

I. The Purpose of Second Corinthians and Addressing Life's Problems

We have been going through the Book of 2 Corinthians, chapter by chapter, because it is truly the key book in the Bible on teaching us how to minister to other people. That is really what our church is all about.

We have been talking about every different aspect. Last week, we examined in chapter 10 the theme of the chapter: understanding the patterns of life that people develop over a period of time. Chapter 10 deals with how to make good decisions. I deal with a lot of people all the time who have problems in their life, many on different levels. I know that there is no way that in one setting I can truly solve somebody's problems. I do know that the Bible has the answers to whatever problems we have, but it would be ridiculous to think that you could spend five, six, seven, or eight years making bad choices in life and getting into situations, and then think that we could sit for an hour and solve all your problems. That is just not realistic.

I have found that there are two things you can do. I see it all the time when I work with people, and they sit down, and we begin to talk about where they are in their life. I have found that there are two things, no matter where you are, what your life is like, or what you are struggling with, on whatever level.

1. Get a plan to get out of the problems you are in. A lot of times when people come and talk to me, that is what we do. You have to see their faces sometimes; they come in so struggled and burdened with what they have. But when we talk about it, and I actually show them and tell them, "I cannot solve all of your problems today, but this is the path by which, if you take it, you can get out of your problems in time." When I put together a plan for them, working with them one-on-one, putting many of you in their life, the look on their face when they leave is totally different than the one they had when they came.
2. Stop making bad choices. This is what chapter 10 is all about. The second thing that we all can do, no matter what your problems are, no matter what level they are, there is one thing that everybody can do right now. We may not be able to fix it down the line; that will have to take care of other things. I am not saying that all your problems will go away, but I will tell you one thing we can all do right now today, if you are willing to, and that is simply stop making bad choices. You can do that today. You may not be able to eradicate the bad ones that you have made, but in time, you can deal with those. The thing you want to stop is making bad choices. Continually making bad choices will always lead to continuous problems in your life.

II. The Mind of the Minister and Understanding People

Chapter 10 talks about the aspect of the mind of the minister. We have talked about how not to make bad choices, how to change things, and understanding people. This is something that,

fundamentally, if you are going to work with people, you have to do. You have to be able to understand why people say the things that they say, both saved and lost, why they do the things that they do, and how they look at things the way they do and why they do. That is truly the key.

Last week, we saw two different aspects of our mind. We saw the word "imagination" in 2 Corinthians 10:5, and we saw the concept of casting down every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

2 Corinthians 10:5

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

That word "imagination" is a great word when you break it down in the Bible. Do you know how it is used in the Old Testament? You find the word "abomination" and you find the word "imagination." Those two words have the word "nation" in them, and they are two great words because they originate with the nation of Israel. As we saw last week, the basic fundamental problem they had was their imagination. The fundamental problem that we have is our imagination. It is used in the Old Testament as "imagination." In other words, Israel was thinking like all the other nations. They were imagining themselves to be like the other nations, so God gives us the word "imagination." They were committing all of the sins that God gave us, the abominable things that God did not want them to do, that all the other nations were doing. So God gave us the word "abomination."

In other words, Israel's two problems were the fact that they were thinking like the other nations, and the second problem they had is they were being like the other nations. They got into problems in their imagination and the way they thought about things and the way they did things simply because they had bad associations. God told them, "You are not to be like the other nations; you are to be separate." But no, they wanted to be like the other nations. They developed their imagination; they developed their abominations, and in time, it caused them a problem. For you and for me, it is the exact same thing. For Israel in the Old Testament, the other nations were the nations that God told them to stay away from. For you and for me in the New Testament, in a spiritual sense, it is the world in general. If we live like the world and we do the things of the world, then that is exactly what got Israel in trouble, and that is what gets us in trouble.

Then the second thing it says is, "casting down every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God." We talked about exalting something in your life, exalting somebody else in your life more than Christ. Then we saw the great principle of bringing every thought into captivity under the obedience of Christ. We talked about how to do that. We talked about your imagination. When you allow yourself to think like the world, when you allow yourself to be like the world, we bring a stronghold into our life. He talked about in that passage, and we talked about it last week, pulling down those strongholds in your life, using all the tools that God has made available for you: your Bible, your church, your pastor, and yourself, to be able to quit making bad decisions.

I gave you, if you remember, some great passages to study, some great principle verses:

- Jeremiah 1 – We saw the job of a pastor.
- Ezekiel 8 – How God gives somebody a lying spirit when they want to do their own thing.
- Ephesians 6 – The armor of God that we are to put around us.
- 1 Peter 1:13 – Where it talks about girding up the loins of your mind.

All of these deal with the greatest battle that the human race and the inhabitants of planet Earth will ever fight. It is the battle that you and I fight every day of our life. It is the battle of the mind, of what we think. That is truly where the battle is.

III. The Readiness to Revenge

Today, we are going to pick it up in 2 Corinthians 10:6 and read it down to the end of the chapter.

2 Corinthians 10:6

And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Most of the time, it is in our mind what we think about. Somebody does something to us, and we think about how to get even. Somebody will hurt us in some way, and sometimes people will actually do it, and sometimes they will not, but they will think about doing it. When you see somebody that has that "get even" mindset, you know that is not God's mind; that is not the way God operates. I have often thought, by looking at God's people, if God dealt with us the way we deal with each other, we would all be in trouble. The day God ever develops that "I am going to get you" attitude and "get even with you," we are all in a world of hurt. But He does not do that.

