

Proverbs 4

Sunday 2/16/2014

Today, if you have your Bibles, let us go back to Proverbs chapter 4. Today, we will be moving along in our next set of verses out of chapter 4. As you should be well aware, we just finished what I would consider a great three-week study on Bible doctrine and how important it is. It is something that we base everything that we do on: the importance of getting the right teaching as you begin to learn how to rightly divide the word of truth.

Now, you have a better understanding and a better perspective of what the key is to a biblical New Testament church. It is built on a model and a pattern based on the church at Antioch that is definitely based on strong Bible doctrine. I mentioned last week how the Bible has certain things that make it all go together, and how the fundamental way to learn the Bible is simply to start with those fundamentals. Obviously, I did not have time to give you all of that last week because that was not the point I was trying to show you in the process.

I have had so many of you come up, all of the younger, new Christians that we have just gotten in the last six or seven months. We have just got a bunch of you that really have a desire to learn the Bible. So, I told the people Thursday night that next month, in March, I am going to take probably two months to do it. I will take Thursday nights and I will bring you through that fundamental structure of how the Bible goes together.

We will start by going back to Proverbs. I mentioned this last week: the seven pillars that the Bible is built on. Those are the key fundamental issues that you have to get down for you to begin to see how your Bible cohesively goes together. We will start with that, and I will go through each one of them and define them for you. I will show you how each one connects to the next and how important they are in their overall concept of the Word of God.

Then, the second thing I talked about is that once we lay the foundation of the seven, I will begin to bring you through the eleven dispensations and show you how they actually work in and out of those seven. What it will do for you is it will give you a great understanding of structure. It will give you the key components of putting your Bible together. This will be a chance for many of you to accelerate your spiritual growth.

Now, I have said it many, many times that there is no fast track to learning the Bible, but there are some things that you can do, as anything in life, to work smarter and not harder, as the saying goes. When it comes to the Bible, there are some things that if you focus on learning first, it will give you the ability to move a little faster and understand a little better, and that is going to be our goal.

I have told you many, many times the problem with most people when it comes to the Bible. It is not that they do not want to read it. Most of God's people have a desire to read the Bible, but through all the years of ministry, I have found two fundamental issues that they have.

1. When they get into the Bible, no matter where, they do not know what to look for. They have the best intentions, but they do not know what to look for.
2. When they do find something, they do not know what to do with it.

My whole life has been to solve that problem for you, and my whole life has been to help you grasp it as quickly as you can. So, I think it will be an excellent chance for all of you to grow and get to a point where everybody that wants to be can pretty much be on the same spiritual level with the Bible. I am looking forward to that. It will give you the key components and give you the complete structural picture of it.

Then, I say this all the time, the rest of the next year, and really the rest of our lives, once you get that foundation down, it is just building upon it and showing you how to put the other pieces together. Pretty much in time, you will figure it out, and we will help you with that.

I. Getting And Keeping God's Wisdom

Today, we are going to move on in our next couple of verses here, and we want to continue to lay out the theme of the book of Proverbs as we have seen it so far. He is writing to us as God's sons, and he is telling us the concept of being able to get God's wisdom and God's understanding.

Now, let us read Proverbs chapter 4, and let us pick it up, read verses 5, 6, and 7. Here is what it says:

Proverbs 4:5-7

5 Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

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

Now, Father, help us today to glean from this and to grow from it. These are good people here today. The majority of these people are here for one reason: that is because they want to know You better. They could have been doing anything else today, and they decided to get out of bed and come to church because they want to know deep down inside. They want to have a better relationship. I understand they are all on different levels, and they all have different goals in their lives, but Lord, the Word of God meets all those goals and all those needs. So, help us today. Help us across the board to help these good people to learn and to be challenged and to want to grow more, to be like You. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name. For His sake we ask it, Amen.

