

I. The Magnitude of Proverbs: Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding

If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn to Proverbs chapter 2. We finished chapter 1 last week, and you can see by now the magnitude of the book of Proverbs and the scope of the great principles it has for us. We took a long time to give a good introduction to the book and then come through that chapter very carefully and very prayerfully. We have gleaned so much from chapter 1 to help us. Last week, we closed out with the message on the laughter of God, and we talked about understanding God's condemnation and all of that.

The book of Proverbs provides for us the three most important ingredients for us as God's children trying to struggle through this life. God could have taken us to heaven the moment we got saved, but we know that He did not. We know that He left us down here to basically finish what He started. Christianity is an ongoing line of men and women who find the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior, who basically fulfill in their life what God started but then took Christ back to heaven and ordained us to do it.

To get through that, God gives us, in the book of Proverbs, three great ingredients that we need to have as God's children after we get saved. In a true biblical sense, God gives you knowledge. We have talked about these before. Knowledge is facts, and you will find that the Bible is filled with facts—facts that you will carry on in everything in life.

However, knowledge is not enough. When you get the facts and you take the facts of God and apply them into your life, then you have what the Bible calls wisdom. Wisdom is simply the facts of God which are applied to any given situation in your life. When a child of God takes the facts, the knowledge, and the wisdom and applies it, then he gets the third ingredient that the book of Proverbs talks about, and that is understanding.

Understanding will simply be how God figures into every scenario in your life. You will never fully understand something until you see God's working in it behind the scenes in that particular situation. You can go to a secular history class and you can get all kinds of facts, and you can even get wisdom. But you will never get understanding because once you realize that God created it all and everything is in place by His command and He is doing a work through it, then all the little components that you have to look at and deal with in your own life, the way you understand it is to simply step back and see what God is doing in your life. That is understanding.

II. The Desire to Know the Bible and Three Profiles of Believers

As we enter into chapter 2, this will be a very practical message today. This will be something that I think will help many of you because we are going to begin to see the incredible process of

what it takes to really get the Bible down. I found this some thirty-five plus years ago and I made it my home. Proverbs chapter 2, verses 1 through 9, is where for the last thirty-five years I have basically lived my life in one sense. I have followed its concepts just like the Bible says, the instructions of a father to his son, as best I could.

I truly believe that many, if not most, of God's people today really do want to know the Bible. I believe that many of God's people, if not most of them, if you would sit down and ask them, "Do you really want to...?" You could find a child of God who is way out in left field and does not care about it, I guess. But I think if you sat down and had an honest conversation with most Christians who are truly saved, I think most of them would tell you, "I want to know the Word of God. I want to know the Bible."

However, I also know that even though many would say that, there are only a very few that will do what they need to do to really get the Bible. Wanting it is one thing, but getting it is something else. I want to talk to you about that process today. This is the same process that God showed me many years ago in my life, and I put it to work in my life. I can honestly say, and I do not claim to be everything about the Bible, but I will tell you this: whatever I do know about the Bible, I would take it back to Proverbs chapter 2 and follow in this line of teaching that he talks about.

When it comes to God's people and the Word of God, I have observed over the years that you find about three basic groups, three basic profiles. The Bible is full of profiles, and you learn to see certain scenarios and circumstances in life by understanding the profiles in the Bible.

The first group you find of saved people are those who know absolutely nothing about the Bible. This has always been an amazing thing to me. I have met people over the years of my life that have been saved ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty, even forty years, and they know absolutely nothing about the Bible. I do not know what they did all forty years of their life. They may have heard a few things from a preacher or someone else, but they could not explain it if their life depended on it. They are totally and completely inept when it comes to the Bible, and after thirty or forty years, they are still just like the day they got saved. Yet, they are very good people. They are not problem people. Many of them do not go around causing problems in churches. They are good people, but they just never put forth the effort to learn it. They go to church all the time. I have known Christians that were in churches every time the door was open, and they have been saved ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years, and at the end of that time, they do not know any more about the Bible than the day they walked into the place. That has always been an amazing thing to me, but it is a true thing; I have seen it.

The second group are people who I classify as knowing some things about the Bible. They do not know the Bible, but they have learned some things about the Bible, and there are a lot of Christians in this category. A lot of pastors and Bible teachers are in this one. They know a lot of things about the Bible, but they really do not know the Bible. It shows in their preaching. It shows in their teaching. When you get to a point in your life, you can almost tell where a person is at with the Word of God by the content of his message.

A lot of things you do not understand about preachers, I guess you have to be a preacher to understand, but there is a real circuit of just passing your messages around to other guys. There are pastors who get on the Internet on Monday and they will get a great sermon to preach the next week. It is filled with it, and they will get information out of other guys' books. They will read all the other material.

I had a pastor one time who quoted a famous motivational speaker, Charles T. Jones. He would always say this to his people: "You will be exactly five years from today the same person you are, except for the books you read and the people you meet." Now, that was Charles T. Jones's take on developing yourself, and I understand where Jones is coming from with it. But I never understood how a pastor could get up and say that to his people. I always modified it somewhat. In fact, I said it one time, and he was not very happy about it when I said it, but I always took it and put it into what I felt was a true biblical context because you will be five years from today exactly who you are today, except for the Book that you read and the Person that you know in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. That, to me, is the biblical process for it, but that is where we are at.

