there is anybody in our church that does not have the ability to be used of God and to do what God wants them to do. I love my relationship with all of you. God does not bring problem people to our church; He just does not. Now, I did not say He did not bring people with problems, but He does not bring problem people. He brings people to the church here, in my own personal opinion, He brings people here with problems because He is giving you an opportunity to get in the book and solve those problems, and that is what a church is all about.

Some of you, the Bible says, "a brother is born for adversity" over there in the book of Proverbs 17. Many of you older guys are like the brothers that I never had in my life, and certainly we have been through some adversity together. I know that many of you call me "Dad," many of you call me "Pops," you are calling me "Grandpa," and you are dead. But you know, and I like that, I understand that, I really do. Many of you tell me I am your father in the Lord, your spiritual dad, your spiritual father. Hey, I understand that, and I never want you to think that that is not special to me, and that I, in many, many cases, I feel the same way. But I also understand that a lot of that can just be, excuse my coining English here, blowing smoke up my rear end, because a lot of people will always want to tell you what they think you want to hear. I do not make any judgments on it one way or the other. I enjoy it, I do, I do, because I love my people.

Somebody says, "You know what, you are my spiritual dad, you are my spiritual father, you are Pops, you are with us, your Dad." I appreciate all of that. But you know what the bottom line is, the real proof of that is that I am your spiritual father, and you love me, and I am your Dad in the Lord, right up to the point where I have to correct you. See, that works. I know how it works. I am your spiritual father in the Lord right after I have to rebuke you or correct you, and then it is just like your kids, you get an attitude about it.

You see, I keep trying to tell you this, and I know it is hard for you to divide it all out, but it is not my job as a pastor to tell you what to do. That is not my job. You are, you can do whatever you want to do if you are saved or you are lost. That is not my job to tell you what to do. Many pastors think it is their job to tell you what you do with your life. It is not my business. It is not anybody's. Somebody comes up, says, "You know, so and so is seeing so and so." I do not care, as long as she is not somebody else's husband or her wife or whatever how the thing works. I do not care what they do. Some of you just get so, "You know, so and so is seeing so and so. Oh, so and so smiled at so and so when they came in the door. I think they are going to get married." I do not get into those things. My job is not to tell you what to do. My job is to tell you what God wants you to do with your life. That is my job.

All churches have to, and all I do is preach a Bible standard that forms a Bible platform by which you say, "Yeah, I want to adhere to that," or "No, I do not." But people think that I have favorites

in the ministry. I do not really have favorites in the ministry. I just get closer to people who are in the foxhole with me when the bullets are zinging by my ears than somebody that is in the rear with the gear, if you can identify with that. I have the vernacular that we used to say in the military, but I will just spare you that for right now. Make it in later on, but right now we will just leave it out.

The concept is that you have to hold a standard, you have to have a Bible platform. The church has to be, in the world that we live in, the church today has to be a stable platform that never changes. My God, people, everything in the world changes around us. Everything. You cannot bet on the news that you see at nine o'clock in the morning; it will change by the time you see it at ten o'clock at night. Everything in this world is in flux. Everything in this world, there is nothing stable, there is nothing absolute. You cannot bet on anything. What people need today is one place, just one, one place where they can go where it is always going to be the same. One place they can go that truth is always going to be the main meal served, and you get the bottom line every time, every way, no matter what it is. People need that in their life. That is all the church really does. That is what a pastor's job should be.

I do not get involved in social issues. I do not care about gay rights. I do not care about this big thing about the funding abortion and all that. I do not get into that stuff. If you preach the truth and you preach the Bible, the Bible truth and the impact of a nation bathed in that book will take care of every moral problem we have. The problem is not the liberals, the gays, or this situation over here, or the people who like abortion. The problem is preachers are not getting in the pulpit and taking the truth and blasting people with it.

I say that because all my life I have heard this: people do not like to be corrected, people do not like to be rebuked. They like to get into situations, circumstances, to do things, and then just kind of pretend that, "I am just fine." Of course, that does not work. "How can two walk together," the Bible says, "except they be agreed?" "No man can serve two masters; you either love the one or hate the other."