Now, look at verse 5 here. It says, "Get wisdom and get understanding." We know now, after the last three weeks, that the foundation of God's wisdom and understanding is our getting Bible doctrine. We know that now. We know that the word "doctrine" means to teach, specific teachings in the Bible, not just some elder, skeletal teaching that you want to put out there about something, but the Bible has right doctrine. It has right teachings.

We talked about it before, that all Scripture is given by inspiration and is profitable. The first thing it is profitable for is doctrine. Doctrine shows you what is right. It gives you the right perspective on how God looks at things from His Word. We also now know that doctrine divides.

It divides truth from error, and it shows you what is right and it will also show you what is wrong. We now understand that. It will divide the truth from any error that may try to creep in.

I gave you last week, really the last couple of weeks, some great examples of that which we face today in modern Christianity. Some great examples today of why people have such a hard time struggling with the Bible and struggling in their life. Good doctrine will show us what is right by contrasting truth against what is wrong. Then you know what to take, and then you will wrap your life around it and apply your life to it.

Mark Twain said one time, and I am not a big fan of Mark Twain. He certainly was not a saved person. He did not have much good to say about Christianity, but he had some good things that were general truths. He said one time, "It is not the things that we do not know that give us problems, but rather the things that we are sure of that are not true, they give us problems." Boy, there is a lot of truth in that.

That is why for you and for me as Christians, the absolute importance of having a final authority in your life, a final authority that when you read the Bible, you do not have to try to interpret for yourself what it means. You hear that a lot today. How many times I hear people say, "Well, the Bible, you can read it and you can interpret it any way you want." Well, you can, but the Bible says that the Bible is of no private interpretation. The Bible interprets itself, and people do not spend that much time with it to try to figure that out. But at the end of the day, the Bible will tell you what it means.

I have given you over and over and over again, and will continue to do so, definitive passages in the Bible about certain things. Those definitive passages are the passages that define something. It shows you a truth in the Bible that will stay consistent all the way through it. Having the ability in our lives not just to know the Bible, but having the ability to know how to use the Bible. It happens by letting the Bible use you and do what God wants to do in your life.

Then he says in the last part of verse 5 and 6, we are going to kind of lay this out and then we are going to come back and talk about some great principles here. Once you get it, once you get to the point in your life that you attain wisdom and understanding, then the next step is to have the ability to keep it. Boy, that is what we are going to focus on today. He says in verse 5 and 6, "Forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not," wisdom and understanding.

II. Samuel: A Model For Spiritual Growth

I do not know what you know about the Bible, but in the Bible there is a model for everything. When I teach the Bible, I am usually teaching off one of these models. I will show you the model, and we will go to it, and I will have you actually see where I am getting from the Bible what I am trying to express and try to lay out for you. We have been talking about your spiritual growth. We have been talking about you growing through a process of getting God's wisdom and understanding. You get to the point where you really have a good relationship with the Word of God, and there is a process that you have to go through.

There is a great example of that in the Bible that lays out the exact principles of getting in the process for you and for me of getting God's wisdom and God's understanding, and then not just getting it, but I am going to show you how to keep it today. I told you last week that there are certain things that I look for in a person. There are certain things that when you meet people, if you have been in the Bible long enough, there are traits that people have, and there are certain things that you look for in people.

I have always been, when it came to the Bible, someone who gives everybody a chance no matter where they come from or what they do. You always have to do that. But there are times that God will bring in certain people, and it happens here a lot because we are kind of an odd group here. God brings us a lot of people who really maybe have had a desire for many years to learn the Bible that has never gotten in the right place, and then God finally orchestrates the events to get them someplace that they get what they need.

When you start to see people like that, you begin to learn over the years what to look for in people. You begin to look at their certain traits that you see. When you see that, you want to develop it. You want to cultivate it. There have been times that God has actually brought somebody I have met with, or somebody that has come in, and we have sat down and talked, and you have come over to the house, and I can read in you that you really are the real deal. It is almost like, and I do not believe that God speaks in anybody's ear and tells them all of that, but it is almost like God says, "Look, you give that girl, you give that person, that guy whatever they need because I have got something for them, and I am going to use you to get it to them because I have plans for them." I have seen so many people over the years come that way.