In the Star Trek movie, Wrath of Khan, Khan says one of the greatest lines. He got marooned on a planet someplace, and they all think he is dead, and 100 years later, he is still alive. He is a super-human guy. So they find him, and he takes them captive, and he is upset because he blames Captain Kirk for what they did. He says this line: "Revenge is a dish best served cold." That is a great line. When he said that, I knew he had to be a Christian because that is the way Christians think. Christians take revenge on everything and everybody.

Revenge can be a good thing in life. We think about the word "anger," and we always hear negative about anger. We hear the word "wrath," and we always hear the negative side of that. When we hear the word "hate" something, we always hear the negative side of that. But you understand that those are God-given emotions that God gave you. They are like any other thing in your life; they can be used for good or they can be used for bad.

Take the word "hate." Every Christian ought to hate. Do you know what you ought to hate? You ought to hate everything in your life that goes against what the Word of God tells you. You ought to hate. God hates. The Bible says God hates with a perfect hatred. You have to study and find out what that is.

Now take the word "anger." Anger can be a good thing. Anger is an emotion that God gave us. One time, Jesus said, when He saw the nation of Israel and He saw all that they did, the Bible says He was angered at them. You can have anger in your heart if it is righteous indignation, if it is anger based on something that violates something with God. Now, anger out of control, anger

to the point of abuse, anger to the point where it gets completely out of control, then that is wrong. Bob Jones Sr. said one time, and it is a true statement, "Every bad thing in this world is a good thing twisted the wrong way." That is so true.

You take the word "wrath," and somebody says, "Oh, I am going to suffer Mom and Dad's wrath." Well, maybe you should. Wrath is the concept of the Second Coming of Christ. God's wrath comes on this Earth. That is a good thing.

Now take the word "revenge." Ninety-nine percent of preachers will get up there and talk about revenge, and they say it is a bad thing. Well, revenge can be a bad thing, but in this context, it is a good thing. In this context, he is talking about not you and me as Christians taking revenge on somebody else, but taking revenge on yourself when you do not do what is right. Think about that.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:7, "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ, even so are we Christ's." That is what I want you to do today. If you are a Christian, I want you to rethink where you are today. I think it will help you because the Bible says that you and I ought to be revengeful when it comes to ourselves.

Look at 2 Corinthians 10:6 again: "And having in a readiness to revenge." I want you to see that word there: "in a readiness." You have to watch every word in the Bible. "Having in a readiness." The fact is, you are in something that makes you and puts you in the proper mindset that will take revenge on your own flesh. What you are in is the Word of God. As a Christian, we ought to get absolutely infuriated with ourselves when we break fellowship with God. If you are truly a red-blooded, born-again Christian and you have a relationship with God, I know what it does for me. I am far from perfect, but I will tell you this: there are times I get so angry at myself, there are times I get so infuriated with myself that yet one more time the devil got an advantage over me. Yet one more time I did not follow through what I preach to you all the time, and I was not smarter than the problem. It infuriates me; I get so angry at myself. If you truly love God and you truly understand what God did for you, when you let Him down, it should devastate you.

I am not Roman Catholic, nor do I pretend to be Roman Catholic, but there is one thing that Roman Catholics do, or did do, or used to do, that I think every Baptist ought to apply at some point in your life, especially in this case, and that is to whip yourself. They came to the place where they would make penance with God. Martin Luther used to whip himself on his back until he bled. No, I am not suggesting that. But how can an unsaved man at that point whip himself to do penance with God because he knows he is a sinner, and you and I who are saved just live our life and do what we want to do and never think twice about it?

Revenge. You ought to be revengeful. You have a readiness to be revengeful. That should get any red-blooded, born-again, saved person on the warpath against himself. Tell yourself how stupid you are to fall for that one more time. Tell yourself how gullible we are to have yet one more time the devil get us. Tell yourself how worthless we are to God and wonder why God even puts up with us the way that He does and just does not come down and wipe us off the map. Hate what you do when it goes against Him.

I like to watch people. All my life I have seen this, and I know sports brings everything out of people. I have watched in volleyball, I have watched in basketball, I have watched in softball where some of the guys—the girls do not do it too much because the girls do not really have a lot of ego involved in sports; the guys do. The guys want to show how macho they are. I pitch in softball. I should not give away my secret. I cannot do anything else; I would be in the outfield, and that ball would go right by me, and I would never be able to see it. But on the mound, I have a secret why I do it, but I am not telling the secret. I can own that plate. If I have a good day, I will drop that ball on any corner I want, and I will strike out a lot of big guys that are good ballplayers. Do you know why I do it? I do not preach to their ability. I learned a long time ago to pitch to their ego. You get a guy that comes up to play that wants to show the world that he is the best ball hitter in the world. He will swing at anything you throw him. When he misses the first one, then you have him because now he is double-darn going to prove how good he is. So you pitch to his ego again. You give him a ball that he cannot hit, but he does not care because it is not his athletic ability taking over; it is his ego, and you strike him out.

Do you know what happens when you do that? He throws his bat down. He kicks dirt. He walks back. He throws his glove down. He slams the gate. Somebody comes over; his wife tiptoes over to give him water. He throws the water down. He goes home that night and kicks the dog. He goes home that night and beats the kids. They did nothing. He beats the kids. He gets absolutely infuriated because he could not hit a little white, stupid ball over the fence. But yet, the devil will get a hold of him; he will sin against God, and he has no problem with that.

I have seen it in our own league in volleyball. People seem to get mad, and they get stuffed, and they take that ball and they will smack it down. At the end of the game, when they get beat, they will not go over and shake the other people's hands on the other team. You see it all the time. They are mad. They do not show up to eat afterwards. They go do their own thing. They are mad. They are upset. Why? Because you lost a volleyball game. My God, there are worse things in life than that. If that is what throws you off, I hope nothing ever major happens in your life. Yet they can sin against God and do whatever they want to do and never even bother them.

