

2 Corinthians 10

Sunday 3/3/2013

SEC: Introduction to 2 Corinthians and the Ministry Handbook

Last week, as you know, we finished chapter 9 of 2 Corinthians, and we are going to start chapter 10 next week. When I do a chapter, especially in this book, there is so much information and so much that I want you to get that in most cases I will do an introduction to the chapter before I really break into the chapter.

I am sure by now, as you have come through this with me almost chapter by chapter, you can see how what I told you was absolutely true: this book of 2 Corinthians really does lay out the ministry. It is the handbook for ministers. When I say ministers, I am not talking about ordained pastors. I am talking about you, men and women, because we know that our job is to minister.

In my life, I am thankful for a lot of things that God has put in my life and a lot of things that God has given me. I think the thing that I thank God for the most, though tomorrow that will change because it will be something else I will think about, is the fact that I understand how the system works. So many times people get caught up in things because they do not understand.

I know that I am not under any illusion, nor am I so naive, to think that any pastor, but I am talking about me and our church here, can fix anybody's problems. It is just not logical. It is not going to happen. Nobody deceives himself if he thinks that he has the ability to fix everybody's problems. That is simply not true, and I realize that is impossible. But I also realize that is really not my job.

To be good with people, and some of you really have the potential to be good with people, I am just telling you that. Some of you, I see in you, if you will just let yourself be developed, some of you are already up to the stages where I would just about trust you with anything that you do with people. I never even second-guess it. When I give you something to do, I know it is going to be done as good as it can probably be done. I understand that.

But I also understand, and I found this out over 40-some years of just dealing with people, that understanding why people have problems is really the key to helping them with their problems. So many times we get caught up in so much stuff that really does not matter, or we get this mindset that we have got to be able to fix everybody's problem. I know that is not possible. My goal in life certainly is not to fix everybody's problem, though I spend most of my life helping people with their problems.

My goal in life is to understand how it all works. I can almost deal with anything in life as long as I know how it works. I have devoted my whole life to understanding how this book works. I have devoted my whole life, and I have not scratched the surface of it, but I devoted my whole life to understanding how God works. I have learned over the years that understanding why people have the problems and the issues that they have is absolutely vital.

It is vital, first of all, for me personally, because I have the same problems or temptations or things that you have. Once it works on you, it is invaluable when you start taking it into your

family, which is the next step, and then taking it to other people, which is the ministry phase of it.

SEC: The Elisha Principle: Understanding People

There is a story in the Bible. I heard this message probably 35 years ago. It was preached by a missionary, and it was one of the greatest messages. There are some messages that you hear that your life is never the same once you hear them. I probably heard 100,000 messages, and I cannot remember most of them. But there are certain messages that I have heard that I will simply never forget. There are certain messages that I hear that change my life so dramatically, or at least gave me an angle on life that I did not have before, that I do not care if I am 100 years old, I will remember it, and I will use it every chance I can.

Bruce Bell was the missionary's name. He was a missionary to Mexico. He was at a mission conference one time, and he preached a message on 2 Kings 4. It was a story about Elisha. When you look at it, it is a weird story, because the story in capsule form is this: a woman has a boy. The boy dies. She calls Elisha. Elisha comes, and the boy is dead. He was making it in a missionary context, which was a great sermon. I have stolen this sermon and preached it 100 times since that point. It is a great sermon. Any sermon that changes your life is worth stealing.

The story goes that this kid was dead. Elisha does the strange thing. He crawls on top of this kid, this dead body. The Bible says he puts his mouth on his mouth. He puts his hands on his hands. It is an incredible study. He puts his eyes to his eyes. In other words, he lays on the guy mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand. It is the weirdest thing in the Bible. I have got to confess to you, many times I read the Bible for long before I heard this message, I just kind of skipped over that part because I did not know what was dealing with it. There had to be more to it than that.

Then he laid it out. He laid out the fact that that boy was dead. That is a picture of an unsaved man. He said, to help people with their problems, that boy was a picture of an unsaved man. He said if we are really going to reach unsaved people, if you are really going to help people, then that Elisha laying on him eye to eye, mouth to mouth, hand to hand is a great example of what we have to do.

Because for us to help people and to reach people, we have to understand why unsaved people see things the way they see, eye to eye. We have to better understand why unsaved people talk and say the things that they do, mouth to mouth. For us to really have an impact in people's lives and change people's lives, we cannot just do it from a distance. We have to understand why people look at things the way they do, say the things they say, and then hand to hand do the things they do.

That message changed my whole life as far as people are concerned. At that point, or maybe shortly thereafter, the Holy Spirit of God took that and began to develop in my life a lifelong quest of understanding why human nature is what it is. Why people, saved or lost, say the things they say, see things the way they see it, and do things that they do.

To me, I know I cannot help everybody, and I know that there are some people that are unfixable, but at the same time, in spite of that, my goal in life is to always understand why people are the

way they are. I want to give you a little piece of that today. I am not going to preach to you today. I am going to simply walk you through one of the greatest things that changed my life about working with people. Because if you are here today and you really get dialed in to what God wants you to do with your life as a Christian, it is going to be people. I want you to be as effective as you can be.

Every person here who is working with somebody right now that may be struggling in some area of your life, and that person struggling may think that you are walking through a 20-foot snowdrift without any snowshoes. Life is not that way. I want you to know they are working with you, they are helping you. Our whole church is geared to bring you in, help you, bring you through your issues, and then turn you back out so that you take the experiences of life, good and bad, learn some great principles, and then take it to somebody else. That is what the ministry is. So I want to give you a little piece of something that changed my life today.

SEC: The Heart and Mind of the Minister

Just last month we came through two of the greatest chapters in the book of 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9. They deal with a single aspect of our Christian life and everything to it: the heart of the minister. You know that now. The heart is the most important part of our physical body as well as the most important part of our spiritual body.