Now, the great principle here talked about in Proverbs chapter 4 is found all the way back in the book of 1 Samuel. So, I want you to turn back to 1 Samuel chapter 3 in particular, and I want to read to you one of my favorite stories in the Bible. I learned this and broke this thing down for my own life, probably about 35 years ago, maybe 30 years ago, anyhow. I have never forgotten it. I have favorite stories in the Bible that deal with different subjects in the Bible, and this is one of my favorites about understanding the process.

I have seen this process enacted in so many people's lives over the years that it is unbelievable. It has always been a marvel to me. Nothing excites me more than seeing God begin to put His hand in your life. Nothing is more exciting to me than that. I get almost giddy about it. It is a thing where I just get bubbled up inside when I actually see somebody that wants to do what is right in a world where most people do not want to do what is right. Then you see God's hand in their life and their response to it, and then you see this process. So, I want to show you this process today.

Now, I want to read 1 Samuel chapter 3, verses 1 through 21, just a little bit of reading this morning. Then we will come back and talk about it.

1 Samuel 3:1-21

1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD revealed unto him.

8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.

17 And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

Now, that is a great story. It is a story that is a great example of how this thing actually happened. You are going to find almost every story in the Bible, even though it is an actual event that is taking place, and even though not everything exactly matches up in any story, you are going to find that within stories like that is a great flowing principle about something. In this particular case, it is one of the greatest examples that I know of the process when God begins to deal in your life and put His hand in your life to call you to do something for Him. It is one of the greatest stories I have ever found in the Bible. I am saying it is the actual thing that God showed me so many years ago. It is a great thing.

The first thing I want to say here is I want to give you a little background on Samuel. Samuel is the last of the judges. He is not in the book of Judges, but he is the last judge that Israel has. He is also a great prophet that Israel has. He is really incredible. The thing behind him and his success, when you read the story, we do not have time to get into all that, but you get into 1 Samuel chapter 1 and 2, is his mother. His mother is a great story. She is an example for every mother in this room who wants your child to serve God. You could never find another greater place in the Bible where every mom had to camp out if you have little children and follow what she did to make sure her kids got to where God wanted them to be. Incredible. She is an incredible lady.

You get into 1 Samuel chapter 1 and 2, and you see Hannah's prayer to God and some of the great things that she did that are great models for her. She simply wants her son to serve God. I am telling you, one of the greatest phrases is found about how, for parents, she takes her son when he gets of age, and she takes him down and she delivers him to Eli. Eli is the priest, and that is where all the tabernacle work is done. That is where she wants her son to be raised up because she knows that God is going to use him. She gave one of the greatest phrases in the Bible: how she takes her child and she lends him to the Lord. Incredible.

You know what? As a mom and a dad, you either lend your children to the Lord or you will rent them out to the devil. It will go one or the other. They will either be in church serving God, or they will be out drinking beer and running with the crowd, one or the other. You either lend them to the Lord or you rent them to the devil. It is just that simple. She is a great example of that. Boy, I will tell you what, it is quite incredible.

I have to tell you this: this is one of the strangest passages in the Bible. I want to draw your attention to three verses here before we really get going here. This is a strange passage. I know in the Old Testament how God worked. God gave what He gave through three ways in the Old Testament. He did it through the prophets. He did it through dreams or visions. He does not do that today. Or there was another little device called the Urim and the Thummim. We do not have time to get into that today. But that is another way that God gave answers and spoke to the people and nation of Israel.

Here, He does not do any of that. This is one of the places in the Bible that is so unique. I believe it is unique because of what it represents, even though it is an Old Testament story, the New Testament example that God wants to get across. Here, there is no prophet speaking. There are no dreams or visions. There is no Urim or Thummim. Here it says exactly in 1 Samuel 3:1, "the word of the LORD was precious in those days," and then specifically tells you, "there was no open vision." 1 Samuel 3:7 says that Samuel did not know the Lord yet, nor was the Word of the Lord yet revealed to him.