I am always suspect of people who call themselves Christian but enjoy a life of sin, and it never really impacts them. The fact that Christ did all that He did for them, He gave all that He gave for them, and then you and I can just do what we want to do. It ought to devastate us. It ought to bring us to our knees. It ought to bring you to the point where you just get on the floor and you beat the floor and you cry out to God, "Why do You put up with me?" But no, we will never take revenge on ourselves, but we will always take revenge on other people.

You ought to hate what you do when it goes against what God is and what He did for you. The fact that God, who gave everything He had for you and for me, and then when we sin, we go against that, it is like eating a hamburger; nothing. Fundamentally, I tell you this all the time, and I tell you this when you want to work with people: a lot of people get into a lot of problems in their life—alcoholism, drug abuse, all kinds of stuff. I tell people all the time, and you see people even come to our own church who struggle with it, and they come for a while, and then they do not come anymore, and it takes them over again. For some of you, we need to have a revolving door back there because you are in and out so much. But I will tell you fundamentally what the

problem is with whatever stronghold you have in your life. I am going to tell you what it is, and I am going to tell you why you can never get over it. You will never get over what is in your life until you hate it as much as God hates it and see it for what it is, and then forsake it for what it is. That is taking revenge.

IV. Judging Not by Outward Appearance

Now look at 2 Corinthians 10:7, and here is another great principle:

2 Corinthians 10:7

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ, even so are we Christ's.

He is saying, "Do you look on things after the outward appearance?" He says, "If you do, and you are saved, you are Christ's." He says, "Let him of himself think this again." I want you to rethink some things this morning. If you are a Christian here this morning, I want you to listen to what I have to say. I am talking about making good choices, stopping making bad choices. I am going to show you fundamentally how to do that, but you have to rethink some things today. We talked about it the last couple of weeks: changing the mindset of where you are. It is just that simple.

There is a great principle in the Bible, and it is certainly a great principle in life: you never judge anything on the basis of how it appears. Your mom and dad used to tell you this, I am sure: "If it looks too good to be true, it probably is." Do you know why? Because you never judge things by the appearance. I learned that the hard way in the ministry and in life. I truly did. I think every pastor does. Every Christian does. I think a lot of times the best way to learn things is to get burned. Do you know how I kept realizing as a kid, when I was five, six, seven years old, not to touch the hot grill in the oven? How? I got burned. When you learn, you get burned, you remember that. When dealing with people, when you get burned, you remember that. After a while, you learn the great process that you never judge anything. Paul is absolutely right; he is trying to tell them here.

The greatest definitive story on that in the Bible, the greatest story on this in the Bible of not judging by appearance, goes back to the book of 2 Samuel. In fact, it is really the whole book, but the story really unfolds itself in the first 16 or 17 chapters. Obviously, it is the story of Saul and David. Israel had come through the period of time of judges, and it is time for them to have a king. When they all get together, God tells Samuel, "This is the guy that I want." Samuel goes down to Jesse, and he says, "I have all these boys," and he has them pass through one at a time. God says, "I do not want him. I do not want him. Nope, do not want him. Do not want him." Finally, little David comes out. Little David is probably at this time 16, maybe 17 years old. He probably weighs about 110 pounds soaking wet. When he walks through, he was the last guy that you would have thought God would have chosen to be king. God says, "That is who I want. I want him."

The other side of the story was King Saul. The Bible says Saul was an incredible guy. He was a guy who, from all appearances, he looked like he should be the right guy. But God did not choose Saul; God wanted David. In that story, He gives us one of the greatest principles in 1 Samuel 16:7. It goes right along with what Paul is saying here.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

That is what the last couple of weeks I have been giving you everything that goes right along with that, and we are building this as we go. I showed you about attitude and action. I showed you how a person will say, "Oh, I got saved," or "I am doing this," or "I have changed my life," and then three weeks later, they will go right back. Why? Because attitude did not change; action changed. You will be smarter than that. You look at that; you do not buy that right out of the chute. You give it some time to see what it is really like because you never go with appearance.

I told you the great concept of short term and long term. Saul looked great in the short term. Many things you face in life, or many people you meet, or many circumstances you look at, it looks great in the short term. It is the long term you have to look at. Short term will always be the appearance; long term will be how it really is. Then I talked about the lowest common denominator: breaking a situation down to see what it really is, not as it appears, but as the reality of it is. Looking at the appearance of something and buying it will be a disaster because it is short term. It is action; it is all you are getting. The heart of man is what you look at and what you look for.

You say, "Well, I cannot read anybody's heart." Oh, yes, you can. You cannot get in and look at their heart and see what they are like, but the Bible says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." If you watch the action, the action will tell you where their attitude of heart is. That is just the way it works. That is the way it works in dealing with people.

Please do not take this wrong because I know many of you have come over and talked to me, and you told me where you are at and the things you want to do in your life. Listen to me now: I have learned over the years, I give you the benefit of the doubt. But am I going to sign you up to be the Christian of the year at that point? No, because I want to watch you. I have been around long enough to know that people tell me everything. I could fill up the rest of this sermon and the next five weeks with the layers of things I have heard people tell me that they never came through on. That is just the way human nature is. After a while, you learn that it is not that you do not believe what they say; I want to believe what they say, but I am somewhat skeptical because I want to see it. I do not want to get my emotions involved. I do not want to get caught up in it where somebody tells me something, but it is an action change; they are not really an attitude change.