If you ever noticed, we know David said one time when he talked about how God fashioned man, he said we are fearfully and wonderfully made. There is no truer statement than that. If you are paying attention, when God created man, He gave him almost without exception, two of everything. He gave you two eyes, two ears, two arms, two legs, two kidneys, two lungs. When you go all down through the list and you look at it, He did that so if you lost one of those vital parts, you could still function. But you will also notice that with very few exceptions, He only gave us one heart. Because the Christian is supposed to be of a singleness of heart.

The heart is incredible; it is the center of everything. Without that heart, man cannot on any level function in any way. The heart of man physically is everything, and without it, man is dead. When it comes to the spiritual life of man, the heart is again everything. Somebody asked a question Thursday night on the five crowns that we get at the judgment seat of Christ. I went through and laid those out. But then I told you that the five crowns are true and you do get them, but at the end of the day, it is your attitude of heart that really constitutes what you get with God. Because everything goes back to the heart. That is true of the physical life. It is true of the spiritual life. The heart is everything. Man's heart toward God and the things of God.

When we got saved, God gives us a new heart at the time of salvation. But until man gets that new heart, he is dead to the things of God. I say that and yet I am sure going through your mind right now that this old world looks at it the same way. We live in Kansas and Missouri. That is typically called the heart of America. We call it the heartland. We just had Valentine's Day and you went in and they did not have kidneys on the cards. They had hearts. It said something to the relationship that "I love you with all of my heart." How many times have you looked into your girlfriend's face or the woman you want to marry and before you ask her to marry and you say, "I love you with all of my lungs?" Kidneys? You love it with all your heart.

In general life, how many times did you want something so bad as a child and to seal the deal? You said, "Cross your heart and hope to die." You promised me with all your heart? We get in there and we said, "Let's get to the kidneys of the matter." No. We get to the heart of the matter. In the great songs that move us all, it was not, "I left my kidneys in San Francisco." It was, "I left my heart in San Francisco." The heart is central and key to everything.

Along with that, God gave you only one mind. I know even in Christian circles, people do not know what the anatomy of body, soul, and spirit is, so they always associate the mind with the heart, the brain, and spiritually speaking that is not really true. But as a Christian, you are to be of singleness of heart with God and also should be of singleness in mind because God only gave you one heart, spiritually speaking, and He only gave you one mind. When you do not do that, then the biblical principle kicks in:

James 1:8

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

See how it works? It is really simple, it is not hard at all.

SEC: The Battle for the Mind: Lowest Common Denominator

When I deal with people, and I deal with them all the time, my goal is to teach you as many as will allow yourself to be taught how to deal with people. When I deal with circumstances or situations, I follow a very basic fundamental principle: that is to break whatever I am looking at down to its lowest common denominator. Most people when they deal with situations, they spend so much time on the symptoms, the side issues, that they never really identify what the problem is.

No, you have got to get it down to the lowest common denominator, whatever it is. Whatever your problem is, it is not what the symptoms appear to be, it is peeling back the layers, peeling back, boiling it down and getting to the real issue. That is the lowest common denominator. Dividing it by itself until there is no way you can get it any lower.

I tell you all this because today we are doing the intro for chapter 10 of 2 Corinthians. Today I want to lay out all the basic assets that we need and principles to see how this chapter really lays itself out when we get to it. For chapter 10 in 2 Corinthians now deals with the mind of the chapter. These chapters are what I call compounding chapters. Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the heart. Chapter 10 then deals with the mind. You are going to see how this all pulls together here. This is why I want to give you an intro on it so when we hit it next week we are ready to go. In chapter 10 we are dealing with the mind.

Like I said, I am not going to preach to you today. I am just going to walk you through this. Here is what I do want you to do. I know sermons can have a lot of material in them and you cannot remember it all so here is all I want you to do today. If you are interested at all in working with people and getting yourself better and even for yourself, all I want you to do is write down 10 things I am going to give you today as I come through this basic outline. It is an introduction

really. I am not going to preach to you. I am not going to rant and rave. I am just going to walk you through it. I want to help you understand it.

We all know that Ephesians chapter 6 says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. In the Old Testament they did. Joshua and Jericho, they fought literal battles. The Bible says we wrestle not against flesh and blood. Our battle is a spiritual battle. I remember when I first got right with God and I tried to read everything I could and I remember the first book I ever read was a book called *The Battle for the Bible*. That was the first book I ever read and that guy said that the real battle today is over the Bible.

Then I read somebody else's book a couple of years later that talked about *The Battle for the Family* because I was working with families and I wanted to learn how to fight that battle. Somebody wrote a book thereafter that talked about *The Battle for Your Child*. They did not want to have people lose their kids. I read another book at some point in my life. I still have the book someplace. It was called *The Battle for Your Spouse*. Now it was not the battle with your spouse. It was the battle for your spouse. In other words, how not to lose your marriage.

All those books were good and I will be honest, I learned a lot from them. But later on in my life, once I really began to figure out the Bible for myself, I saw how that those books, as good as they were, they did not get to the real lowest common denominator because even though those books were good, they were not divided down enough because everything in those books, when it is taken to the lowest common denominator, the battle for the Bible, the battle for your family, the battle for your child, the battle for your spouse, will be the battle that is the real battle that we all face. And folks, that is the battle for your mind. That is where the real battle is. The battle for our mind.

When we talk about the mind, the battle for the mind, we are bringing it down to the simply lowest common denominator and there is no lower to go. It is the battle for our minds. For every issue in life starts right there, the mind and what you think about everything in life, whether it be good, whether it be bad. Our viewpoint.

The reason why I say this is real simple because you and I are what we think about.

Proverbs 4:23

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Proverbs 23:7

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:

Matthew 12:34

for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Here is the first thing I want you to write down. Some of them will be all close together and will go a while before we get another one. So do not think you missed anything. At the end of the sermon if you do not have 10, either you miss something or I miss something. And we both know it could never be me so it has to be you.