I find a lot of people today who know things about the Bible, but it is very shallow. I am not against reading books; I read all the time, and I think it is very important that you read. But I do not take what I read and run it around the Bible. I take what I read and run it through the Bible. I think the Bible forms a great filtering system for us. They talk about all the information that they get and they find all these things. I know guys who simply use the Internet as their Bible. They do not read their Bible anymore. Why should you? You can find anything you want on the Internet, and you do know that everything on the Internet has to be true.

You can get everything you want off the Internet, and it is when a man is not disciplined or he really does not want to do the work that he has got to do to get out of the Bible what he has to get. That is an easy alternative. If there is any group of people on the face of the planet—I do not know anything about car mechanics, car salesmen, doctors, or lawyers, but I do know something about preachers, having been around them all my life—if there is any group of people that will nine times out of ten take the shortcut, it will be a preacher. Our churches are filled with it today. They know things about the Word of God, but they do not know the Bible.

For instance, I will show you a couple of examples.

Proverbs 9:1

Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:

Do you know what those seven pillars are? It is kind of ludicrous. "Yeah, I believe the Bible is the Word of God, and oh, I read the Bible, and I love the Bible." But the Bible says that its Word is built on seven pillars. There are seven things that hold this Bible up. That is knowing the Bible; that is not knowing some things about the Bible. That is knowing the Bible.

We talked about it before on Thursday night Bible study. The Bible talks about there are seven mysteries, and you are told in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 1, that a pastor is supposed to be a

good steward of those mysteries. He is supposed to pass them on to his people. Yet, if you go to the average church today, they would not understand what the seven mysteries are.

- There are seven distinct baptisms in the Bible, but they would not know what that is.
- There are seven judgments in the Bible.
- There are seven resurrections in the Bible.
- We talk about the seven things that change the day you got saved.
- There are seven marriages in the Bible, and they all mean something and they point towards something.
- There are seven suicides in the Bible.

I had a pastor one time whose primary focus was suicide. He would go into high schools and churches, holding conferences on suicide. He was considered the guru of suicide. If you were a kid, he saw suicide in everything, and he would get up there and talk about it. He would lay out and give all his facts and figures about suicides and how, and he would try to offer some support to it. I was in a group meeting one time where he was talking about all this, and he was an expert on suicide. He traveled around the world, and if anybody wanted to know about suicide, he was the guy to ask.

I just stopped and said, "I have a question for you then. I am glad to finally find somebody who is an expert on suicide. Not that I have been thinking about doing it, but I said, 'You can help me. There are seven suicides in the Bible. Who are they?'" He had no clue. He was so busy amassing all the facts of teen suicide and the facts of all the suicide and all the theories that you get of suicide. He never thought that the greatest authoritative book on suicide would have been the Bible. You find in this Book seven people who committed suicide. Each one of them is different, and when you put them all together, you see that is knowing the Bible. That is not knowing some things about the Bible. That is knowing the Bible.

- There are seven stages of spiritual growth. That is knowing the Bible.
- There are seven things that you are told to add to your faith.

Somebody says, "Well, I am struggling with my life. What do I do?" "Well, I am going to go read this book, or I am going to go read that book, or I am going to grab this guy's stuff over here." Why not get the Book that God wrote and simply, I guarantee, probably the problem you are having is you are truly saved, but you are not in an adventure of adding those seven things to your faith. See how easy it is? You can stand up here all day and give facts about the Bible, and you hear pastors all the time that talk about things in the Bible, and I meet Christians all the time who think they have learned some things about the Bible. That is totally different from knowing the Bible.

Then that is my third group. The third group you find are people who know the Bible. In my humble opinion, for whatever it is worth, I think if a child of God has been saved ten years, at least ten years—I will give you the first ten just to figure out what is going on. I will even stretch it to fifteen. I will give you fifteen years to figure it out. I think any child of God who has been saved fifteen years or more should be able to, at any minute, with thirty seconds' notice, stand up

and lay out every book of the Bible as far as its doctrinal, inspirational, and historical application, and lay that thing out with thirty seconds' notice.

I think every one of you ought to come to the place where if somebody asked you to speak at a Bible conference, and you were excited about going to that thing, and there was going to be a bunch of preachers there, and they told you, "We want you to speak on the Judgment Seat of Christ or the Great White Throne Judgment," whatever it is, and you worked and got that great sermon. So it was your turn to preach, and you are sitting on the platform next to the pastor, and the lady is up there to sing, and you know you are going to have to go up and preach as soon as she sings because that is the way it does. Just as she starts to sing, the pastor leans over and says, "Are you ready to go?" And you say, "Yes, sir." He says, "Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you, we have changed your preaching assignment. We want you to teach now on the book of Obadiah, Jonah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel," and he throws that book right in your lap with twenty seconds to go. Every child of God saved fifteen years or more should be able to look at him and say, "Not a problem. Turn to that book and let it go." You see, that is knowing the Bible; that is not just knowing some things about the Bible. That is knowing your Bible, knowing the Bible.

Last night, they had a youth thing here, and I was walking around. I do not spend much time in the youth room, but that is where the food was last night, so I spent a lot of time back there, meditating and praying. I was looking at Zach's board there that he is teaching on Thursday night when he has the kids in there, and I looked at it, and I kind of stood back and I thought, "Wow, now that is exactly somebody who is building a foundation in these kids' lives to know the Bible."