I have heard people all the time, "I want to change my life. I will do whatever you say to do." And then two months later, they are gone, or they have an attitude problem, or they do not like now what they once said that they did. I have learned it is very important, and you learn this

when you work with people: when somebody comes over and sits down, and they have some issues you are working through, I think it is very important to document that first meeting. Let them understand what you expect. Let them tell you what they want. Document what the process is going to be. Do not get into a situation where three months later or four months later somebody comes back and says, "You did not say that," or "That is not what we agreed on." No, do not find yourself in that scenario because people will change, because most of the people want to change their action and not their attitude. Most people want to go with the appearance of something. Do not fall for that. Document what you are talking about. So three months later, four months later, when it all falls apart and they do not like it, you just simply go back to that first meeting and say, "What part of that did you not understand?" You have to bring it back to the reality of it because that is just what it is.

People always go by the appearance. I have seen girls, and guys too for that matter, get into a terrible marriage, a terrible situation, just by looking on the outward and buying the line that is put out and not using the principles of God to figure it all out. It is just the way that it works in life. You never go with the appearance. That will always be the short term. You will always follow the Bible principles in all that you do.

V. Flying by Instruments: The JFK Jr. Analogy

I told some people a couple of weeks ago, if you want to work with people and you want to use the principles, and you know a lot of you play video games and a lot of you do goofy stuff. If you want the Bible alternative to that to help you grow, there is a program on TV called The Last 24. It is on the Current channel. I taped nine of them yesterday. The Last 24 is an hour of taking a famous person who died, many of them by suicide like Janis Joplin, many of them like being murdered like Marvin Gaye, many of them different things. You sit there for an hour, and it actually builds the case to show you what happened and then goes back and shows you how it is. It is the greatest counseling tool you will ever find. I sit there with a notebook. I sit there cataloging principles. I cannot wait for it to come on because now you are actually looking at something in a person's life, and you actually have the ability to take the Bible and weave yourself through it and learn and put the principles to it, and you already know what the end result is going to be.

One of the greatest that I ever saw, and I used it this morning for where we are talking about making bad decisions, was the death of JFK Jr. JFK Jr. was a unique kid. He was the little boy that when JFK, the president, was killed, was there saluting, little John John, and everybody fell in love with him. He grew up to be a dynamic guy, and he was a very good-looking guy and a very charismatic guy, and he was just a really neat guy. But he got killed. He got killed in a plane crash. On The Last 24, when they were showing this, I just about, I could not—I am glad I taped it because my jaw dropped so much, and I thought, "There is so much here that is relevant to where we are at." When they laid out the story, what they always do, and this is where you find the principles, here is what happened.

He was a pilot; he flew his own little planes. In flying planes, you get two kinds of readings. The first kind of readings you get is what they call VFR. That means you have a visual, visual flight

rules. That means when you take your little plane off, the sun has to be out; there cannot be a lot of big clouds in the sky. You have to stay below the cloud level because you always have to have perfect vision of where you are. So you have to have vision of where you are flying. You cannot lose sight of the horizon. You cannot get up where you lose sight of anything. It is a very basic fundamental where pilots get to in their life when they start flying that they only fly on good days.

The other one they find, when they get a little bit farther on, they get what they call IFR-rated. That is instrument flight rules. That means that they can get into the soup of clouds and not see anything at all and be able to fly without crashing your plane. Here is the problem, and here is where it gets interesting. When you lose sight of visual and you get into a cloud, you lose your perspective of everything. You cannot tell if you are up. You cannot tell if you are down. You can be in a steep dive going down, and your instincts tell you you are flying straight. You can be in a spin, and your instincts are saying, "I am not going down; I am going up." You lose all perspective of up and down, left and right. The human body is designed, whether you know it or not, the human body is designed to be relevant to everything that we see. This is one of the problems they are going to have with space travel when they get out there, if they ever do, and they cannot see planet Earth anymore. You get out into space, there is no up, there is no down, there is no left, there is no right. You lose all sense of direction. For human beings, the way God made us, that does not work well for us.

So what they did in airplanes, and real pilots follow this—if you are going to take a short hop to Columbia, and it is a nice sunny day, you have no problem. But if you are going to fly through some heavy stuff, you have to be instrument rated to be able to do that. What does that mean? It means that you get in completely socked out, and your senses, your emotions, tell you that your plane is in a dive, or you are going down, or you are going up, or you are going left, or you are going right. Your instincts are thrown off. You do not follow your instincts. You look at your instrument panel, and you will have a little horizontal plane in there that will tell you if you are left or right, or if you are up or if you are down. That is what you look at. But it is the hardest thing in the world, the hardest thing in the world, to put your instincts aside, to put your feelings aside, and trust those instruments. I do it with a GPS. I am not sure why I bought a GPS because I put it in that tells me to take me, and I think I know a better way to get there. I do not like the lady's voice anyhow.

As human beings, we have instincts, and when you get into flying blind, those instincts get disoriented. You think you are going up when you are going down. You think you are going left when you are going right. You think you are straight, and you are in a straight dive down. You lose your horizon. You lose all perspective of where you are. You have to learn to follow your instruments. That is what he did not do. He was not instrument rated. In fact, when I looked at that, I thought to myself, "Boy, there are the things exactly I tell people in dealing with people that he violated."

The first thing he did: he took off late in the day. It was almost dark. He could have taken a direct route where he would have stayed over the coast and he had a land thing, but he did not do it. He decided, because he was running late, he was going to fly out of the way. He was going to fly out

over the Atlantic Ocean and go up the ocean. By doing that, he cut 20 minutes off his flight. In other words, this guy lost his life for 20 minutes. I have seen a lot of God's people lose their life spiritually for a lot less than that. So he takes off, and he flies. He gets out over the Atlantic Ocean, and he gets into a fog bank, and he cannot see anything. He gets disoriented. What the FAA says happened is that he thinks he is flying level when he is going down, and he crashes into the ocean, and he dies.