1. In the Bible, the Bible literally says we are what we think about. That is the first thing I want you to know because we are getting ready to enter next week into the greatest chapter on the mind of the minister and the mind of the minister is key because God only gave you one heart, God only gave you one mind. As I said, chapters 8, 9, and 10 are great compounding chapters.
2. The heart of the minister will always produce the mind of the minister. See how that works? This is going to be a very basic fundamental of why people, us, you and me, the people you work with, the people in your life, people in this church, people in your family, why they have problems.
3. In dealing with people there is a great principle that I use and I have taught it all through my life in dealing with people and teaching other people and it will be the third thing you want to write down and it is simply called attitude versus action. Now attitude will be where my heart is, where my mind is, you see. The action, those are the things I do, will be outwardly always governed by my heart attitude inwardly. So we call it attitude and action. The attitude I have about something in time will produce the action.

In developing yourself, your family, or other people, you have got to get this principle down and learn how to use it. As I always say, it starts with you and me. It has to work in your life first. The attitude of heart will always be defined by our mindset, what we think, how we form opinions. You will find, as you come down through it, we call this in dealing with people, patterns of thought, thought patterns.

These patterns develop in our heart through the years of association with different things. Things that we learn, things that we read, things that we see, things that we hear, the people we associate with. It forms in time a pattern of thought that will produce a pattern of life based on our view of life and our attitude about things in life.

I will give you an example. Marriage problems, when people have marital problems, in its lowest common denominator, it is always one thing. The person, people, couple, got into something called marriage without ever understanding from a biblical standpoint what marriage really is. They got married based on all they have heard all of their life about what marriage is, and it is all wrong. They never got the Bible viewpoint of why even God gave marriage. So they enter into something called marriage that God designed, but they try to run that marriage by another design that God never intended it to run by. You know what the end result is going to be in that and everything? A disaster.

I use this example all the time in couples, and many of you couples are going to smile at this because you have been in my office when I have told you this very same illustration. It is a great illustration. I have said, "You know what if I come home from work and my wife says the dishwasher is on the blink and it is not working, I am going to call the repair guy tomorrow." And I will say, "Well, you know, before you do that, he is going to cost us a hundred some bucks for him to come out and look at it and fix it. Let us get the owner's manual that came with it because maybe there is a reset button. Maybe we just knocked something out. Maybe we have got to balance it out or something. I do not know, let us look at it."

So we go through, as all couples have, in your kitchen drawers of owner manuals and we find one for the microwave, the toaster. We find one for this. We find for that. We go all through it and we cannot find the one for the dishwasher, but I do find the one for the washing machine. So I say to my wife, "I could not find the one for the dishwasher but I found the one for the washing machine. I am going to try to fix the dishwasher with a handbook from the washing machine." Now this is very basic. In my mind they both use water. They both clean things but in reality they are two different designs. Now what would be the chance of me fixing my dishwasher with a handbook from the washing machine? Nil.

But yet when marriages have problems they will try to fix those marriages which God designed by another handbook that God never intended it to run by. In fact, I would have a much better chance fixing my dishwasher with a handbook from the washing machine than you will trying to fix your marriage without this book. See how it works? It is not really complicated. It really is not complicated.

We get ideas about marriage. We get ideas. You see it with people. How many of us have got a bad attitude about some other person simply because one of our friends told us that that was a nasty person? Told us something that may or may not be true or a half-truth, and you, without finding it out yourself, you formulate now a mindset, a pattern of thought that produces an attitude about that person so when you see that person the action is wrong.

Another great example is the internet, and we all know that everything on the internet is true. I get the most absolutely goofiest phone calls from people that I do not even know. I mean, I have got enough goofy people in my own church. I do not need them around the country. They will get on the website. They will see some. Had a guy call me last week and I am out with the dogs and I am trying to answer his Bible questions to get the dog to go to the bathroom. What a dilemma to be in. He is saying to me, "What about these meteors over there in Russia? What about the Bible says in Revelation that stars are going to fall from heaven?" Well, come on. On a Thursday night Bible study that is a 20-minute question, go to the Bible, but I am not dealing with normal rational people. I am dealing with a guy who obviously thinks he was born on Mars who has no concept of anything in the Bible, and I get it all the time. You know where he got that? Off the internet.

Had a guy send me one time a video stream about when George Bush blew up the World Trade Center, he was behind it, you know, and then somebody else sent me one that aliens were behind it and actually had a video that showed little aliens scaling across the burning buildings. Photoshop is a great thing. People see that, they read that, and without ever investigating anything, that forms now their pattern of thought, it would form their attitude, and you know what? "Yeah, Bush, it was a conspiracy." Yeah, well, I am not saying there are not some conspiracies out there, but you are not going to get them on the internet, but we form our thinking patterns based on those things.

Kids who grow up in racist families and that is all they hear from mom and dad as racist slurs or racist issues, you know what, unless something changes in their life, they turn up to be racist. You know what is the greatest example of that is Westboro Baptist Church there in Topeka. Joe

told me this last week that they are targeting churches in Kansas City and Independence and Lee's Summit, that they are going to picket on Sunday morning Baptist churches, and I guess they are going after Phil Hopper's church, Abundant Life, and they are going to preach against whorish Baptist churches. I do not even know how to answer that. I would not mind if they came here, but nothing like that ever happens to us. That is the problem of being in the basement. If anything you can say about Old Path Baptist Church, we sure fly under the radar.

I would love for him to set up out there. I would. You know why? Because he calls himself a Baptist and I would love for him to show up here and picket this church because we are Baptist and show the whole world that we are not that kind of Baptist. I think it is a good thing, but you know the danger in that thing, you realize that that whole church is nothing but a family run by one man, Fred Phelps. You know what that shows you? That whole church is all family and that whole family came from one man, Fred Phelps, who got a twisted, screwed up idea and then put it into his family and orchestrated the whole family's mindset against everything that is in the Bible and decent in the Bible. It shows you how the father would influence you have on your kids. One father, one man, turned a whole family into a bunch of radical goofballs.