Years ago, I had a guy that came in to see me, and this has been in this church a number of years ago, about eight years ago, and he said, "Well, you know what?" He said, "I just do not feel, I just do not feel like the church is where it used to be, and I do not think the church is, is, is that anybody in church likes me." What he is trying to get across. I let him go on for a little bit, and I finally said, "Do not say, you know what?" I said, "I think the, I do not think the problem, the church, we are still preaching the same thing now we preached the day you came in the door. People are still getting saved. You won four or five people to Christ the first couple of years you were here. You went in the last year, you never missed the Bible study for the first two years you were here. Last year you missed just about all of them. You know what? I do not think the church has changed. I think you have changed."

You see, the church has the same passion now that it had when you came, and you had that passion for a couple of years. You know what you did? You gave that passion to something else or somebody else, and so now when you do that, your passion changes. You do not love the things that you once loved. You start to think the church changed. I guarantee you one thing, on

all the money you have, this church will never change the stand on what it teaches and what it preaches. Wrong is wrong, right is right, black is black, white is white. The devil do not get you, I do not forget how that thing goes. Anyway, it was a little song, but that is just the way it is. People do not like to be rebuked. They just do not. And you are fine with the pastor, you are fine with me, right up to the fact that I have to deal with you on something. It is just the way that it is.

Your kids are like that. Listen, kids, let me tell you something. When I was your age, and God put a man in my life, and I recognized his motive, what it was, that he loved me, and when he corrected me, brother, many times he corrected me publicly when I was preaching. I knew it because he wanted me to do what is right and be the best. I realized what I had. I saw his motive, and years later, years later, he said to me one time, he says, "You know what, I saw something in you that I did not see anybody else, and that is why I was harder on you." And I appreciate it. He did not have to tell me that; I already knew that. You know what the difference is between me and some of you right now? I will tell you what, when he told me something, whether I liked it or not, it is what I did because I knew he was right. I knew he knew more about it than I did. I knew he knew more about life and the ministry and people, and I knew God had put him in my life, and I never caught an attitude with him because I knew his motive, and I knew he was the man that God put in my life. Just do this to it.

Motive is everything. Motive in ministry, why we do behind what we do, and that is what I am saying, this great chapter is dealing with forgiving and forgetting, and when your motive is right in ministry, forgiving people is never an issue. Never is, never is. In reality, it is the key to everything in our relationship with Christ. Nikki asked a question the other night in Bible study, and I talked about the Judgement Seat of Christ. When you get to the Judgement Seat of Christ, it is not about what you did or what you did not do, it is not about how much you did, it is about the motive of why you did what you did. That is what God looks at. He says, "of what sort it is" in 1 Corinthians 3:13. He is going to sort out what we do according to the motive that was behind it, why you did it.

Paul did not say these hard things he said to hurt them, but to help them. He said it in chapter 1, verse 24, "I want to be a helper of your joy." But it is true with your kids, and when you get into ministry and you start dealing with people, you have to realize that reproof and correction go right along with it, right along with it.

We had a girl in our church here, she is still here, and I am not going to embarrass her because she has turned out to be one of the crown jewels of this church, and I appreciate her very much. But when she came into this church several years ago, I have to say she was probably one of the most dysfunctional people I have ever met in my life. This girl was prone to make every bad decision that there was to make. I think she even invented a few. There are many times that me and the people were looking at her, and we just shook our head. This girl had so many issues she had to work through, so many misconceived concepts about life, relationships, and the whole nine yards, it was unbelievable.

I remember talking to the people that were working with her, and I will not even say anything about anybody because I will not even give any shadow of who it was, but I remember talking to

people working with her, and I said, "You know what?" We would just say, "Do you believe that?" And I said, "Yeah, I believe that. I have seen it all my life." And then we both come back and say the same thing, "But you know what, there is something about her because no matter how brutal you are with her, no matter how you just get in her face and say, "That was the stupidest thing you ever saw, you ever did in your life, why would you do that?" No matter how brutal you got, and you had to get right down where she could grasp it, but no matter what you said, she did what was right with it, and today, one of the finest people in our church.

I do not know what to tell you. There is something about it. God puts people in your world, just like He puts your parents. Some of you, well, we do not have many teenagers here, yeah, we do not preach the teenage section. Some of you teenagers do not understand it today. God put parents in your life to correct you and reprove you and to guide you because they love you, and that is what the church does. That is what Paul is dealing with this church here. Paul was one of the hardest preachers I ever met anywhere and I ever read about in the Bible, but his motive was the same as God's motive when He is hard with us: a love for God's people to do what is right, and that was the bottom line in everything you did.