I know your kids are going to struggle with things in life, and I know that there are times when you teach on this and you teach on that and teach on that, but I want to tell you, teaching on things in the Bible for your kids is absolutely worthless if they do not have a foundation about what that Book is first. You have got to build on something. I looked at that last night and I thought, "Boy, they are getting a foundation." Not that I doubted that they were not, but I understand that they are getting it.

I would say that as a Christian, you can know where you are at in the Bible probably eighty-five percent of the time. Every child of God saved ten, fifteen years or more ought to have that handle down. You ought to know the Bible. You do not want to just go through life knowing some things you have heard somebody say or something that you have read. You want to be able to understand it by what I call a working knowledge with the Scriptures, being able to open up that Book and know where you are at, know what you are dealing with, about eighty-five percent of the time. I will tell you right now, fifteen, maybe twenty percent of the Bible, nobody is ever going to figure out.

Everybody looks at the Bible as such a hard Book to get their hands on, and part of that is because you are told that it is a hard Book. I am going to take you the other way today, and I am going to show you how easy it is. The problem is not hard or easy; the problem is the process by which you go through to get it. That is the key.

The first two people are quite common; the last one is rather hard to find—somebody who really knows their Bible. Yet, I must say that some of you here today are very good with the Bible. I have watched you grow, and I have watched what you have done with the Word of God in your life, and you know the Bible very well. You have what I would call a working knowledge with the Bible. Others of you are well on your way; you are well on your way. I think that what we are going to talk about today, that God gave me some thirty-five years ago when I found this in the book of Proverbs, I think that many of you are ready for this.

As I said earlier, I want to show you the process that God will give you, and through that process, give you the knowledge of God—not the knowledge about God. The very same knowledge that God has, that is what I am talking about. I am not talking about that you are going to get a lot of knowledge about God. No, I am talking about you are going to get the exact same knowledge that God has, and that is what it takes for you to really understand the Bible.

Philippians 2:5

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

1 Corinthians 2:16

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

The question is, how do you find out what God wants you to do if God Himself does not tell you what He wants you to do in your life? How does He instruct you? How is God going to judge you someday at the Judgment Seat of Christ for what you did or did not do if He did not instruct you in what He wanted you to do? That is the question. The answer to that question is very clear. He says, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" Then he goes on to say, "But we have the mind of Christ."

We do not have the mind of a couple of things that Christ knows. No, the Word of God is the mind of Christ. That Book is everything that is God's mind and everything that is God's thought. That Book is eternal as God is, and when you have the Bible in your hand—and I am talking about a King James 1611 Authorized Version—when you have the Bible in your hand, you have the mind of Christ, and that is all you need. But you have got to learn it.

Let me just dismiss another myth here while we are here: to learn the Bible and get the Bible, it does not take Bible college. It does not require formal education. If it took that, I would have never learned it. I was in the sixth grade so long the kids brought me the apple; they thought I was the teacher. It does not require a degree. You do not have to have some high IQ. It does not take Greek or Hebrew. No seminary. It just takes you and God in His Book in a relationship—the Father's instructions to His Son.

William Tyndale was one of the great... he was the second man that put the Bible out, which became the forerunner of the King James Bible, off the text that the King James Bible came from. In fact, eighty-five percent of what the King James translators came out with in the King James Bible, when they sat down in 1603 to do the King James Bible, came off of his translation.

He was greatly opposed for what he did because he, like Wycliffe before him, wanted to put the Bible in the hands of a common man. He produced the second English translation (Wycliffe the first one), but Tyndale produced the second from 1494 to 1536, an English translation for the common people.

At one time in Oxford, he was being crucified by the scholars because they thought, "How dare you? How dare you take the Word of God, which God has only entrusted us scholars with the education, with the IQ, with the knowledge of the original languages? How dare you think that you can give those common people out there a Bible that they could understand? They are always going to need us to tell them what the Bible says." Do you know what he said? He looked at them. There was a plow boy out there plowing in the field. Do you know what he said? He pointed out there and he said, "Someday that plow boy will know more Bible than all the scholars in England." You betcha, he understood it.

A man asked me one time, he said, "What is the key, Bob, to learning the Bible?" Then he began to answer his own question. He said, "Well, I suspect you have to really study it." I said, "Well, study is important, but if you want the key to learning the Bible, it is not studying it." He said, "Well, I guess then it is just reading it, meditating in it." I said, "Well, that is important too, but your question is what the key was, and if you want the key to learning the Bible, it is not reading it." He said, "Well, wow," he said, "I guess maybe it is memorizing and going to Bible college and getting a Greek and a Hebrew." I said, "No, no, you asked what the key was." He says, "Well, yes, what is the key? If it is not studying, and it is not reading, and it is not Bible college, and not the Greek and Hebrew, what is the key to learning the Bible?" And I said, "The key to learning the Bible is simply loving the Bible. If you love it more than anything else on planet Earth, you are going to learn it. That is the key. That is the key."

We have a generation of God's people today, probably the last four or five generations, who love everything in this life more than the Book that God gave them. That is why you will find those first two groups where you find people who will spend twenty, thirty years going to church and never know anything about the Bible. That is why you will find people all their life whose amassed knowledge is just things about the Bible. They love everything else in life. They love the music, they love the song service, they love the special, they love the praise group, they love the big screens (ours is broke), they love all those things that you have out there, except loving the most important thing that God ever gave you, and that is that Book right here. That is where it starts.