But you know what he did? He gave them information. He taught them the Bible wrong. They took it in in their mindset. It became a thought pattern, became an attitude, and now they are going to picket because it is the action. That is how it always works. Really not hard.

Kids who grow up watching their parents smoke think it is okay to smoke. Kids who grow up hearing their parents cuss think it is okay to cuss. Kids who grow up watching their parents drink think it is okay to drink, and kids who run with the worldly crowd, they become just like the worldly crowd because those crowds, those people, those scenarios form a pattern of thought that produces an attitude about it that in time becomes your action.

I told you last week:

Psalms 1:1

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Everybody is going to get counsel from somebody. People tell you, "Well, you are just following Bob Alexander, you are following a man." Well, thank you, but everybody follows somebody. The problem that Paul said, "Be followers of me as I follow God." Everybody follows somebody. You just need to make sure that you are following the right person. That is all. But that is, you know, that is a straw man. "Well, you are following a man." Well, who are you following? The bottom line is everybody follows somebody and everybody takes counsel from somebody. The Bible says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." There is someone that stops taking their counsel from the Word of God and starts taking it from ungodly people.

Then you know the progression I showed you last week. Standing, remember? Walking, standing, sitting. And the last one is sitting in the seat of the scornful. There are people who are scornful of this church today who, when you go back and would peel back the layers, no matter

who they are, it all goes back to one thing: attitude, thought pattern produced wrong action. It always works that way. That is how it works.

SEC: Strongholds and Their Consequences

In time, those patterns of thought, the mind, will develop into a way of life, a lifestyle, about everything that we see. We develop an attitude about everything we see, good or bad.

4. A wrong pattern of thought will always produce a wrong attitude, which in time will produce the wrong action. See how easy it is? You and I are simply outwardly what we think about God, the Bible inwardly. It does not get any easier than that. When you start to work with people, or in churches when you see people with problems, these are the things you want to remember. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

Many times as we get older, these patterns of thought, they start to compound. They start to compound into what the Bible calls strongholds. This is what chapter 10 is all about. Chapter 10 is about the strongholds we build in our life and how to pull them down. When you develop the wrong attitude, mindset, and the wrong attitude comes out of it, and then the wrong action, the longer you go, that pattern of thought, the way you think, your attitude, it starts to compound.

You start to put, when you have got your nose bent out of joint, you do not want to hang out with godly people. You look for other people with their noses bent out of joint. It is the way it works. When you get a bad attitude, you do not want to hang out with somebody with a good attitude. You want to look for that person that has got a bad attitude just like you do. You know what you do when you do that? You compound. Pretty soon you are building that thing into a stronghold, a compound. Now you are in trouble. Now we are no longer in control of our lives, but we are out of control of our lives.

The stronghold grows stronger every day. There is not a day in your life at that point that you do not get worse day by day. Now you multiply that by 20 years, multiply that by 30 years. You know what you have? You have a royal disaster on your hands. The final stage of that is people who have addictions. Addictions to smoking, addiction to drug, addiction to alcohol, addiction to pornography. And the famous last words, "I can stop anytime I want to." In every case, never met an exception. In every case, the lowest common denominator will simply be that it goes back to our mind and how we developed our patterns of thought that brought about the attitude, which in time brings about the action.

Parents, stop here for just a second. This is why you need to be up on what your kids watch. This is why you need to be up on what your kids listen to. This is why you need to be on top of who your kids, the friends they hang out with, and what they have access to.

Does this ever begin to answer a lot of questions that people have about why things are the way they are in Christianity? If this does not begin to answer for you why God's people are the way they are, I mean, I know I cannot fix everybody and I do not claim to have that ability, but all I really want to do is learn the cause and the effect because you will never help somebody until you understand where they are at with the whole thing.

Sometimes people get so confused about things. You really do. I watched some of you. I watched some of you look at circumstances in this church. I have seen this all my life. You look at a couple or you look at this, you look at that, and they get out of whack or they do some stupid thing or they get an attitude about God or the Word of God or whomever, whatever, whatever, and you just have such a problem with that thing. It seems to be so confusing for you. Well, I have got news for you. The Bible says God is not the author of confusion, nothing confusing about it. It is simply somewhere along the line they got, however, from whoever, a bad thought pattern that produced a bad attitude that in time produces the bad action. It is not any more complicated than that.

I do not know why you get so confused about it because if you are paying attention, my advice to you, I do this all the time, develop case studies with people. I do. I think it is one of the most important things I have ever done in my life. I like to watch people. I mean, I consider them all day long and watch the people go by. I consider them in an airport all day and watch the people go by. You see, now for me it might be a little different because my life is people. My whole life, my whole world is built around people. So I learned a long time ago that I needed to pay attention.

What I have done all my life is I am going to tell you, there are only about eight or nine patterns of human nature. In your mind, you develop case studies. If you have got to have goofy people around you, why not use them and learn from them? Do you not have good people around you when you learn from them? Well, if you can learn from good people, why can't we learn from goofy people? Does that not make sense to you? Thank you. Nice to know you are still here.

I watch everything people do. But that is my job, you see. Some of you, you are like the sun coming up in the morning. If I give you something to do, I never think twice about it. When I know you know what you are doing, I will get a call on the phone from somebody that you are working with. I will be working with two other people or something. I will have you call them. To some people, they think, "Well, Bob, he does not, he, he, he, the pastor will not talk to me. He is going to have to ask." No, the person I am giving you to talk to, I have all the confidence that he knows as much about it as I do. That is how much confidence I have in some of you. That is a pattern, you see. I watch you in the pattern. I just did not meet you and say, "Boy, I watch you." I make case studies of people. People are my life. I cannot imagine a chemist going through life not having any test tubes. Well, I cannot imagine a people in ministry not having people that you watch.