I gave you last week a great principle. Boy, if you do not have this on a three by five card, you are in trouble. Job 34:23. What a great verse:

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

That is all God wants. All God wants is you and me to do what is right. And then he says that he should enter into judgment with God. If you are not right, God wants you to make it right. Take care of it now, or God will take care of it tonight. Just that simple.

#### IV. The Wise Man vs. The Foolish Man

In the book of Proverbs, and I love Proverbs, in the book of Proverbs, you are going to find the greatest, wisest man who ever lived in this book on wisdom. I love Proverbs. If I had one book in my life, and I have told you this, I can commit the total Greek call in every situation to be the problem. I think out of Proverbs comes the issues of life. I think in every example, every model, everything in the Bible, you are going to find the rest of the books, I think it comes back to Proverbs. I think it is the central concept of the mind of Christ.

But what he does in Proverbs for you and for me is defines for us a wise man and a foolish man. We have talked about a part of this that we are to examine ourselves, the four things, examine ourselves, see, go down through that line, examine yourself, be honest with yourself, all those four things I gave you. I tell you it is so simple here that sitting here this morning, you can put yourself in one category or the other. Now there are some things in the Bible that are nebulous, and nebulous means kind of smoky, that you cannot see everything, but boy, this is not one of them. When it comes to the book of Proverbs, he cuts right through the smoke, and in Proverbs, he defines for us what a wise man and what a foolish man is. I want you to see this today of how it fits into this concept of accepting what God corrects us and rebukes us.

Everybody enjoys, or they probably enjoy for the wrong reason, American Idol. I like American Idol. I never watch it, but I watch it every once in a while for one reason: to watch some horrendously horrible person get up there and sing. A couple of weeks ago, they were in Galveston, Texas, and they had two cowboys come in and sing. It was the absolute most ridiculous. I have heard some things on it that I have laughed for three weeks after I have heard some of them. I mean, I go downstairs and I cannot quit laughing. It is absolutely the most ridiculous thing you have ever heard in your life. Nothing is on key, nothing is in tune. They do not have a clue of what anything about music has to do with. I mean, if you close your eyes, you would think it was a wounded coyote out there in the desert someplace. I have heard some of those gals come up there, and I will tell you what, I am honest with you, the one gal, she will never make it as an American Idol, but she could rent herself out to a small town for an air raid siren, I guarantee you, I promise you she could.

Anyway, the thing that I like about it is just not how terrible they are, but how good they think they are when they are not. That is what I cannot. I mean, come on, have you not listened to yourself? I mean, I hope you live in a house that does not have much glass; you are going to break every window in that place, man. And they get up there and they actually think they are good, they actually think they are great, and when you tell them they are not, oh, have you ever seen them stomp out? Did you ever see them look, that look like a deer in the headlights, like, "What? I am not good?" "No, you are not good."

Now, I do not know who these people are, but you have a three or four panel people who are supposed to be experts in music. I do not like it much anymore since Simon is gone because Simon was brutal, and I relate to Simon because Simon was, he did not hold anything back, and he was brutal. I mean, he did. I remember what happened, I laughed for a week. He said to this one gal, he says, "Did you ever just, you have got to think about taking singing lessons?" And the girl says, "Oh, I have." And he says, "Where at?" She says, "Oh, it was a correspondence course." And he says, "Boy, they sure lost a lot of your mail, didn't they?" I love it.

I have to say this: God's people are the same way. They get out of fellowship with God, and just like I sit there and listen to American Idol, you listen to it, and we look at each other and say, "Man, what was that?" They think it is great, and nobody is going to tell them how terrible they really are. They can listen to their own tape, they will say, "What is wrong with that? What, what is wrong with that?" The dog is howling, the canary died, and the fish are belly up in the pool, and you want to know what is wrong with that? God's people are the same way. They get out of fellowship with God, and they just like, they do not see that everybody else sees it. When you start to get out of fellowship with God and you start to drift away from the book and the principles and start to get into areas where you should not be, let me tell you something, you cannot hide that any more than Miss Screecher can scream and sing and say, "Was not that really good?" I have seen them sit there and those poor judges put their hands in their head. I watched one of them put his hands over his ears. They never got it. If I was singing up there and somebody buried their hands and somebody put their ears over there, started laughing, I would just stop and go home. No, no, not them. They just go on like I am at the opera house. These people, they are there. He has put his head down because he has never heard anybody like this.