III. The Eight Necessary Things for Getting God's Word

We know now that the book of Proverbs, the first eight chapters, is simply the instructions to a son by his father. We know that as a picture, inspiration is God giving to you and me as His children. In this chapter 2, in the first nine verses, you find eight things. Eight things that if you do these in accordance with your Bible and loving the Bible, you will learn the Book. I call them the eight absolutely necessary things of getting the Book and getting it down in your life.

Let us read it here in Proverbs chapter 2. Let us pick it up in verse 1, and then we will begin to talk about it.

Proverbs 2:1-9

1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and we do love You so much for the Word of God that You have given us. We love You, Father, for the people that have come today and for the Book that You have provided for us, that we know is without error and that we can trust with our very soul, trust with our families, trust with our relationships, and trust in everything. Lord, I ask You today, Father, to just take and open up our hearts, open up our minds, and to let us see and understand this great truth. Lord, I thank You every day for some thirty-five years ago on that morning when You showed me this great passage and how it changed my life, and Lord, how I have never left the passage or its concepts. I have not always done much right in my life, and I have screwed things up many, many times, but I have never forgotten, Lord, Proverbs chapter 2, when You said, "My son," and You told me what to do—these eight things. So help us today, and we will thank You and praise You. In Jesus' name sake we ask it, Amen.

There are a couple of things to note here. First of all, just in general housekeeping, this will be your fifth set of paragraph marks. Remember, I told you how important paragraph marks are in the Bible, and that we are going to come through Proverbs by the paragraph marks; that is the best way to break it out. The other thing I want you to see is that this is the fourth time that he says, "My son." I told you in the first eight chapters that there are fifteen times that he says, "My son," so this is the fourth one. The other thing I want you to see is you find the word "understand" or "understanding" here five times in nine verses, so this is going to be a key passage.

Just eight simple things, and then I would sound so easy, but nothing will show us how unstructured or how dysfunctional or undisciplined we are in the Bible better than this passage. Let me tell you something, when I say that God showed me thirty-five plus years ago, that is true, but I want you also to know I had to change some things in my life. I had to adjust some things in my life. For me, it was not just, "Oh yeah, I see it, pick it up and run with it." No, I had

to change some things in my life and adjust some things in my life, just like you are going to have to do yours. But this passage is one of the, I call, one of the great bonus passages in the Bible. It gives you everything you need.

There are probably about fifty or sixty passages in the Word of God that I look at strictly as bonus passages. They just, you do not have to do a lot; bang, it drops it all in your lap right there. The Bible, we talk about the book of Revelation, but the Bible itself is a book of revelation, revealing things. I have found in dealing with people over the years that we all, not everybody, but many of us have an overinflated opinion about ourselves. I think Dirty Harry said it best of all in one of his movies when he says that you are a legend in your own mind. I think that many of God's people get to that place in their life.

Nothing will reveal things about us better than getting into the Word of God, and frankly, that is why so many people do not want to get into the Bible. It will reveal your weaknesses. It will reveal your strengths. It will reveal your courage or it will reveal your cowardice. It will reveal your ability to stand against opposition when things come into your life, or it will reveal your inability to stand against things and just try to take the middle of the road. The Bible is an incredible Book, and it reveals some things about us, and nothing will reveal who we really are more than when we are faced with what we need to do with the Word of God in any given situation. That is the great litmus test. It is not about what we talk about or how we talk about this, or "I know this," or "I studied this," or "I learned this," or "I have been here and got this." It is not about that. What really proves who you are and what really reveals what you are, when push comes to shove, is what you do with the Book or the principles in your life, just as much as they are in your conversation. That is the key, and nothing will reveal that better than Proverbs chapter 2.

Let us begin to look at these eight things, and I think these are very instructive.

1. Receive My Words (Your Attitude Toward the Word of God)The first thing I want you to look at is verse 1, and he says this: "My son, if thou wilt receive my words." That is your attitude toward the Word of God.1 Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. The first thing that verse says is that when God gave you the Word of God, it was not the word of men; it was the Word of God. The next thing he says is that it will only work in you if you believe it. Now, that does not mean, "Well, I believe in God." The devil believes in God. It does not mean, "Well, I believe the Bible is the Word of God." It goes way beyond that; that is the surface stuff. It is your attitude about that Book. It is your attitude of what you believe about it that makes it work effectually in you, and it starts with your attitude of receiving that Book as the absolute, infallible Word of God. I hear a lot of preachers today, a lot of Christians today, think, "Well, the Bible is a good book," but "the Bible is only a translation, so the Bible, that translation, it contains the Word of God, but it is not the Word of God." That is a big stick today, and I am telling you right now, that Bible you hold in your hands, if you have got the right Bible, it does not just contain the Word of God; it is the Word of God. It is everything