Case studies, you learn. It is not a thing that you learn and you look and then you make bad gestures or comments about them. You are learning. You want to learn in time the patterns of human nature. There are not a lot of them, but when you learn them, you understand them, you are in a better position to be able to help them.

Some of you, I call you the sign-ups and no-show-ups. You will sign up for everything and show up for nothing. I look at the sign-up list and I do not mean to be crude about this. I look at a sign-up list and I can, I said I have got 60 people. Nope, got 48. Somewhere between when we finally

meet, I will get a phone call. Happens all the time. "I cannot be there. Something came up. My grandfather died again." That is a pattern. You are laughing. That is a pattern.

When we did our, remember when we did the restart thing and we all adopted families? Thank you. You had a late night last night, son? That grease you put on your head. That is a pattern. I mean, you know what? We had a restart and we all adopted families and you guys, "Oh, and I have got to tell you, Bam, I want you to get my name in the Christmas gift next week, next year." I mean, you bought that kid a television set. Some of you bought them bikes. Some of you bought them, I could not believe it. And you all took it and you know what? Here it comes. Patterns.

I had four couples, two couples, four people that took two people, four people. I had some people that took some people. When I went down the list and I saw what the needs were, I saw who took them. You know what I did? I went out and bought those gifts. And sure as I am standing here, come that morning, when we had to have them wrapped, we are having a party that afternoon, those people never showed up, never brought those gifts and never did one thing they said they were going to do and left, not me, but those little kids down there without presents. But I covered it. You know why? I know your pattern. Patterns are incredible. Patterns are incredible.

Some of you talk it, but you do not live it. That is a pattern. Some of you love to get into the deep thing of Revelation. You love Daniel, you love the Tribulation. You get how many hairs the Antichrist has got on his head. But your own personal relationship with God is a disaster. That is a pattern. These are patterns people get into. These are patterns.

I watch how people, I have had people sit down in my office and tell me, "Oh, oh, restart is the thing for us. The lights have come on. We are all ready to go. I have waited all my life for this." And you know what? Two months later, where are they? Now I am glad they are there and I am glad they say those things, but you know what? I did not call Jamie and say, "We have got to go it in the inside." I did not call the team leaders and say, "The world is going to change." Patterns.

Some of you people have never finished anything you have ever started in your life. That is a pattern. It does not make you a bad person. It just means that if I waited for you to take my dogs out, I would have to buy stock in a paper cleaning company.

You need to build you some case studies. Do it at work. Do it with your family. Do not tell them. Do it with people in this church. You learn from it. If you can learn from good people, then you can learn from goofy people. The two of the greatest men who forged my concept of ministry that taught me more about it than any other two men on this planet. One of them did it right. One of them did it completely wrong. I learned from both. Do not think that you can only learn from good people. If somebody gets their nose bent out of joint and leaves this church, find out why. I do.

Why will you not learn? Why do you live in a little bubble? Why do you live in a little world that you refuse to just find out why? I do not understand those things. I really do not. I mean, learn from it. Learn how and why a child of God that claims to be saved, and I do not dispute that they are, they are not. But they are on their way to heaven. Will forsake the Word of God almost

completely. Live like the world, half in, half out, and yet go around and justify themselves and their lifestyle. I have seen it all my life.

I mean, ask yourself, do a case study. Ask yourself with all the Bible verses, with all the Bible examples, with all the New Testament principles, the five wisdom books that clearly lay out a wise man and a foolish man and show the disastrous consequences for a life with you turning your back to God. Add to that all that Jesus said, all that Paul said, all that Timothy said, all that James said. Ask yourself, use them as a case study. How in the world could they try to justify and think they are okay and there is something wrong with you, the church, the Bible, the message?

When you can see that, when you understand how that works, when you can see the cause and the effect of the way those things operate, you are ready to go. You will not get fooled much. When you can see those things and break them down to the lowest common denominator, you will be something else in working and helping with people. I am trying today to do one thing, broaden your horizons. To work with people and getting past your own issues in life first. You must understand why people look at things the way they look at them. Say the things that they say and do the things that they do, eyes to eyes, mouth to mouth, and hand to hand.

I have told this story many, many times and it is a great story and I tell it every chance I can. It is one of those things that absolutely in another message changed my life. A lot of times things will happen to people and everybody wonders what happened, how did this happen? Sometimes there are people that are in the church, they are strong, they are leaders, they are this, they are that. I have seen this all my life. I have dealt with it for 40 some years. I got this out of a sermon by a guy years ago that again it changed my life.

He told the story. He was preaching to us at a church one time and he told the story. He asked the question, he says, "What do you get when you squeeze a lemon?" He waited for an answer and everybody in the church almost said, "Lemon juice." He said to them, "That is not necessarily true." He said, "Where I come from," and he was from Georgia, he said, "About a year ago we had a guy going into grocery stores with cyanide or some kind of poison in a needle and he was walking over to the produce department, he was injecting poison into the lemons. When the people bought the lemons and took them home and squeezed them to make lemonade, 40 or 50 people died before they caught the guy."

He said, "So the question is, what do you get when you squeeze a lemon?" And the answer is whatever is really on the inside is what comes out. He said, "You know what? What do you get when a Christian gets squeezed?" You would think you would get Christian juice. But when you get squeezed, when I get squeezed, when the circumstances of life grab us around the throat, when we get dealt bad cards in a bad hand of life, what really comes out of us when we get squeezed is what was really on the inside to begin with. That is why people react to things the way they do. Once you understand that great principle, you are not surprised.