That is true. He, I mean, she is holding her ears because it is ridiculous. God's people are the same way.

Well, the book of Proverbs is one of those recordings of our singing. You want to find out what you really like, get into Proverbs, because Proverbs defines. I am going to define for you a wise man versus a foolish man. You put yourself and you score yourself.

Now the Bible says a wise man, I am going to give you the references, and you need to get these down if you do not have them in Bible. The Bible says the first thing, I am going to keep asking yourself, "Do you know? Ask yourself first, am I like this?" And then ask yourself, "Do I know anybody like this?"

Now, do you know anybody like that? I mean, you can give yourself, maybe one off, but I mean, when it comes down here, the key ones that you want to put in red are "receive commandments," "hearken to counsel," "seeks knowledge," and when he gets knowledge, he "increases it into learning." That is the key. That is the key.

Now, see how easy that makes it? You can put yourself in one or two categories. Just do not be like the American Idol person. Obviously, the tendency, the first thing to do is you say, "Oh yes, I know somebody like that." The person sitting across the thing saying, "Yeah, I know somebody like that too." It is you. You put yourself in here. This is a good self-examine, examine yourself, know yourself, prove, just here it is right here, take heed to yourself. Here it is right here. I mean, this is cut and dry, does not leave anything to the imagination.

## V. The Balance of Accountability in Ministry

When it comes to confrontation, and Paul confronts this church, in ministry you have to understand that dealing with people in their problems and confronting them is something that has to happen. But I will be honest with you, I personally do not like confrontation, and I never have really. I never have. I am not a person who enjoys confrontation. I do not think most people are. But I also understand that it comes with the job, and it is nothing personal. If you are going to do what the Bible says, and the Bible is a standard, and I understand that there are variations in things that we allow, but the bottom line is there are some things that you just have to hold a line on.

God's program of accountability and responsibility is a New Testament Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Bible-teaching local church. I said it earlier, the church has to be a stable platform for truth. I think the hallmark of many big churches, I said many, I do not necessarily say all, but I think the hallmark of many big churches is that people are drawn to them because they can hide. There is no accountability. You can come when you want, do what you want, go when you want, do not come when you want, nobody ever cares. But you see, there has to be accountability, and the church has to be a stable platform for truth, that God's people have a base to build on, something that never changes, and that if you change, it is you, but the church cannot change. It is still wrong to do this like it was last week. The fact that now you think it is okay to do this, that is you moving out, not the church.

Now look at verses 3, 4, and 5 again. Here is another great Bible principle in ministry:

*And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.*

*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.*

*But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I might not overcharge you all.*

Now here is this motive, what a great motive. You see, the motive is, he says, "I am not grieving you because I am not, I am not grieving you or saying these things to you to hurt you. I am saying these things to you because it is truth, and you need to hear them because you need to get where you need to be with God." When he is saying down through here, now brings up another great principle. When you start to deal with people, when you start to get involved in people's lives, and many of you know this principle already, but I will define it a little clearer for you even today, you have to come to the point where you have to find a balance in dealing with people.

I talk about not taking things personal, but personal things are your emotions, and you cannot keep your emotions out of dealing with people. I mean, if you love people, that is an emotion. You have to find a balance between loving them and giving them a part of you, but then having a line drawn in the sand, so to speak, that a balance that you do not change. You see, it is the balance of getting your emotions involved to a point, but not getting to the point where you get used by the people because you really want to help them, but they really do not want to do what is right. I find that is the biggest single flaw in young people, Christians who are trying to get into the avenue of working with people, and it comes in time, it really does. There is nothing wrong with it. I am glad you have it. I would much rather have that as a problem to solve than it is trying to get you mostly involved at all.

But Paul has a burden for this church, a genuine burden, and he cares about them, and all his correction and the hard things that he says to them came from the aspect that, "I simply want you to do what is right with God because I love you." And I know as the man who started this church, he is saying to them that, "You are better than this. You have more to offer, and you are sidetracked." Look at verse 4, here is his heart with him: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." There is a motive, that is as pure a motive as you can ever have.