Now, that does not mean that Samuel did not know about God. He was raised in a family that did. It simply means that in his process of growth, just like so many of you, you know the Lord as your own personal Savior. You know the Lord. You know all about Him. You know the church. You come to Thursday Night Bible study. But the Word of the Lord has not been revealed to you. What does that mean? It means that yet in your young Christian life, like Samuel, you do not understand yet how to discern the voice of God when He is telling you something. The Word of God has not been opened up to you to that degree. You may know some things about the Bible, but when it comes to God speaking to you, and I see this with young Christians all the time, once they get into church and they begin to grow and God begins to work with them, they have a tough time understanding what God is saying. It can get confusing at some point for them. Of course, we know that God is not the author of confusion. We understand that there is a process here.

But this is a picture of something in the church age. This is a picture of something that happened in the church age because just like today, there is no open vision today. The only thing that you are going to find out that God speaks to you is through the Word of God. The only way you are going to find out anything that God has to say to you is if the Word of the Lord is precious to you. This is something strange here, but it is one of my favorite stories.

III. The Process Of God's Calling

Now, this is the model or the process that each one of you will have to go through to get where God gives you His wisdom and His understanding. In this chapter, there are six circumstances, we will call them, six different things that Samuel grows through. Let me say something about that. You do not become a strong Christian just because you go through adversity. I know adversity will make a strong Christian, but we get the idea that we become strong in God because we go through some tough times. That is not necessarily true. You do not become a strong Christian by going through tough times. You become a strong Christian by growing through tough times. There is a difference.

I know lots of God's people whose whole life has been a train wreck right around the next corner. They go from one bad problem to the other. They go to one bad mess from another. They get into one bad relationship to another. They do not use the Bible principles; therefore, they just go from one bad relationship to another, and oftentimes the same one when it is a dead end street. They never get to the place in their life where they grow, though they go through it, but that is not the key. The key is growing through it. That is what Samuel did. Samuel grows through these

circumstances in his life. Going through this process, growing through it, will end up with you getting the wisdom of God and the understanding of God.

Now, let me say something about that. The wisdom of God will be defined in the Bible as you knowing the Bible. When you get the wisdom of God, you know the Bible. But the understanding of God is different from the wisdom of God. Where the wisdom of God may be knowing the Bible, the understanding of God is knowing how to use the Bible. Again, I have met lots of people who know the Bible, but they do not know how to use the Bible. I know people all my life that could quote 100 scripture verses, but their own life fell apart every time they had to go through some circumstance in life. Of course, that is the difference.

Then, of course, it is not just enough that you get the wisdom of God and the understanding of God. Proverbs chapter 4 then says that you have to keep it. This has nothing to do with your salvation. I am not talking about you losing your salvation. I am talking about you getting to the place in your life. I could tell you a hundred stories today of people who in my lifetime came to church, got the wisdom of God, got into the Bible, and then forsook it and lost it. They simply traded it for something else. A better deal came along.

The real story of any ministry, and I tell you all the time that there is no such thing as a perfect church. There is just not. You look for that and say, "Well, I am not going to church until I find a perfect church," you are never going to go to church. But people do not understand how to judge the worth of a church. The real mark of a church is nothing more than the story of any church or any ministry or the people who get the wisdom of God, who get the understanding of God, and then firmly keep it. That is the mark right there. But all the time in my life, and I am sure you will see it in yours, there were people that get it, they have it, and then they are gone. No more around. They lost it. But keeping it is the right stuff.

I love the movie. There are two movies that I, no matter how many times I have seen them, if I see it on the TV, I watch it. I do not care. There are two absolute movies that I will watch anytime, anywhere, and I probably could confess to you I have seen them a thousand times. But there is something about those movies that I just am drawn to. The first one is *Apollo 13*. I will watch that anytime, anyplace, anywhere, because I lived through that. That was one of the most momentous times where most people do not know how close we came to not getting those three guys back. It was a very, very tenacious time.