I looked at that, and I thought to myself, "He violated every principle that we use in our life."

- He did not recognize his limitations. I tell you all the time, you have to know your limitations. He did not recognize. He was not rated to fly instruments. He did not understand his limitations.
- He lost control of his circumstances. Because he was late, because he was in a hurry, he took a more dangerous route than he should have taken. He lost control of it. The situation dictated what he did; he did not dictate what he should do in this situation.
- He had two sets of rules. If somebody, a young pilot, would have come up and said, "I am going to do this," he would have just said, "No, do not do that." But he himself thought he could do it.

Those are the things that get us in trouble. I looked at that, and I thought to myself, "That is exactly what we do." Listen, when you get something in your life that you cannot see, and you do not know which way to go for sure, and it is cloudy and it is dark, and you do not have a clear direction, when your emotions and your feelings tell you to do one thing, you better forget it, and you better fly by the instrument that God gave you. You better stay with the principles. When your emotions say, "Do this," and the Book says, "Do this," do what the Book says. I am going to tell you, it is just as hard in the Bible as it was flying a plane, because our instinct says, "No, I can do that." The Bible says, "Do not do that." We fight that battle all the time. That is the battle of the mind.

Every Christian needs to be IFR rated. You need to understand how to fly blind. In the Bible, we call that walking by faith and not by sight. We call it understanding when it is dark around, and you cannot see where you are going and what is going on. Follow the principles that God gave you. That is exactly what got him killed. He did not follow his instruments; he followed his mind. It is the same with us. When you do not know for sure what to do, follow the principles, not your mindset, not your instincts. When your basic mind tells you something is okay and the Bible tells you it is not okay, follow what the Bible says, or you will crash and burn. It happens all the time.

You have a supernatural compass in this Book. You have a directional finder, an onboard radar, that will always get you home safely if you follow your instruments. Most of the time, Christians are flying through life completely blind. That is why you make bad choices. That is why things do not work out for you in your life. That is why you get an attitude toward God in time, and the church, and people in the church. You are someone who has been flying blind all of your life. You have made so many bad choices. Yet, here you are today, sitting under the preaching of the Word of God, and have been for quite a while. The hardest thing that you and I have to do in our

life is to put our intellect and minds over here and take the instrument that God gave us and follow the flight plan. It is just that simple. We struggle with that every day of our life. That is exactly how he got killed. That stuff is some great stuff.

Never make decisions or get into a situation or a relationship based on the appearance of somebody. The moment you step over that edge and get your emotions involved more than the principles, you are in trouble. You are going to have some problems.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

VI. Applying Principles to Relationships and Life Choices

I tell young women all the time, and young girls all the time, in finding a spouse—and I tell guys too, but especially to young ladies—we get the idea, how many times I have heard it, "Well, I tried the bar scene and did not find a mate, so I am going to go try to find one in church." Let me tell you something: in most cases, there is no difference between the bar scene and the church scene. If you think there are not people in here today, male and female, that are not on a safari to find a mate, you are wrong. All you need is a bush coat and a big hat with a leopard skin around the top of it. You are on the hunt. It is true everywhere you go. In your case, you are on safari. I am afraid if you say you are going to go on safari, you are probably never going to get back, but that is your deal, not mine. You will use that tomorrow. You will be telling everybody at work tomorrow, "I was on safari. Where did you go? I was on safari. I never got back." You will use it all day tomorrow.

Ladies, can I tell you something? I am a guy, so I am going to speak against guys because I am a guy. I am a guy who has got a little wisdom, not a lot, but a little bit. Never believe what they say. I am going to give you three rules in finding a spouse. I am going to give you some instrument rating this morning because most women fly blind, especially blonde women. Just kidding. You have to throw the traditional blonde joke in. It is okay. I mean nothing by it. I think you are lovely.

Rule number one: I say three tests you give them. You give them a test, three tests.

- You never find a spouse in church. Never do. I know that is hard to believe because church is supposed to be a good thing. Let me, lowest common denominator, okay? You never find a spouse in church. You find a spouse in Christ. Ministry. Do not fall for this. How many times have I heard it over the years? The guy will say, "Well, I am not in ministry right now, but once we get married, I am really going to get into ministry." Let me tell you something: if they do not do it before, they are not going to do it after. I guarantee you. Now, I have had some exceptions to it over the years, but not many. These are rules you follow. You do not go by appearance. You fly by instruments. You do not fly blind.
- Never marry the man. I can traverse that around: never marry the woman. You do not marry the man, nor do you marry the woman. Who you are marrying is the Christ in the man. That

is who you are marrying. Outward appearance, inward appearance. Do not marry the man; marry the Christ in the man. You say, "I do not see the Christ in the man."

- Will he minister to me? What good is it if you have a husband who ministers to everybody else but he will not minister to you? That is his primary job. See how easy that is? That is flying by instruments.

I collect World War II stuff. Most of you know that. I have always been a history buff. I just love history. Military history, my military background, I just love it all. I love military history, and I love World War II. World War II, as far as I am concerned, was the greatest generation. It was the greatest war. We will never have another war as good as that one. Everything after that will be a sideshow. That was the best one. I love collecting World War II stuff, and I love famous outfits. I mean, guys who fought in the Battle of the Bulge. I do not know if you know this or not, and probably this is more information than you care to have, but in World War II, many of the units painted the insignias on their helmets. I love that. Finding one like that is like finding the Holy Grail or the blood of Jesus or Mary's false teeth or something like that. I am into that stuff.