But you know what, as a pastor in a ministry for over 40 years, I understand exactly what he is saying. I know exactly what Paul is alluding to. Let me tell you something, nothing kicks you in the gut harder than having a person in your ministry that you see that has great potential, that you see could be used of God. I have seen people that had great personalities, they were people, a people person, they had, they had a, they get a great sense of everything about them. It is absolutely, it just kicks you in the gut, that sick feeling that somebody who has great potential

but winds up because they are a fool of Proverbs chapter 1, throwing it all away. That is what grieves you. That is what grieved Paul. It did not make him mad, but it grieved him at his heart because he understood what I understand, and what in time I hope you understand, that the job of this church is for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, and in dealing with people, there has to be correction and reproof. It just comes.

Having the good times without being able to deal with the bad times, it is like I said with your kids. If you get along with your kids fine, and you just play and laugh and talk, and you just say, "Oh, I have a wonderful relationship with my kid," and then when you try to rebuke them, you see, you really do not. It is not about what we have together, it is not about when everything is going good. What we have together is when the world is coming down around us and we have to deal with things. That is where the real relationship and the maturity of Christianity plays itself out.

Paul says, "I have learned this, and I have learned to say this, and you need to learn this also." He says, "I want you to do right, and I want you to begin to do right, and I am so burdened for you and weep for you, and I love you so much." But look at verse 5: "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me but in part: that I might not overcharge you all." Now here is the balance that he says, here is what he is saying: "You grieve me, but only in part." You see, Paul had a part, a line that he was not going to cross. Paul loved these people, he loved them, he wanted to do what is right, he would do everything in the world for them, but he knew that there was a line he could not cross.

Now here is what he is saying, and it is our next great principle in ministry that goes hand in hand with forgiving and forgetting. He says, "I want you to do right," but he says, "I am not going to overcharge you." Now what does that mean? Well, a charge in the Bible, like you find Paul giving to Timothy, is the commandment to do what is right. He says to Timothy, "I charge you, I give you this charge." At our prayer group, we are talking about the 12 charges that God gave Timothy as a young pastor. A charge is something that he commits unto him that God has given Paul that he is charging him with. When you charge something on your credit card, you put it on your account. When you charge somebody with something in the Bible, you are putting it on their account. You better do something with it. In other words, you better be accountable. You know why they call it your account when you put up your balance every month? "What is your account? What is my bank account? What is my charging account? Here is my statement from my credit card, and it is my account." You know why it is called an account? Because at the end of the month, you have to be accountable for it. So when we charge you with something, we put it on your account, you need to be accountable for it. That is what he is saying. He said, "I will not overcharge you. I will not overcharge you." It is not going to give you something that you are not ready for.

But what he is saying here is this, and here is this great principle: "I want you to do right, and I weep and pray and grieve for you to do what is right, but I will not let myself want you to do right more than you do." Because the moment you want somebody you are working with to do right more than they want to do right, you are going to become vulnerable, you are going to become used, you are going to sidestep the biblical principles, you are going to cut them some

slack, and you are going to get taken advantage of. It is the tender trap in dealing with people, keeping your emotions principled by the Word of God.

I have had people, and I know you deal with people too, because you ask me, you tell me, "Well, you know, I am working with so and so, and we are discipling, and you know what, he comes to discipleship, but I cannot get him to come to church. What do I deal with that?" It is simple. Here is what you do: "Hey, look, it does not do you come to church any good if you are not going to get the disciple. If you are not going to come to church, the two work together. Now here is the deal: we disciple, you come, you come to church Sunday, we disciple on our night Wednesday. You decide not to come this Sunday, then we do not disciple this Wednesday." That is what you do. You hold them accountable because if you just want this person that you keep going with them, "I want them to do what is right, I want," you are going to waste your time with somebody who does not care enough about it to make the effort to get there. So you are going to wind up short-circuiting your own system, and you are going to get taken advantage of, and at the end of the day, they are going to walk out the door, and you are going to sit there.

You know what, "I meet you halfway. You want to do this, fine, I will do this. You come the other distance. You want to do that?" I have dealt with people in marital counseling. They can be a marital problem. I said, "Hey, look, I am willing to help you. I cannot help you. I will do whatever I can do. But the bottom line is, I do not solve problems in one session. I am talking about changing all your life. So if you want help, I will help you. I am not saying you have got to join our church. I am not saying you have got to become a member. But I am saying that I want you to come to get what is said so we can tie it all together and help you put the relationship into your life." I meet them halfway with the thing. That is what you have got to do, people. It is a thing where you have got to get a commitment out of people. You have got to get a commitment from them, and you have got to hold them accountable to that commitment.