Most people think that most Christians are everything they need to be. That may be true, but the real test of that will be when you are squeezed. When you are squeezed and what we all think should come out, but it really does not come out, something else comes out, it all goes back to what was really on the inside. You see, it is so easy. Why we make it so complicated, why we get

our emotions involved and try to come up with all these things? It is so easy. It makes your life a lot less complicated. Somebody says, "What happened to so-and-so?" "Well, they got squeezed." You take it up from there. I do not know what to tell you. That is one of the greatest things I ever learned.

The answer to all of this lies in the concepts that I already gave you. Wrong attitude of heart will produce the wrong mindset that will produce the wrong thinking pattern that produces the wrong action, which will produce and put us on a wrong path in life.

5. This is why some Christians, if they are really Christians to begin with, this is why they do what they do. This is why they will get out in the world and yet they will stand there. This is going to be a big part of your puzzle right here. This is why some of God's people, male or female, can get into trouble, do things. Can we all agree on one thing? And maybe you do not agree with everything I am saying today, but let us all agree on one thing. As a Christian, we should have different standards than the world. Can I get an amen on that? Are there not different levels of standards of holiness with God that He requires with His people? Does He not say, "Be holy for I am holy?" In the book of Leviticus, broken down on those two concepts? I do not think we can disagree with that.

This is why a person who claims to be a child of God, and I am not arguing they are or not, can do what he does, do what she does, that is wrong outside of that, clearly wrong outside the Word of God, and yet they will stand there and blame everybody else. It will always be somebody else's fault. They blame everybody else, and when he or her, as far as God is concerned, and all that it goes on, it is never their fault, they are okay, it is their right for them to do this, and they will spend their whole life finding other people who are Christian who do the same thing and saying, "See, there it is."

Now, let me show you how this works. This is number five, and it is so simple. He has allowed himself to build a stronghold in his life. A stronghold, ladies and gentlemen, is a defensive position. Across our country, Missouri has got two, Kansas has got one, Fort Riley, Fort Leavenworth, Fort Leonard Wood, you have got Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Fort Devens in Massachusetts, Fort Benning, Georgia, forts. You know what those forts are? They are strongholds. They have got more ammo and more weapons and more troops and more tanks and everything you can have. They are a defensive position, and when you build, listen to it, here it is, it is simple. When you get the wrong mindset that develops the wrong attitude, that develops the wrong action, you know what the Holy Spirit of God does? He pushes you in the corner, and you know what you do? In that hymnal right there, I think it is 394, what you have got to do is turn to that, and we all sing the song, "I Surrender All." "All to Jesus, I surrender. I surrender all," but we do not do that, do we? We fortify. We are in a corner, so we sandbag, put up all the defensive. Now we have got a stronghold.

Now it makes sense. Why does somebody who is definitely wrong with God doing things that are outside the Bible, and yet they stand in front of you, talk to you, and tell you, "You are wrong, the church is wrong, I am wrong, the Bible is wrong, it is okay to do this, it is okay to do that." Why do they do that? Because now they are in a stronghold. Now they have built their

defenses up, and they, because of their pride, because of their arrogance, because of their sinfulness, they are hell-bent to election, are going to defend their stronghold. That is how that happens. It is not hard. Chapter 10 is about pulling down them strongholds, but that is why it happens. He has allowed himself to build a stronghold in his life, and because of his pride, his arrogance, and he feels now the need to defend himself. Whenever somebody says something to him, "Hey, that was not right, that was wrong," oh, defensive shields go up, because now I am in my stronghold. "Do not tell me I am wrong, do not tell me I am wrong for doing this." I am in a stronghold, I have got myself defended. It is an undefendable position. We will call it Fort Deception. His pride, his bad attitude, his wrong thinking pattern, his arrogance, that he thinks he is right and the Bible is wrong, he has built himself into a stronghold.

6. You have heard me say many, many times, and this is why you have got to tear down the stronghold, and many strongholds never get torn down. Some of God's people are going to think they are right, and they can do what they want to do, right up to the judgment seat of Christ, and add to that in most cases, their parents are backing them up. But this is why you have got to pull down the stronghold: You cannot fix your problems with the same thinking that caused those problems.
7. Here comes a \$10 million principle. This will be number seven. This is why in dealing with people, you never focus on when they just change their action. You always focus when they change their attitude. Change of action is temporary. Change of heart is permanent. You always want to remember that. This is where most people get caught up in the game of life. They get played, they get burned, they get used.

I have told you this before, as a Christian, you can fake a lot of things, but you cannot fake true spirituality because there are some things that true spirituality demand. Remember when you were a kid and you did something wrong, and you knew you were going to get whipped for it? So you pretend like you fell down and hurt your arm or your leg really bad, so mom and dad would not whip you quite as hard or maybe not whip you at all. You were rolling the dice, but you thought their sympathy for your broken arm, which was not broken, was going to override the seat of your pants. Christians do the same thing. They will fool you with their action when they have absolutely no mindset at all to change their attitude. I have seen it all my life. These are things you need to learn. Change of action is temporary. Change of heart is permanent.

This is why people say, "Well, I am leaving the church to find another church." Oh, you are going to find another church you are not going to go to. You are going to find another church you are not going to get involved in. You see, that is an action. That is an action. You can fake a lot of things, and this brings in the concept of short-term and long-term. I never look at anybody short-term. I never do. I always look long-term. Short-term will always be action. Long-term will always be attitude.

If you are really going to change your attitude and not just fake it with an action change, there are five things, five things that you cannot hide that have to come along. You know what that Bible says? That Bible says, we talked about a couple weeks ago, your life is the altar of God.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Our job is to lay ourselves on that altar. When you take yourself off that altar and say, "I do not want to be part of it, I am going to do this." And then you hear a message or God gets a hold of your head or your heart or whatever, and you want to come back with God and get back in that altar. You have got to bring five things with you. I am not going to give you what they are. My tricks are to trade. I am not going to give you what they are, but there are five absolute things you have got to have. When you do not see them, it is an action change. I did not mean to preach. But how does a man of action not preach on action?