The other movie that I love, and I will drop whatever I am doing and watch it, is *The Right Stuff*. I love *The Right Stuff*. A movie about the early space program and how you had all these test pilots, but they went through, and out of everybody, it really compares Chuck Yeager, who was my hero in life, to the astronauts and how he never became an astronaut, but he was in his own right the first man to break the sound barrier. He was an incredible guy. But the movie *The Right Stuff* simply says that of everybody that was in the military, only a certain group of people had the right stuff. That is what it takes in Christianity. That is what it takes. Knowing what the right stuff is and what to look for is the key.

Now, you take Samuel here, and it is a great story, this great model unfolding, and we are going to look out here, he has got the right stuff. When you see it, you also see the process that he went

through as God developed him. From the time I have been a little kid, I have collected things. When I was 15 years old, I had the greatest comic book collection of Sergeant Rock comic books that you ever saw in your life. Five hundred of them. I could not wait until Sergeant Rock, and there was a whole bunch of them that came out, but they are all about World War II. I had over 500. If I had those today, they are probably worth \$1,000 apiece. They are collectors. I do not even know what happened to them. But I had them in a big box, and they were all sorted out.

All my life I have collected stuff. I just, I do. Today, I love collecting military jackets. I mean, you have to wear different jackets. I just love the idea. I get them from all over the world. They are cheap, and nobody really wants them, and I think they are the neatest thing in the world. I am a baby boomer. That means, many of you young men probably do not know what a baby boomer is. That is somebody that was born right after World War II. There was a baby boom after World War II. You can figure it out. Everybody came home that was at the war, and the baby boom went off from there.

I grew up in the shadow of World War II. While you guys play video games and some of the goofy stuff that you do, and I should not say it is goofy, it is good for you, but in my day, we did not have those things. We played Army. The great movies on TV were *Combat*, *Rick Morrow*, *Gallant Men*. I grew up in the era when the great war movies were actually being made. I saw many of them in the theaters. I have collected World War II stuff for probably 50 years.

I remember when I was 18 years old, I had Aunt Nettie and Uncle Clyde. They lived in Frostburg, Maryland. It does not get any more Duck Dynasty than that, let me tell you. Aunt Nettie and Uncle Clyde. I loved going to Aunt Nettie and Uncle Clyde. For me, Maryland was back then the wilderness. It was the Wild, Wild West. I just loved going back there. I was just a little guy, and I had my BB gun, and I would go out, and there was not a frog left in that pond when I was done. I just loved going back to Maryland.

I will never forget one night, and I was really into military Army stuff. My dad had five brothers, and all of them, my dad was not, but all his other brothers were in the military. We were sitting down around there one night, and Aunt Nettie, I do not even know how it came up, and Aunt Nettie talked about the fact that we were talking about Marcellus. That is one of my dad's brothers, and he was in Germany. We were talking about all the stuff that Marcellus had brought back, Lugers and all the stuff he brought back. Aunt Nettie said, and I said, "Boy, that stuff sounds really neat." Aunt Nettie said, "Yeah, up in the barn garage someplace, there is an old German helmet that he brought."

As soon as it was light that morning, I mean, it must have been five o'clock. I do not think I slept at all that night. I asked Nettie, I said, "If I find it, can I have it?" Clyde said, "Well, you can have it." He said, "I do not even know where it is at. You will probably never find it." There was a lot of junk in there. I found it. It was a single decal, Luftwaffe Air Force helmet, my first German helmet. Oh, I looked at that. It was in really good shape. I found it under a bunch of old, I had to clean out that whole garage, man, but I found it. I took that thing home with me, and that was the beginning of it for me. It was absolutely the beginning.