that God ever wanted you to have. I believe that Bible is the Word of God from cover to cover, including the cover. Every chapter... somebody Thursday night, the order of the book... somebody asked Thursday night in Bible study the Enoch question. It was Aaron. Aaron asked the Enoch question. Not only did I, in Genesis chapter 5, not only did I answer the question, but I showed you how the structure of the chapters—from chapter 5 to chapter 6, chapter 7, chapter 8, and chapter 9—shows you by the order of events the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ. I could take you over to the book of Second Chronicles and show you from Second Chronicles right up to the book of Proverbs how you have again everything laid out that shows you the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the pre-rapture concept, pre-trib rapture. A lot of people today, they read this stuff on the Internet, they read these books that these guys have put out, and it looks good, so they buy it. But they do not have the ability to go beyond underneath the surface and actually see that the things that we believe, the traditions that have been held down through the true church, believe the Word of God, know that it is the Bible itself that lays out the doctrines that we like and we teach and we preach. The events, the places like Bethel or Gilgal, Bethlehem, the structure of the Bible itself, and the structure of the books, the chapters, and the verse markings. When we get into Proverbs a little bit farther on, we are going to get into the six things that God hates and the seventh is an abomination, and it is found in Proverbs chapter 6 and in verse 16. Under six things that God hates, what you have in that chapter is the character, structure, and the makeup of the man of sin, the evil man in the book of Proverbs. We know him as the Antichrist. Now, who would have thought that anybody, any guy, you think that when the guys translated that and put that in there and put that structure in there, that they saw that it was going to be about the man of sin, so they put it in chapter 6 in verse 16 and listed six things—666? I do not think so. That Bible is the Word of God in every aspect, and until you get that attitude in your heart that you accept it that way, you are not going anywhere with it. You are not going anywhere at all with it. It is God's work. We talked about the paragraph marks, every sentence, every aspect, the punctuation. I showed you in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6 and 7, by the punctuation, every word was ordained by God to show you something. When I talk about the Bible being the Word of God, I am not talking about that in that general, loose sense that everybody talks about it. I am talking about that you can have an absolute standard in your hand that tells you everything in life that is the absolute knowledge of God. Everybody wants to have a relationship with God. You would think that if you ever really believed that this Book was truly the mind of God in every sense, you would be all over that Book. Why is it that things in your life take more precedent over the Book that God gave us? Believe me, when God comes back in the Millennium, and the Bible says in Zephaniah chapter 3, verse 9, He has a perfect and pure language, and He will. I guarantee you, when He put His Book out, He put it out in a perfect language, and He put it out in English at a time when the English language was in its perfect form. The very idea of imperfect man today tearing apart God's perfect Book... I have been around these guys all my life. It makes you feel real big and real important to stand in the pulpit and take the absolute final Word of God and want to impress your people by standing there and saying, "Well, that verse does not mean what it says. Let me tell you what it means." I cannot tell you the sense of exhilaration that these guys get from doing that. I call it the God syndrome: the fact that

God gave a Book, and you are going to stand in the pulpit and you are going to tell Him that God made a mistake, and you are going to correct it. The Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a great time—you and me as a mortal man correcting God in what He said. Origen did that in 185; we saw how it worked out for him.

2. Hide My Commandments (Your Personal Time with God in His Word)The first thing he says is, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words." There is your attitude. The second thing he says in verse 1 is, "and hide my commandments with thee." So that is your personal time with God in His Word.Psalms 119:11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Most Christians, bless their hearts, just have a passing acquaintance with the Word of God today. The shallowness of God's people... your heart is your spiritual bank account. It is a storehouse of God's principles to get you through life, and the problem is, you have nothing on the account. I have used the illustration before how that if I go out tomorrow morning and start my car, and the motor blows up, and I have to go down to the garage, and the guy says, "Well, you are going to have to have a new motor; it is going to be about \$3,500." So I say, "Okay, that is fine." So I go down to my bank, my friendly bank, and go up to the teller there, and I say, "How are you today?" And she says, "Well, I am not doing very good, but my car blew up, and my engine blew up, and I have got to get it fixed and all of that." She says, "Oh, I am so sorry to hear that." I said, "Yeah, all right." She says, "Well, how can I help?" And I said, "I am glad you asked. I need \$3,500." And she said, "Well, can I have your account number?" "Sure, here is my account number." She goes down, looks me up on a computer, and comes back and she says, "Well, I am sorry, you only have \$2.28 in there." And I said, "Yeah, I know that, but I need \$3,500." She said, "Well, I cannot give it." I said, "What are you talking about? That guy over here, she doled out about \$1,800 to him right next here in this room." He might have gone to her. She said, "You do not understand. He had the money on the account. You do not have any money in your account. I can give you \$2.29; that is all I can give you." I said, "But you are a bank! Look at that big vault back there! You have got all kinds of money back there." She says, "I know we do, but the bottom line is, you do not have a job?" And I said, "Yeah, I got a good job." She said, "Well, I do not know what you do with your money, but you never brought it into the bank, and for us to give you money out in a time of need, you have to put something in in a time you have it." Now, that is the same principle of the Word of God. The reason why you get into situations where you do not know what to do and you do not know how to handle it is because your bank account spiritually is empty. You have not hid the Word of God in your heart. You have not hid the commandments with you. Your personal time with God. I do not know what you do or even if you do it, but there is nothing on your account. The most difficult time for me, and I struggle with it, I never say anything, but I struggle with it, is when you have to go to somebody who dies, or somebody is really bad off, or somebody is this or somebody is that. In most cases, when somebody dies and you are there when they die, the most difficult time in the ministry is trying to give people, Christian people, comfort from the Word of God when they do not have anything they have ever put in their life. I mean, Christians who all their life never memorized one verse, Christians all their life who lived their life and never took time to hide anything from God. Their idea of God is He is a God on demand. "I am not going to do