In collecting, we have a saying. Follow the saying, you are okay. Fail the saying, you are in trouble. Do you know what the saying is? "Buy the helmet. Never buy the story." When Band of Brothers came out, which is great—I love it to death, Saving Private Ryan, great—but what that did in the collecting world is take everything and made it of an insane value. Everybody wanted it, which is supply and demand. So what happened is all the fakers get on it. They make these things look so good. They put them in the ovens. They scratch them up. They put old paint on them. They take the smell out. They have it down to a science. Everything I ever bought came with a story. "My father was on the flag raising of Iwo Jima." Well, that is good. "This is a pilot's helmet." I do not think there were any pilots raising the flag. "He was with Patton." "He was on the left side of Patton's car." It all has a story.

So the rule is in buying stuff: look at the helmet. Buy the helmet. Do not buy the story. Look at the helmet. Real helmets look certain ways. Real helmets were made certain ways. Real helmets have a certain look about them that when you know what to look for, the fakes cannot fake. You learn that. But when people want this helmet, and they want one like this, and here is one sitting on a table, and I have always wanted that, and the guy says, "Yeah, I got that from a vet. He was in Bastogne over there, and he died a while back, and I bought a bunch of his stuff. That is all I got left." "Oh, I want it." Buy the story. Buy the helmet. Never buy the story.

When it comes to God's people and Christians, just like helmets, Christians do some things that unsaved people do not do. Look for that. There should be things different about a man or a woman who is truly saved. It is the same way with people. Do not buy the story. Look for the things that should be in their lives. Real Christians will have some thing that you look for that you cannot fake. Do you know what happens with young girls? They love this guy. They let their emotions get involved, and they want to marry him so bad, he has to be saved. "I want to marry him so bad, I believe he will tell me that right now he does not want to get into Bible with anybody once we are married." I have seen parents do it with their kids. I have seen everybody fall for that line that you believe what they tell you instead of holding them accountable, and you buy it, and when you buy it, it does not work out. But just like a helmet that is fake or a uniform

that is fake, once you buy it, you own it. Never judge by appearance. It is as simple as that. Do not fly through life blind. God gave you an instrumentation, and my job is to get you rated. This is not a sermon; this is an instrument rating class. I want to get you prepared to fly blind and never get off track. I want to get you prepared that no matter what comes your way in life, how dark it gets, how bleak it gets, how cloudy it gets, that you never lose your focus.

VII. Saul vs. David: A Case Study in Disobedience

Now, going back to David and Saul, our Old Testament story that illustrates what Paul is telling his church about buying real things and not going by the appearance. Saul versus David. They saw Saul's stature, but God saw David's heart. I have to tell you, short term and by the appearance, Saul looked like the right guy, did he not? 1 Samuel 9:1-2 says he was the tall man. Tall men always get attention or always look to as leaders. This is the problem I have had all my life. So I decided years ago to have four or five inches taken off my legs, and here I am today. I am down with the common folk. My standard line with tall people, especially basketball players, when I used to play basketball, hang out with them and people, they would be towering over me, and people would look at me and look at them, and I would say, "I used to be tall before I got sick." But tall people, they command a presence. They do. The Bible says that he was heading his shoulders above everybody else. He was a tall guy. He was very good-looking. Now you take being tall and very good-looking; that is a good combination. Then add to it, he was very charismatic. He was very liked by people. He spoke very well. He was a great speaker. In fact, the Bible says that he was a choice young man, but outwardly.

David, on the other hand, was a runt. He was the runt of the litter when all those seven boys came through, and nobody thought David was going to be the guy. They thought that the other six boys would be great, but no, God wanted David because God saw in David what everybody else saw on the outside of Saul. You cannot look at circumstances or people from the outside. Use the directional finder that God gave you. Do not fly blind. By looking at him, "He is the man. He is the guy we have been looking for." Here is a great example where, just like us, and this is where we have to learn, this is where we make the association: just like us, in a thousand different scenarios, we will get messed up because we do not follow the Bible, and we follow our instincts, our mind. We look at the appearance. We follow our desires. Yet we fail, and we make tremendous messes and bad choices in our life. I am sure they, just like us, "Oh, I have heard it all my life." I have seen people make some of the biggest, stupidest mistakes that they have ever made in their life, and then stand there and look at me like I am so stupid when they try to tell me, "Boy, God was just all over this thing." God is 100 million miles around this. You wanted this. You concocted this. You got this going. The Bible tells you to do something else. But no, you want what you want, and just like Israel, "Thank You, God, for what You gave us in Saul." God said, "I gave you nothing."

Let me show you what I am going to give you. Now watch this thing develop. Here is what you look at: the people wanted Saul on the throne. God wanted David on the throne. Let us make the spiritual application. You ought to have David on your throne of your heart today, as a type of

Christ. But some of you want Saul. Let me show you what Saul is like. Let me show you how this thing is incredibly, it works wonderfully.

- Israel's attitude of heart was wrong. In 1 Samuel 8:19, they say, "Give us a king like all the other nations." Samuel says, "You are not supposed to be like the other nations." Remember abomination? Remember imagination? You are not to be like the other nations. They did not want to hear it. They did not want to hear it at all. They wanted what they wanted. "Give us a king like all the other nations." Bad associations.
- God sent them a preacher, Samuel, a prophet. He told them straight up, so there is no misunderstanding, "This is not who God wants you to have." Do you know what they said? "We do not care what God said. We want to be like all the other nations." There is your fundamental problem. You do not care what God said. You want to be like the world. Fundamentally, there is your problem. I do not know what to tell you.