I have always collected stuff. When you collect stuff, you want it to be the real deal. Anybody that collects stuff, Gary collects cars, some of you collect other things out there, but you want it to be real. Anybody who collects anything knows that there are a million fakes out there. If it is worth anything, somebody is going to fake it. They fake baseball, shoot, they were faking Super Bowl tickets. They are not even old. You could not tell them from the real deal.

When I collect this stuff, I have to tell you, it is out of respect and honor for the men and women who paid the price for my freedom. I love history and military history and seeing it and understanding it and knowing. I love to get into it. I love to get the groupings that you have, that people have, and just, I mean, the history of everything that goes on. We were talking about Matt's dad. He was a P-51 pilot, and Matt got ahold of his uniform and his leather jacket and all of his hat, incredible stuff, all painted up, man, except that they actually wore. I just love stuff like that.

A while back, I got one of the saddest groupings that I ever have gotten in my life. I really do not know what to do with it. I picked it up, and I got it. But it was a B-17 pilot. His name was Herbert Brandt. He lived in Independence. He married a girl in Independence, and he went off to war. They had a little baby girl, and in the whole grouping of things, there must have been 500 letters, all the letters from him back and forth while he was in flight school in the States, and then when he was over in France and flying out of England and dropping bombs into Germany and all the places over there. He was in a B-17, *Little Butch II* was its name. He was killed December 12, 1945, just three months before the war was over.

I have the last letter that he wrote his wife before he got killed. Then I have probably 200 letters that go on for the next year that she keeps writing him because she did not know what happened to him. He was killed. The way he was killed, the plane was blown up over Germany. They did not know what happened to him. Five of the guys later they found out, bailed out, became prisoners, and five guys were killed. For a year and a half, she is writing these letters. They are the most heart-wrenching letters, and every one of them are stamped when they sent them back, "missing in action." You can read in those letters the emotion. One letter she is saying, "I know you are okay, and I am expecting a letter any day." And then the next letter you can see, "I am afraid something..." It is the most heart-wrenching thing.

In 1946, right after the war, when they got repatriated and all the prisoners came back, they found out what happened to him. Five guys went out the back, and five guys went out the nose, and he was the last two guys. Him and another guy were going to go out the nose. The plane exploded, and Herbert got killed, and his buddy got blown free and opened up his chute. But Herbert was killed. Nobody would know about that because they were in a prisoner of war camp. After they got him back and they debriefed him, they found out.

Then I have the Independence papers. She must have collected eight or nine of them that actually show his picture and tell the story. I have a couple of his hats, four or five of his hats. I have his ribbon bar. I have all the stuff that they sent back. I never knew what happened to her. She died. It came out of an estate sale. I never knew what happened to the daughter. It is one of the most tragic things. There will be times that when I get feeling sorry for myself or I get feeling goofy

about something, I will just sit down and I will read some of those letters. It makes your problems seem like they are nothing. Can you imagine the agony for a year of going through something like that, of not knowing what happened to your husband? It is unbelievable.

I have tremendous respect for things like that. I look at myself in a lot of ways as a preserver of history to keep their memory alive. That is what the collector shows all about that, and I invite you to every year. But when it comes to, I do not know if you ever thought about this, but when it comes to God and the ministry, God is a collector. Did you ever stop and think about it? God collects people. Where I will meet some guys and I collect World War II stuff, God collects Old Testament people, New Testament people. He makes up His collection out of the Jew, the Gentile, and the body of Christ.

The Bible talks about in the great house there are vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. Have you ever been at somebody's house that is a great athlete, and in the cases there they have all kinds of collection of the trophies they have won? Well, up in heaven someplace, God has got a trophy case, and in it is the collection of all the people that have accepted Christ as their own personal Savior. The Bible says you have got a new name written down in glory. I would say it is probably written up there in that collection. He collects people. It is an incredible concept when you think about it.