anything and put anything in, but when I demand something from You, God, give me somebody to do it." It is a fallacy of thinking that I am going to go in there and just deal out a couple of verses like you deal out cards and make them feel better. There is no comfort in that. Listen, the Holy Spirit of God can only take what you have already put in your heart and use that. When anybody tries to help you with the Word of God, you cannot just go in and get a gunshot wound in the head and go in and put some Neosporin on it and say, "You will be better in the morning." It takes a little more than that. You need something more than that. When you have problems in your life and you have never put the Word of God in your life, and I am in these situations many, many times where you have to go in there, and I feel the pressure because the family is hurting or this, that the person just died, and you go there and you talk to the wife or you talk to the boys or you talk to the dad, and you sit down there and you try to explain to him, and they, and you try to explain to them the Bible and what God is doing. They just look at you with a blank stare. There is no way that if you do not sow the seed in your own heart, when tough times come, you have got to have something for it to land on. It is like those verses, they just bounce off a stone wall, and they look at me and they say, "Why? I do not understand why she died. I do not understand why he died." Honestly, what I am thinking inside is totally different from what I do, and I will do what I best I can and get in the Word. But inside, somebody says, "Oh, why did, why did, why did they go through what they went through?" My real answer is, "Why shouldn't they go through what they went through?" Do you know what Christ went through for you on Calvary's cross? If He suffered all the indignation and things that He suffered for them, if that is part of God's plan for you to be a testimony to go out that way, the way He went out on the cross for you, if He is willing to suffer that for you, should you not have gotten to the place in your life where you can lay there with whatever ailment you have got, whatever you are struggling with, and be satisfied in the fact that the One that suffered for you, now you are going to get a chance to suffer for Him and find the comfort in that, that you are only doing for Him what He did for you, only on a lot lesser plateau? Most of them cannot get to it. They say, "Why?" And I want to say, "Why not? Is he any better? Is she any better than God's Son?" You actually think it was all right for God to turn His back on His Son and hang there and die for you, and He comes down and you trust Him, and so and so trusts Him, and your mom trusts Him, and your dad trusts Him, and now they go through their whole life and never do one thing with the Bible, never put one verse in their heart. And now you are sitting here at the end of their life where the God of comfort who died for you wants to take that loved one to heaven, and you have got to ask, "Why?" But that is where we are at today, and I do my part. I put the Neosporin all over the place. I have got a spray gun now because I know what my job is, and I know that is not the time to do what I need to do. But I am also telling you, brother, it is the time when the Word of God needs to come through for it, but you do not have anything on the account. You do not have ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years of a life consumed by God and the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God, and so it does nothing for you. Dealing with terrible issues in life without God's wisdom and understanding, it is just not going to carry it through. Yet, it happens all the time.

3. Incline Thine Ear Unto Wisdom (The Work Involved) Now look at the third thing, verse 2: "So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom." There is the work involved. 2 Timothy 2:15

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. It takes work to get the Word of God. The word there, "incline," or the phrase there, "incline thine ear unto wisdom," suggests that you have got to get close to God. "Incline" means to get down. You have got to get close to God. You have got to listen closely. You have got to get close to Him. I have had people ask me all the time, "Why did God write a Book that is so hard for people to understand?" Well, first of all, it is not hard to understand, but it is hard to understand when you do it your way instead of His way. It is only hard to get when you do not want to do it the way God made it to happen. But I will show you why the reason why you have to study, and he says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Second Timothy 2:15. It takes a workman, and I will show you why, because there is a reason for it. At your job, when you work, I remember years ago I worked at the Hoover Company back in North Canton before I moved here for four, five, six years. That was a company that made vacuum cleaners and made washing machines, made a lot of different things. They had these big presses where they would press flat metal into canisters or whatever, and they would form them up. They would always be working like three guys on that press. Back then, well, I guess it is the same way wherever you go, it was piece work. In other words, the more you did in the eight-hour day, the more money you got paid. You had a certain goal; you had to have at least two hundred out, and anything over that, you started to make a bonus on. These three guys on these presses, they were older guys. I could not believe it. I used to sit there, I used to drive a fork truck and bring them. I used to sit there and watch them. They were absolutely the smoothest transaction from the bin to the dump to the press to the line. It was bang, bang, they wished. These guys must have made a million dollars on the line. They were just absolutely... but they had been doing it for thirty years. They had worked together, those three guys, for thirty years, and there were a lot of people like that. You know as well as I do, if you in your job, if you work with somebody side by side and you are together with somebody for ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years, you are going to know them. You are going to know at the end of that time, you are going to know everything about them. You fit together as a team. I have seen husband and wives do that, and that is what husbands and wives are supposed to do. I have seen prayer groups do that; that is what prayer groups are supposed to do. That is the whole concept of our counseling ministry, why we do what we do and the way we do it, to build that infusion of people working together that you can anticipate other people's what they are going to do that you are working with. I see it with many of you that you will call me up on the phone and you say, "Hey, I had to deal with so and so," and you start to lay out what you did, how you handled it, and I am saying to myself, "Wow, that is exactly the same thing I would have done." You see, it comes from the time of working together. God designed a Book that you have to work to learn it side by side with Him. You want to learn about God, do you? You want to learn God, do you? He designed a Book that you cannot get it in one reading. You cannot get it in one setting. It requires you to be a workman, and what you do for five, ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years, you work side by side with Him. You work as He is a co-laborer with you. He works through that Book with you, and what happens over the course of ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years? You know everything about Him there is to know because you have worked with Him.