How many times have I seen this? Here is where you get the great principle that I tell you about not getting your emotions involved and a good conscience toward God. Samuel falls for it. Samuel is moping around. After they rejected him, he is walking around, moping around, and God comes down and says, "What is the matter with you, Samuel?" He says, "Oh, these people, Lord. They do not listen to me." God says, "What have you done and done for?" "Well, I gave them the message, and they did not like me, and they did not like the message, and they do not want anything to do with me, and they rejected me." God says, "What is your problem? They did not reject you; they rejected Me. Now, let us go get them."

Do you know what Samuel does? Samuel goes back, and he says, "Okay, boys." He lays out the consequences of taking the wrong king. He lays out the consequences of making bad choices, just like I do every Sunday morning. In 1 Samuel 8:11, he tells the people what kind of king Saul is going to be. He is going to be a dictator. He is going to take your children. He is going to take your money. He is going to take your property. He is going to treat you like dirt. He is going to be the worst king you ever had. How many times have I said the same thing about somebody on the brink of making a bad decision, and yet they follow the same thing? "We do not care." And still, they will not listen to God or God's man. They are going to follow their heart, their instinct, instead of the Book that God gave them, and they are not going to listen to the man of God God sent them.

When you get the attitude of heart that you are going to do it your way, we saw this last week in Ezekiel 8, if you remember. This is when God, after a period of time, and you are so focused on doing what you want, the Bible says in Ezekiel 8, He gives you a lying spirit. At the end of Saul's life, he got nothing from God. While you make a life of bad choices, by the end of your life, you are not going to get anything from God anymore. Do you know what he had to do? Do you know what his desperate act was when he wanted to get something from God? He went to a witch at Endor. How did that work out for him?

I am not the brightest guy in the world, but I see a red flag in all of this. If you are paying attention to the Bible halfway, and you just know a little bit about the Bible, a little bit, and all the people want Saul, and you know anything about your Bible, the first thing that would be a

red flag for me, and the first thing I see, and the first thing I hope if I was back there, I would raise my hand and say, was that this guy was from the wrong tribe. He is from Benjamin. The principle in Genesis 49 said that the king that God gave them would be from Judah. David is from Judah. Saul is from Benjamin. That did not seem to bother anybody. It did not seem to bother them that God said, "When you get a king, it is going to be from Judah." They wanted one from Benjamin, just like it does not bother God's people today when God says this, but they want to do this. I am sure you parents see it all the time.

When you take control of your life and you remove God off the throne, and you do not care what the Word of God says, it is all about what you want, all about you and how you are going to accomplish it, and you still want to make everybody think you are right with God. That is appearance. You never look at the appearance of something. Always look at the biblical principles involved and see if they are being followed. Do not fly visually. Fly on your instruments.

Israel wanted a king, but they did not want God as their king. They wanted Saul, but they still wanted to give the appearance of being spiritual. So they refused to put God on the throne of Israel, a picture of your life and my life. They proceeded then to violate everything that God had told them and the man of God had told them that God sent them, and so in spite of that, they set up Saul, and by doing so, do you know what they did? Going back to last week, Saul became the stronghold in their life. Saul became the guy who dictated to them some of the most terrible things that you ever saw. We will look at it here in a minute. 1 Samuel 8 and 9 deals with me or you putting your will or Saul over God's will in your life, setting up a stronghold and ending with disastrous consequences.

Saul, from the outward appearance, looked like he was the right man, but inwardly he was a coward. He was a weak person who thought only what he wanted. When it truly comes down to it, in 1 Samuel 17, when somebody had to go out and fight Goliath, when Goliath is walking up and down in a valley disdaining God and making fun of God and the people of God and the nation of Israel, and he commands somebody to come out and fight him, Saul was the biggest guy in the kingdom. Saul should have gone out to fight him. Saul did not. He was cowering behind a throne someplace. David went out to fight him. Great principle: not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog. David went out. Saul should have, but he did not.

VIII. The Consequences of Rejecting God's Way

When you break this man down, who we put as king in our lives, and we make king in our lives over God being king, you see some interesting things.

- 1 Samuel 13 says that he took all the swords away from the people. We know from Hebrews 4, swords are a type of the Word of God, a sharp two-edged sword. That is the first thing when you put Saul on the throne of your life that is going to happen: you are going to lose your Bible. He is going to take the Bible from you. In fact, if you study the story back there, he had all the people turn in their swords. Then they had nothing to fight with. When the Philistines finally came down and attacked them, they took them just like that. Do you know

why? Because they did not have anything to fight with. When you put Saul on the throne of your life, the first thing he is going to do is take you out of the Word of God, and you are going to be defenseless when the Philistines, the world, come after you.

- In 1 Samuel 28:14, God took his spirit from him. That is a picture of you and I losing the power of God in our life. I know you are always saved, and you are always once saved, always saved. I understand that. But there is a difference between the infilling Holy Spirit of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. When you get saved, you get indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, but to do the work of God, you get filled on a daily basis. When you put Saul on your life, that goes. That goes. You have no power in your life at all.
- In 1 Samuel 28:15, God sent an evil spirit to him. When you jump the Word of God, and you make up your mind, you are going to do the only thing, and you lose the power of God, and you lose the Word of God, do you know the next thing you get? You get a lying spirit from the Lord. If you think that does not happen, if you think, "Well, I do not understand how God could give a lying spirit," you have been spending too much time on the soap operas; you need to get in the Bible. It happened all the time.
- In 2 Samuel 7:15, God took His mercy from him. Now, there goes your insurance policy. Remember I told you a couple of weeks ago, God wants to give you an in-depth insurance policy. If you do what is right with Him, He will do what is right with you. He will providentially provide for your family, protect your family. He will be there for you every step of the way. You lose that when you put Saul on the throne.
- In 1 Samuel 31:4, Saul, like Samson last week, winds up with spiritual suicide. Some of God's people, as sure as I am standing here, you may live to be 90 years old, but you committed spiritual suicide a long time ago, or you are in the process of committing spiritual suicide, or you will commit spiritual suicide simply because of the fact you refuse to put God on the throne of your life and you want Saul.
- The last thing he says there in 1 Chronicles 10:13 is, God writes his testimony, and God simply says, "God killed him." That brings us back over there to 1 Corinthians 11:30, where he says:

1 Corinthians 11:30

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

He was a complete washout, and yet he is what everybody wanted as king. When you see what happened to them when they put him on the throne as king, do you know where it led them? It began the process in their life that ended with their Babylonian captivity and the Assyrian captivity. When you put the Saul on your life and the throne instead of David, you are going to wind up in a Babylonian captivity, a stronghold.