I see it all the time. You see it with husband and wives. I have had husband and wives where they finally, it is broke. It went five or six years, she is done. That magical switch has been flipped. She does not care what is going on now. They will come into my office and sit down and he will say all the right things, "Honey, I am sorry, I will do better. I will do this. I am going to fix this. I am going to stop this." She says, "I do not want to hear it." And I said, "Why not? Here is a man wanting to try to do it." She says, "Bob, for five years, every time we get in a jam, he says these things, it lasts, we have been through it a hundred times. He says these things. And then three weeks later, he goes right back to being what it is. I am done." You know what that is? That is a man who got in a jam that always just changes action. Never changed it permanently with his attitude. Now it is over.

You will see it with people you work with. This is where you really see it. People will come in to me, how many times have I heard this? I wish I had a nickel for every time. My mom always saw somebody with a really big nose. She always say, "Well, she had that nose full of nickels." That was her saying. It is true. I do not say that way because obviously some of you have larger noses than others, and I do not want you to feel bad about it. But if I had a nickel for every time I heard some people tell me stuff, I have people come in on time. "Oh, I am tired of this life. Oh, I want to do this. I want to do that. I want to do that. I am so sick and tired of it." And you know what? Three weeks later, when push comes to shove and I start putting you with somebody to help you and they start screwing down the old ratchet to make the things work, suddenly now it is not as exciting as it was. You know what? It is an action change. When it is an attitude change, you do not care what you have got to do.

We have a rule in counseling that, and I do not mean to give you all my rules, but we have a rule in counseling that there are no secrets between the person that is working with you and me. They are an extension of my ministry. They are working for me. I have trained them. I have got them ready. They know what they are doing. They feed back to me, all the information so I can oversee it and make sure everybody gets what they need to get. But there are no secrets and you will see it all the time. You will start working with somebody and somebody will say, "Well, do not tell Bob this." The moment that counseling person falls for that, they are out of a job because that is exactly what they do. Hey, if you really have got an attitude change, you do not care what I know. I think you would be the guy that wanted me to know. I think you would be the guy you would want to know. It is an action, not an attitude.

I am telling you, I see it all the time. I have seen guys, people, they get this mindset. You have got some worthless Christian. And I use the word worthless because I cannot think of another word. They actually think that if you give them something to do spiritually, that is going to make them spiritual. Years ago, we have our athletic league here and softball. Years ago, we had volleyball, we had basketball, and we had softball. Our league today has been built. Some of you old people have been around for a long time. You know, it is built on a great tradition of understanding the concept of athletics for ministry.

But I will never forget, I had a guy, he was a decent guy, and he had a worthless son. I am all for it. He wanted his son to come and play, I do not even forget what it was, basketball, I do not remember what it was, but he wanted to come and play. I am all for it. Bring him on. You know what? I like to bring him on. I know he is wayward. I know he did not bring him on. Well, it was not three weeks later that somebody told me, "Do you know so and so had his son do the devotion last week?" I said, "No, no, do not, you have got the wrong guy." He said, "No, no, he did." He says, "You know, a lot of the people were looking around and saying, 'Well, this kid was out drinking last week and now he is over here doing a devotion.' Does not that send some kind of mixed message?" And I said, "It certainly does."

So I go to the guy, and I am diplomatic about it. I mean, I am mad as a wet hen, but I am holding it back and I am not going to, I am upset about it because, and maybe I am wrong, but as Christians, do we not have to have standards? Would anybody come here this morning, hear me preach? If you saw me drinking a beer last night, oh, you would. Okay. So I went to him and I said, "Look," I said, "So I have got some people coming to me and complain, did you do this?" And he said, "Yeah, I did." And I said, "What were you thinking?" Here is what he said. He said, "Well, I know we struggled and I know he is having some problems. I just thought if I gave him some spiritual responsibilities that it would pull him out of it." And I said, "Oh, then let us not stop there. Sunday, let us make him a deacon. Oh, no, no, no, let us not stop there. Shoot, two weeks from now, get all the family together, we will ordain the sucker."

I told this guy, "If stupidity was a crime, you would be doing 25 years to life." You do not fix people's unspirituality by giving them something spiritual to do. You know what you do when you do that? You confuse everybody else and then you bolster to him or her or whatever that they are okay. You are out of your mind. I told him it was the most stupid thing that I have, no, I could not say that. I have seen a lot of stupid things since then.

I have seen people get all excited because some son or some daughter or some person that they are working with makes one good decision, one out of a thousand bad ones. And it is like, "Change has come." It is like Obama. "Change has come," has it? The only change that has come is when you go to the grocery store, you do not get any back. "Change has come." Well, do not kill the fatted calf and throw the party just yet. Short term, long term. Let us see if it is an action change or an attitude change. If it is an attitude change, then ministry, attitude change. There is an eight Bible study. Attitude change, where the action is. Action change, you sucker. Give it six months. See where they are at. See who they still hang out with, what they are not willing to do for God. I am telling you, there are five things you have got to see. They are not there. Go roast a weenie. You are wasting your time. It is real. Do not get played. Understand the basic

fundamentals of why people do what they do. Eye to eye, mouth to mouth, hand to hand. It is not complicated. We make it so complicated. That is action change, not attitude change. That is temporary change.

I am going to tell you something right now. You do not have a stronghold on Monday and then not have it on Tuesday. They are hard to break. You do not have a stronghold on one day and then the next day it is gone. There is a pattern to strongholds. Also there is a biblical process to getting out of it. The Bible says we are going to look at it next week, how to pull it down.