He has been your, He has been on your team, He is your co-worker. The tragedy of saved people, twenty, thirty, forty years, and all of that time they did not have one day where they showed up for work with their Partner, the Holy Spirit of God. And you are wondering why, scratching your head, wondering why, "What is wrong? How come I do not know the Bible?" You have not been to work. You have not picked up your Partner and went to work, and through the process of Him showing you, when you are working together, after ten, fifteen, twenty years, you know everything about God there is to know. The last thing he says here, and the last part of that verse, says that "that needeth not to be ashamed." In the New Testament, wherever you find the word "ashamed," you want to mark it down; it will always be in context of the Judgment Seat of Christ. It will always be in a context of Revelation chapter 3, verse 18, where it talks to that church of Laodicea, that "the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." A church that has forsaken the Word of God. I am not going to preach on it this morning; it is another whole message. But it is simply the Judgment Seat of Christ, and getting the Book down to you in your life now means everything at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

4. Apply Thine Heart Unto Understanding (The Application of the Bible) The fourth thing, verse 2: "And apply thine heart unto understanding." This will be the application of the Bible. God's people make many fatal mistakes when it comes to God and the Bible, but one of the biggest that they make, and this is why churches are filled with saved people who have gone to church all their life and yet know nothing about God or the Bible than the day they walked in, is the fact that they thought that just attending a church and serving a church service and listening to the sermon or the message—and in most churches, three times a week, you go Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night—the first thing you need to realize is that churches today are not really designed to teach you anything. Churches today are designed to entertain you so you will come back next week. They want to entertain you better than the other church you were at so that you will come back to them for the entertainment. I am not entertaining you. If my teaching of the Bible and my belief in the Bible, and my laying out the Word of God for you and your family and your wife and your kids, is not enough to keep you here, move out. I understand. But churches are not designed for that. But I will tell you something else: reading and studying the Bible will not give you the Bible. You have got to apply what you read. There has to be an application to it. You have to apply your heart to understanding. Applying means you take what you hear and then you apply it to your everyday life. You take what you hear, you take what you study, you take what you read, and then you apply it to your everyday circumstances with your own personal life, with your family, with your children. Now, application demands determination. It demands structure. It demands self-discipline, and it demands self-denial, and it demands self-control. It is simply taking what you hear and what you read or what God gives you and then developing it into your lifestyle through the principles. You hear me say it all the time: the job of every Christian, once we believe that the Word of God is God's mind and God's opinion and God's thoughts, then the job of every Christian is to make God's thoughts your thoughts. When you go to your parent-teacher conferences, I used to hate those as a kid growing up. All of my teachers would always sum me up the same way. They would never get into my good habits or this because they saw in me a lot of probably good things, but they saw my number one

flaw, and I used to get so sick and tired of it. In fact, I could go there after three or four years of parent-teacher meetings, I could sit there and I could mimic the words of what she was saying out of my mouth, and he would always say the same thing: "He is a good kid. He does not cause any problems, but his biggest problem is he just will not apply himself to anything." And that was my problem. She said, "He daydreams. He looks out the window." Well, there is a lot going on out there, man, this thing moving around out there. He wants to check it out. She said, "Well, he looks around. He just does not, he does not apply himself." Many teachers, when they talk to the kids, especially today, that is what parents hear: "He is a good kid. He really does not cause any problem, but when it comes to class, he just does not apply himself to what is there." I understand that at this point because I am now a teacher, and I have a, I do not have a classroom in the sense of the public school system, but I have a church, and I have to teach people. I will tell you, that is the number one issue with God's people today: they do not apply themselves. They do not want to learn anything new. If you approached your life in a general sense like you approach the Bible, you would be homeless, and we would be giving you hamburgers and hot dogs down in Indiana City. You have got a job. Probably nobody here started out, I do not know what you do. Some of you are welders, some of you are electricians, some of you are plumbers. But you did not just, you did not come out of being born and have a toilet plunger in your hand or a pair of wire cutters. There was some point in your life you had to learn electricity. You had to learn to be a plumber. You had to learn to be this. You had to learn to be that. Some of you are great with computers. You just did not come into life with a computer in your hand. You had to learn it. You had to apply yourself. In everything in life where you are at, if you got anywhere in life, you had to apply yourself to learn it. It just did not happen. You had to actually take the time to apply yourself to learn it. This is the best illustration I have. The hardest thing I ever had to do, and my wife and my kids remember this, to apply myself to do, is when I used to hunt turkeys. I got the bug for hunting turkeys. I think turkeys, and everybody calls them stupid turkeys. You do not know anything about turkeys if you call them stupid. They are the smartest birds on the planet. They will see you long before you see them. I was sitting up on a hillside one time down in Warsaw, about halfway up in the tree line and along the cove down here, and about four hundred yards over, I saw two turkeys walking down the deal. I was in the woods up on the hillside, camouflage, and they were walking around. The sun was in their eyes. I stood up to get a better look, and they turned right up in that wood. They saw me. They are not dumb, and you have got to be smarter than they are to hunt them. Every once in a while, some bozo will just walk into a herd of them, but that does not happen very often. You have got to learn how to do it. I started with the typical box call that makes the squawk. It is a terrible thing to hunt turkeys. It is in mating season; they want to get with a woman. They are all excited about it, and you get them all lathered up, and you come in and you kill them. That is a terrible thing to do. That is what we do. Real men do it anyway. So I got the box call, and then they had a little slate call. You are squawking the thing, but real men put the turkey call in their mouth. It looks like a little round, like a little horseshoe with a piece of tape, taped up with a little thing on there. You put it back in the back of your throat and you blow air over it, and you can make great, great turkey calls. I swallowed four of them before I ever got it done, and I will tell you what, I