I will tell you something else. A good collector, a serious one, a good collector will use what we call in the trade as pickers. You see, you cannot be everywhere. I have like four or five guys that pick for me. You know what the 63rd Street old drive-in theater was? They have a flea market there every time. I have two pickers that just, they will call me. "You want this? You want that? I found this, I found that." "Nah, I do not need that." But I have four or five guys. I have guys across the country, California. They will go to all these places. They will see stuff. They will call me up and they will say, "Hey, this is a great deal. I found this. Are you interested in it?" And sometimes I will say yes, and sometimes I will say no. But a good collector will have some pickers. What they do is they pick stuff up for you that they see that way you are not. In fact, that is how I got that Herbert Brandt grouping. One of my old pickers found it at the 63rd Street grub over there at the trading place where they all have their grub shell stuff.

To me, that has always been a simple example of the ministry in the simplest form because I am a picker for God. I pick people. My pickers, they will walk up and down the aisles. They will walk up and down the flea markets. They will walk up and down this. They will walk up and down that. They will go through everything that they do and walk up and down it to find it. All this stuff that they try to find. You know what? And they will find stuff. They will call me on the phone and say, "Hey, I found out of all this trash, I found something really good."

Stop and think about it. All my life I wade through the trash of everybody's life: the carnage, the problems, the broken marriages, the broken lives. I look for the same thing that my picker looks for me: something that is real. Sometimes you find it, sometimes you do not. Up in Watertown, Massachusetts, a couple about 10, 12, 15 years ago, at an old secondhand store, a guy walked in. There in the back, on a dusty shelf, was what they, about that big and all, was a red case with a big Nazi swastika on it. He saw immediately what it was. He opened it up, and it was a Knight's

Cross document, the highest order you could get for a German general who was the head of the Battle of the Bulge, Manfred von Richthofen. The guy asked him what he wanted. He says, "Oh, a piece of junk." He says, "20 bucks." It sold later for \$250,000. In that old back of that old dusty store with all the other worthless stuff, there was one thing that was worth \$250,000. Through the trash of life and all the problems in life, you find some treasures. Amen. Oh, I am telling you, God collects. He is a collector of people. He really is. Vessels of honor, the Bible calls them.

A really good picker will only pick the good stuff up. He has had a relationship with the guys that he picks for, the collector, and he has been taught and trained by him to be able to tell the fake from the real deal. God, through his association over the years, he has been taught all the things that he needs to look for, and his job is to find out of all the trash what is real. You know, when you start coming through the Bible, you have got two kinds of people. You have got people who are fake, and you have got people who are real. When you go out into life and you walk through life where you work, you know this is true. You have got people who are the real deal, and you have people who are fake and phony. In Christianity, it is the exact same way. You have people who are the real deal, and you have people that are phony.

Now, Samuel, he was the real deal. In 1 Samuel 3, you have a clear process of God unfolding some events in Samuel's life. As they unfold, you see how Samuel puts all the right things in his life and uses all those things to follow God's leading even when he is not sure what God is doing. Old Samuel turned out to be one of the best prophets that Israel ever had.

In all my many, many, many years of the ministry, some 40 plus years, I have seen people fall into the pattern that God sets up for them to learn about Him. I have seen them do it, and I have seen them follow Him, and I have seen them get to the Bible and fall in love with the Bible and really start to get some things in their life. You know what you have got? You have got the real deal. One of the most amazing things I could ever witness in my life, and it is the most exciting thing in the world, is when I see the hand of God begin to work in your life. I will see it long before you will. But then that is the job, you see.

I see it begin to work in your life when you, I think you are at odds with something and you are struggling with something, and you look at it as this. I look at it as God beginning that process in your life. You will have issues with your family or relationship or this or that, and you will struggle with that. You will not see it for what it really is because you are not, the Word of God has not been revealed to you yet, you see. You do not know the Lord in that former fashion.

I want to walk you through these six things and come back through here. I want you to see it because I see this in so many of your lives. God wants it to be true in all of your lives. We will talk about that here a little bit.

Now, the first thing I want you to see here is that there is a process in Samuel's life that developed him, and then God calls him through that process.