The Bible says, "Do not go by appearance."

John 7:24

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

That is the Word of God. How many times have I seen it in couples, in people who have been married? "My marriage," how many times I have heard it, "I should have waited for David, but I got Saul instead." You would not listen. How many times have I seen it? In life, the blessings of God, the power of God, the completeness, the happiness you could have if you just built a life God's way. But no, David on the throne, no way. You have to put Saul up there.

How many times have I seen it? God gave you a Book, absolute principles of God, the wisdom of God, the mind of God. No need to make the terrible, tragic mistakes of life and the bad decisions people do. He gave you a compass, a directional finder, an onboard radar that shows you everything that you need to know and always points you true north. Oh, no, we forsake the principles. We cast them aside. We follow our own human instinct like Israel and Saul, like JFK Jr. in his plane. We refuse to follow the principles and wind up in a mess. In every case, the lowest common denominator will be: you do it God's way, or you do it your way. End of the day. You buy it, now you own it.

Paul told the Corinthian church, "Do not look on the outward appearance. Rethink that," he says, "if you are saved." I tell you today, rethink where you are today. Rethink what situations you are in. Rethink what relationships you are in. Bring them back in line with the principles. This whole story in 1 Samuel was an example for us, for our admonition, to clearly illustrate the principles that Paul is telling the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 10:7. In Israel's refusing to follow the principles and setting up a king, Saul, we find a great model for us in our own Christian lives. It is simply four things:

- The holiness of Israel. God called them to be a holy people. God called you to be a holy people. He set standards for holiness. There is no room in our life for the things that are not pleasing to God. When they come into our life, we ought to have a revenge against those things because we have let God down.
- God's warning to them to stay with the Book that God gave them. From Moses to the last prophet, Malachi, you are going to find He warns the nation of Israel continually about staying in the Book, but they get out every time.
- The hardened heart toward the principles of God, the man of God that God sent them. Everything all because their association with the other nations that led to abominations, that led to consternation, led to all of the things that they had to struggle with. They built their stronghold and then foolishly tried to defend it. There is no way you can.
- The disastrous consequences in their steadfastness against God and His Word was the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. 400 years that historians call the 400 silent years where God spoke to no one. If you get away from God and put Saul on the throne of your life, you may not live for 400 years, but you will go 20, 30, 40, 50. You will have your own silent years program, where you will not get anything from God.

May I again give you the great verse I gave you in Job over and over again? It fits right in the story today in our lives.

Job 9:4

He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?

He answers nobody. Not you, not your mama, not your grandmother. Nobody does. All because they wanted what they wanted and refused to follow the principles that God gave them. When Paul talked to the church at Corinth, he says, "Look, if you are a Christian and you are looking on the things of appearance," he says, "rethink that." Because it is setting up the principle that I gave you today: you never judge things by the appearance. Just like that JFK example, flying blind, thinking he was going to get to Martha's Vineyard, flying through the clouds, he cannot see a thing, he thinks he is going straight when he is going down, and it led to his death. All because he would not follow the instruments that told him, and he followed his instinct. It does not get any easier than that. It does not get any simpler than that.

IX. Conclusion: Stop Making Bad Choices

Saul on the throne of your life or David, a man after God's own heart, on the throne of your life. You do it your way instead of God's way, and at the end of the day, as I said a little earlier, whatever happens in your life, you own it. It does not mean that God will not help you get out of it. It does not mean that you cannot get victory over it in time. But I am telling you this, I will end where I started: you cannot continue to make bad choices in your life. If you continue to make bad choices in your life, then you are going to perpetuate a situation that is already in play, and it is an unending thing. There has to be a break in the cycle. There has to be a break in the cycle where you can look back.

It is like having credit card debt, and every month you pay for it, and you pay for it, and you pay for it, and you were foolish, and you know you were foolish, and every time it is way out of control, and you pay for it, and you pay for it, and you pay for it. How do you get out of debt in that kind of situation? The first thing you do is make the choice not to use your credit card anymore. That is your first choice. Cut it up, swallow it, eat it, feed it to the dog, do whatever you have to do to it, burn it. When you make that choice and you stop making bad choices, then you still have to pay for it, but you know what, it comes to a point, pay it this month, pay it that month, "I have got another year, I have got another six months, I have got another three months," and finally you are out of it. It works the same way in our life. You have to stop making bad choices, and then you may have to pay some things on some things that you are doing along the line, but you will get out of it. We will put a plan together. I will help you. The good thing about it is you do not have to go through it by yourself. How many of you, if we walk through problems together hand in hand, we work through everything in life. You never had to make one decision to get through it. We walked every inch of the way with you. That is the plan.

Paul said, "You are judging by appearance; you need to rethink that because you do not judge by appearance; you judge by a righteous judgment, the Word of God." We are going to hold up there today, and next week we will get on into 2 Corinthians 10 again.