At the end of the day, you have got to realize it is their choice, and you have got to be, sometimes I have said to them, "You know what, you can either stay here or you can move on. I am moving on. If you choose to stay here, that is okay." Now let me simplify it for you. There has to be in ministry a line you and I cannot cross, and sometimes it will cost you a friendship. It will. I do not know what to tell you. I mean, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Link up with him. I do not know what to tell you.

Now here is the bottom line. If you decide to commit suicide, now I do not think you should, but if you decide to commit suicide and you go up to a 30-story building downtown, open the window and get out on a ledge about this big, and inch your way over, and you announce to the world, "My life is over, I messed it up so bad, I am going to jump." And they call me and they say, "I hear that this guy or gal, whoever, is in your church." "Yes, they are." "Well, Reverend, they are up on the ledge and they are threatening to jump. Could you come down? We cannot talk to him. Would you try to come down and talk them down?" I say, "Absolutely." That is why I walk up there, get out of car, look up there, "Sure are 30, 30 stories up there, you are, man, just as goofy looking as you ever were." And they are up there. So they take me up the elevator, and so I get there, I open the window and I look out and I say, "Hey, how you doing? You know, this is not very good right now. A lot of people are worried about you. Your mom is down there, your

wife is down there, your husband down there, whoever they are. Your whole family is down there, and this thing, this is not good. I do not know what your issues are, I do not know what your problems are, but I promise you, whatever they are, we can work them out. Whatever you have got, whatever the issues are, you know, you have got 28 fire trucks down there, all these firemen are down there slopping, salivating, they have got these big old nets hoping you will fall and jump so they can try to catch you. And you know what is going to happen? You are going to go 30 stories, hit that thing, bounce up 20 more stories, and then you are going to come down and miss the net the second time." So I said, "Why do not you just come in and we can talk about it?"

Now, I will do everything I can do, but let me tell you what I am not going to do: I am not coming out on that ledge to try to grab you. Now, do you know why I am not coming on the ledge to grab you? Because I am not going to die with you. You are not taking me with you when you go. And that has to be the attitude in ministry. You do not want to do what is right? I will help you. I will do whatever I can do. But if you want to commit spiritual suicide by what you are doing, you know what, I will do whatever I can do, but you are not taking me down with you. There is a line I will not cross. It may cost you some friends. I do not know what to tell you. Better start looking at who your friends are.

I mean, I love people, I am a people person, I help them to a fault. My whole life has been spent dealing with the tragedies of life and their consequences of sin in people's lives, and I love it, it is my passion, I do it, that is what I do. But I have to learn what Paul had to learn and what you have got to learn in ministry, and it is simply this: not everybody is going to make it. It is not because I do not want you to, not because I will not give you the best shot. There are some people that are just not, they are going to be fine with you right up till they get their nose bent out of joint or they get into a circumstance that they should not be in there, and then you are going to get mad when you try to teach them and show them and help them get what is right. It is the wise man versus the foolish man, and that is the great, it goes back to the great principle of chapter 1, verse 12, the first week where he said, "Before you and I 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 had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to your word." He says, "You know what, I have a good conscience. You do not make it, you go out to the world, it will not because I did not do everything in my power, but there is a line that I cannot cross because when you jump off the ledge, you are not taking me with you. You make your choices, I will make mine." That is what he is talking about. Because the very moment you want somebody to do right more than they do, you will be taken advantage of, and you will lose your biblical perspective. It is just that simple. You will want to help them so bad and be involved emotionally, get involved emotionally, you will violate the biblical principles and try to cut them some slack, and I know the thing, "Well, they will leave." Well, you know what, let them leave.

Let me tell you something, the prodigal son syndrome is one of the greatest lessons in God's tools and God's tool belt. Let me tell you something, if you cannot learn in church, then you are learning at Pigpen University. That is a great school. Sometimes it is the best school, and I can say that because I graduated with honors from that school. But sometimes that is what it takes.

Paul was sorry, but only to a point, in part. His motive was right: "Do right, and I want you to, but only to the point that you are willing to do what is right yourself."