SEC: The Solution: God's Mind and the Bible

8. The job of every Christian, once you get saved, is to get into that Bible, find out what God's opinion is on everything in life and then make it your opinion. That is the only way you can ensure right patterns of thought, right attitude, and right action. The only way because that will produce the right mindset, which will produce the right pattern of thought, which will produce the right attitude of heart, which will put the right action. That is why, honestly, folks, I hammer you with Bible principles all the time. It is the only way. It is the only way.

Psalms 119:11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Psalms 119:9

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

The beginning of change is simply you getting God's mind over your mind and letting the mind be in you, which was God's mind, make the lasting attitude changes, which produced the lasting action changes. You see it in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When Jesus first showed up, he had 12 disciples. A little bit later on, he added 70 more. A little bit later on, now we are all disciples. Now, we are all disciples here if you are saved this morning, but there were only apostles back in the New Testament. I was going to say there are only 12, but that is not true. But they were only back in the Old Testament. There were some qualifications to be an apostle. Nobody can meet them today. But we are not apostles, but we are disciples.

The word disciple comes from the word discipline. Twelve men back then who disciplined their life to what Christ said and taught. Twelve men who took what he said and disciplined himself to it, therefore they were called his disciples. It is the same thing. If you go to UMKC, if you go to Missouri, if you go to Northwest, by Southeast, by East and West, it does not matter. When you go and take a philosophy course or take a medical course and you start to talk to somebody, they are going to ask you this, "Oh really? You are in philosophy. Yes. What discipline are you studying?" Discipline means who you are following, who you are building it on, who you are studying.

When you get saved here, we go through 10 discipleship lessons. Ten basic lessons that teach you to be a disciple by learning what Christ thinks about 10 fundamental areas and then you learn how to discipline yourself to them and that is the beginning of you being Christ's disciple.

The Bible that God gave us in its lowest form and common denominator is God's mind. Think about that. Incredible.

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

What a great verse. As it says there in chapter 2:

Philippians 2:1-5

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

That is the mind you have. Getting God's mind is overriding your own mind. Getting God's thoughts and making them your thoughts. Practically speaking, all the Bible to me in a practical sense is my new mind that God has given me to go along with a new heart that he supplied me when he saved me.

Second great verse:

1 Corinthians 2:15-16

But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Verse 15 says, if you are spiritual, you have the ability to judge all things. Now let me talk to you about that for a moment. As a Christian, I do not judge people. I do not really care what you do one way or the other. And you shouldn't either. But as a Christian, if you are spiritual, that verse says that you judge all things, not people. I do not judge people but I do judge the things people do. I do not judge if it is right and wrong for them, that is not my business. But I do judge if I want it in my life. I will tell you something else, I will really judge if I want it in my church. I will ask myself, is that going to help me? Is that going to strengthen me? Is that going to take some of these young people and help them? Or is it going to hurt them?

You see, I do not judge people. I could care less. That is between you and God and God will deal with you and God will judge you. But I will judge the things people do and so should you if you are spiritual. You say, "Well, I do not do that." Well, thank you for the testimony. If you are spiritual, you judge all things. You look at what people do and say, "If I put that into my family, I

do not want my child doing that. I do not want my teenager running with that teenager. I do not want my son going with that girl. I do not want that girl going with my son. I do not want my 20-year-old hanging out drinking beer with that 20-year-old." You have got to make choices and it is based on the things people do going back to the patterns of thought, going back to the attitude it produces, going back to the ultimate action that happens. It is not complicated, folks. You do not want to do what is right with God. You like to make it complicated, do you not?

Here is the standard, verse 16. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that we may instruct him?" So he says, but we, God's people, have the mind of Christ. You see, that mind of Christ is what you let be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

This is the lowest common denominator breaking things down. You now know in the most simplistic form why people are the way they are. You now know why people will get outside of the Word of God. We have already established, I think I got about 75% of you have agreed that there are certain standards of holiness that we should have as a Christian. We know that outside that there is no defense. I mean, if we are all just going to live like hell and live like the world, what is the point? How do we tell people there is an alternative when you do not follow the alternative? I mean, I do not understand that.

We now know what happens, do we not? We get the wrong patterns of thought, develops the wrong attitude, the wrong action. Then we get pushed in the corner. We build a little defensive. Now the funniest thing in the world. It is like I look at some people and I think to myself, all she needs, all he needs is a clown suit, three rings, and a big top. Because this is a circus. How in the world do you live where you live, do what you do, and then say, "I am okay and you are wrong?" I tell you how you do it. "Hand me another sandbag, hand me another log. Let us fortify my place. I have got me a stronghold. Nobody is going to tell me what is right. I am going to drink what I want, smoke what I want, do what I want. Nobody is going to tell me. Certainly not that preacher, certainly not the people in that church. Why, they have got no grace. They do not understand. I like my booze. I like my cigarettes. I like my lifestyle. Who are they to obtain? There is something wrong with me. I have got me a fort." Yeah, Fort Deception. And run by Captain Stupidity.

SEC: Conclusion: Be Smarter Than the Problem

9. Always be smarter than the problem. Start looking around you. Take what I have given you today and find out why people do what they do. A couple of you guys have been going over to the motel over there and you have been putting up with a lot of junk over there, but I guess you both would agree probably the best training session there has ever been and you have got to see why it is the way it is. Today you are going to drop the hammer. Take a big hammer. I love it. That is why I will let you be with deadheaded people that have no future at all and I will let you stay with them and stay with them and stay with them when in my mind probably just from my experience there is no way they are ever going to turn the corner. But you know what? If I cannot fix them, then I will use them to help you grow and learn how to do it. I mean honestly, if I cannot get honor and glory out of you one way, I will get it another way, but I will get it.

Case studies. Be smarter than the problem. Start looking around you. Start making case studies. Judge all things in light of God's mind for yourself.

Next week, and this is the intro, next week we are going to jump into 2 Corinthians chapter 10. We are going to start looking at the mind of the minister and the problem that we all have are the strongholds that we build and I am going to show you how to pull them down.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you.