wanted to do nothing in my life more than to call a turkey in with a turkey call in my mouth. Children use the box call. Real men... I never went so far as to put a thing of Skoal in my back pocket, but I wanted to know how to do it. I practiced, I practiced, I practiced. My family was ready to throw me out of the house. I mean, I stayed with it, and I learned a couple of the more... I tried to do it, the worse I got at it, so I realized, take short jumps at it. But I worked, and boy, I worked and I worked and I worked and I worked, and one day, one day it just all came together. It got to the right place in my mouth, my tongue got in the right area, and the air got over it, and I made my first audible turkey squawk. Once I did it, I remembered how I put everything up there, and now I have not hunted turkeys for years. You give me a turkey call, I will put it in my mouth, and I guarantee you, if I stay right here, get the kids off the steps because they are going to be coming down the steps, I can do it. But that is to me the greatest example of me applying myself. I had to work at it, and I failed a lot. I got the idea that the turkey call was the wrong one, so I must have bought five thousand of them. I had them in all colors. I thought maybe that would help it. No, it took just staying with it long enough, making a mistake, learning by what did not work, and pretty soon I got it, and pretty soon it came to the point where I... and it is all because I applied myself. It is the same way in whatever you do. When I first was in school, I did not do well in school. I did not do well in English. I liked to read, but I was not a very good reader. I did not understand a lot of big words. It was a thing where there were a lot of things that I was not good at in school that I did not care about. But once I came to the Bible, and years later, and I realized how important the Bible was, then I had to come to the point where I realized that I had to apply myself to some things because I recognized how important it was to read. So I went from somebody who could hardly read to somebody who got to a point where you could read eight hundred words a minute. I got to the point where I could just... and I did that because I wanted to read the Bible. Then that was another thing I did because it was a time of my life when I read through the Bible every thirty days, and that was a goofy thing. At the end of three years, I was all messed up because I got my priorities out of whack. It was the fact that I was taking pride in the fact that I got through the Bible every thirty-three days or thirty days, but I had to learn a lesson: it was not how many times I went through the Bible, but it was how many times the Bible went through me. So I quit that. My whole life has been trial and error, especially when it is electricity. Do not stick your tongue on that one thing there because you will find out if it is hot or not real quick. That is the way life is. I know a lot of you have natural ability for sports, but you did not learn the techniques that you have just because you got up one morning. You had to play a lot of ball. You had to apply yourself to a lot of things. It does not matter whatever you do, you have to apply yourself. I have watched people apply themselves to everything. I have watched guys who did not know anything about welding or anything about electricity or anything about plumbing or anything about those trade deals that they taught themselves, went to school, learned, and got it all down and became it. But for some reason, when it comes to the Bible, "I am not going to apply myself." When it comes to the Bible, "I am not going to look at my deficiencies of learning that Book and then add them to my life." "I am not. I will do it over here, but when it comes to that Book, I am not going to do it. I am not going to work at my weaknesses. I am not going to fix what is wrong about me so I can learn how to apply. I am not going to work on

the level I need to to get the Book." And that is the downfall when it comes to the Word of God, because unless you are willing to apply it, you are never going to get it. I told you when I started, there are some things in my life that I had to adjust and had to change. There are things I had to realize that if I am going to get this and I am going to do this, I have got to do it all right.

5. Cry After Knowledge (Your Prayer Life with the Bible)Lift Up Thy Voice for Understanding (Your Prayer Life with the Bible)Five and six, they go together: "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge; and lifteth up thy voice for understanding." This will be your prayer life with the Bible. This will be crying out and lifting up thy voice. For this one, for me, it is Psalms 119, verses 1 through 176. I do not know if you understand that passage or not, but that is 176 verses, and every verse says something about you learning the Word of God. I saw that immediately. I attributed that Psalm to David's relationship with the Word of God, and I figured if it worked for him, it probably worked for me.It is simply taking time before you ever begin to study the Bible to ask your co-partner, the Holy Spirit of God, to teach you. I remember early on, I still have it marked in my Bible, that I developed the prayer out of Psalm 119, out of those 176 verses, and it was based on David's prayer. I looked at that thing, and I broke it down into nineteen different petitions, and I would sit down before I ever studied the Bible, and I would take passages that would basically talk about God, "If You give me the Word, I will do this for You." It was David telling God, "If You give me Your Word and teach me Your Word, then I will stand before kings and queens and all of those things." I went through and hand-picked for me—I mean, there are 176 verses, the mathematical options are endless—and I built that whole thing around my own personal prayer of asking God to teach me the Word of God. I would sit down and put a chair across from me and sit down here, and I would read that prayer at my own pace, in my own time, and each one of those petitions I would stop and ask God to give me what it was saying there, pretend like He was sitting in that chair.You have to cry out. You have to lift up your voice. You have to come to the place where you ask God to give you the Word. You have to show Him in your heart that that is what you want. You are crying out for something like a little child that has to have it from his father, and He responds to that. When you sit, nothing God loves more than somebody sitting and reading the Word of God back to Him, and you give Him those things, and yet you put it in such a form that you are saying, "God, if You give me Your Word, I will do this with it. I will stand before kings. I will stand before the enemy. I will stand before the people. I will take it. I will rejoice at Thy Word as one that findeth great spoil. I will love Thy Word above gold, yea, above fine gold." Those are the things you have to do. You have to come to the point where you, in your prayer life, you cry out and lift up your voice, "Oh God, teach me Your Word."

6. The Result: The Knowledge of God and His Gifts