## VI. The Principle of Wisdom and Understanding

I leave you with this great principle today, and you want to put this down, and next week I am going to show you where we are going to take this church to the next couple of levels by the end of this year. I want to leave you with Proverbs 4:7. Turn to that and look at this great passage. It is a great passage. We have seen today the motive behind ministry, one of the greatest single things. The motive behind what you do with people has to be love because when you rebuke somebody or correct somebody, just like with your children, as long as you know your motive is right and your motive is biblical and you love them and want them to do what is right, but you also know there is a line in the sand that you cannot cross because when they take that fatal leap, you are not going with them.

*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*

*Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.*

*She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.*

*Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.*

Now the key to getting Bible understanding, as we talk about understanding all the time, talked about a couple of Thursday nights ago, but the key to getting understanding is getting God's wisdom. We know that God's wisdom comes from getting knowledge. Here is how it works, it is a simple format: You come to church. When you come to church, you get knowledge, that is facts. You start getting involved, you start getting a little deeper, you start learning some things, you start coming over to see me, you start getting disciplined, you start getting this, and then what God does is He takes those facts, and pretty soon you are starting to get God's wisdom in things, not the fleshly wisdom of the world, but God's wisdom. And when you start using what God has shown you, when you start putting it on little three by five cards like we do, when you start using the principles like we have been talking about, in time, when you start to get enough God's wisdom, then that wisdom turns into understanding. And he says that wisdom is the principal thing because the key to understanding is getting God's wisdom, and he says, "with all thy getting get understanding."

Now look at verse 8: "Exalt her, and she shall promote thee." There is your seven stages of spiritual growth. You see, when your passion becomes the principles of the Word of God, that is when you grow. When your passion becomes somebody else, something else, that is when you stop growing. It is real simple. He simply says, and it is the greatest advice that I could give any young man or young lady, mom or dad, whatever the case, in verse 8, "Exalt her," wisdom, "exalt her," and it is a "her" because Proverbs 31 is the virtuous woman, which is the type of the church, is what you are supposed to be. "Exalt her, and she will promote thee." You want to get promoted? You want to get up the spiritual stages of growth? You want to keep going? Then

exalt wisdom in your life, and she will promote thee. There is a process of getting to that point. You put God's wisdom number one in your life, and God puts you number one in His life. It is just that simple.

Look at verse 8 again: "She shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her." You see, once you get the wisdom and understanding, you have a good reputation with people. People will seek you out for guidance and help because they trust you, and they know you have and use the Word of God in your own life first. You see it. I think of people that, you know, been saved for 10, 20, not necessarily people in our church, but people have been saved 10, 20, 30 years. You think it would bother them that nobody would ever come and ask their advice? Oh, they are really good at giving you their advice, but nobody ever comes to ask them for any advice. "Yeah, she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her." Notice the word "embrace," there is the intimacy between you and God, Song of Solomon.

Verse 9: "She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace." Now that ornament of grace is throughout the New Testament, we will always be talking about the Holy Spirit of God and the things God puts into your life, and it is showing you that an ornament of grace around your head, you know what that is? That is you start to think the way God thinks and look at things the way God looks at them. Then he says, "a crown of glory" in verse 9, "shall she deliver to thee." There is your Judgement Seat of Christ, the process by which someday you are going to stand before Him and receive the crown, five of them listed in the Bible, but they all come because of the wisdom of God.

The best advice in the world for you today, and I do not even know what your all your circumstances are, situation, do not need to know, wherever you are at, whatever you are doing, the best advice in all the world for you today is verse 10: "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many." You want to have a happy life? Stay with the book.

Somebody said to me one time, "Well, you know what, you are going to look like a real fool when you die and you realize that all that Bible was not true and there was nothing true about God and all that stuff you put into your life and all that stuff you put into your world and all the things you made your family do. Boy, when you finally die and you realize what a farce this whole thing called Christianity was and you realize what an idiot you were, what a fool you were, what are you going to say then?" I said, "I do not need to wait then to say it, I will say it now. Even if that is all true, my life has been so much better and the happiest I could ever want it to be, more so than yours. And even if it is not true, it has given me a better life than I could ever hope for." But I tell you folks, it is true, and that verse means what it says and says what it means. All right, I am going to hold up there next week.