1.) The period of time. This is right after the judges, and Samuel is ministering with Eli in the midst of total corruption, just like today. You have already been told that the priesthood in Israel is in a total mess, and it is an exact time period like you and I are living today. Christianity, as we

have seen in the last couple of weeks, is an absolute joke. But Samuel, his whole life, when you begin to lay it out, was nothing more than in the midst of this dark time in Israel's life where not many people wanted to do what is right, that the priesthood was corrupt, Eli's own sons are worthless. In the midst of all of this time, there is a shining light, and that shining light was Samuel.

I do not care how dark it gets, and I do not care how bleak it gets. God will take the pick of the litter, so to speak, and God will make you a vessel of honor and put you in a pristine place in His collection if the process enacts in your life. It is your choice. You get to choose. That is the great thing about it. You get to choose. Samuel's whole life was nothing more than an orchestration of God to get him where he needed to be to get what God wanted him to have.

I do not know if all of you understand that principle today. Do you realize that it is no accident that you are here today? You just did not invite yourself, and you decided to show up today. You just did not hang out here because of this or because of that. Did you ever stop and ask yourself, with all the things that we have talked about over the last couple of weeks, "Why you?" Why are you not in some worthless church someplace? Why did God give you the Bible? Why did God not find you this morning in some neo-evangelical mess out there? Why did God choose you to reveal the true Word of God to and put it in your lap and put it in your hand? You think it is just by happenstance that you just happened to be at the right place?

I am going to tell you, just as you see in Samuel's life, God was orchestrating every event in his life to get him where God wanted him to be so he could get what God had for him. God is orchestrating every event in your life. God will put you, it may take some of you longer than others to get where God wants you to go. That never matters. What never matters is when you finally got there, were you on the job? God orchestrated the events. He saw down inside you. He saw down inside you things that you wanted.

Missy was telling me the story in the church as she was. Four or five times she wanted to get disciplined. Four or five times she asked to be disciplined. The last time they said, "Funny over," you know what the guy did? He came up and knocked on the door and said, "Here is the lesson, read them through and see if you understand it." You say, "Well, why would God let that happen like that?" Because there is always a process. In God's timing, God orchestrated the event, but He saw in her somebody that would, hey, she saw somebody that the first time that somebody that did not work out could have gotten her nose bent out of joint and just went and did her own thing. But she wanted it. She would not stop. She would not rest. That is what God sees in people. He wants to see in people that they want the Word of God. So sometimes He will put you into a stupid place just to let you see if it is really real, and then He will put some obstacles in your life to see how easily you will quit. Amen. When you do not quit and you keep going and you keep going and you keep going and you stay with it, God says, "You know what? She has got the right stuff." Amen. And then He got her where she needed to be. He has done that. If you cannot see it this morning, He has done that in almost every one of your lives. Some of you have responded. Most of you have. Most of you recognize that. But there will always be people who never look at it that way.

The awesome responsibility that we have in our lives based on understanding that great truth. I mean, God, with all that He does and all that your Bible says He is, bottom line is He cared enough to orchestrate your life because He saw in you. God saved you for a purpose. He wants to enact the same process in your life that He did in young Samuel's life. Not just so you will learn the book, not just so you will learn how to use the book, but also that the rest of your life, once you get it, you will never forsake it. You will never give it up. You will never trade it. There will be no relationship that you will trade it for. There will be no job you trade it for. You will never lose the wisdom of God and the understanding of God that He has for you.

I see it all the time. At one point, the Bible, God, church was the most important thing to somebody. They loved it. They could not live without it. Serving God was the most important thing in their life. Not anymore. Something happened. Something transpired. Somebody forgot it. Somebody declined from the words of His mouth. Somebody forsook the truth of God and lost God's perspective in their life. I am not talking about in any way, shape, and form of salvation.

2.) Samuel gets called by God as he ministers for God, but he is young and he cannot yet discern the voice of God calling him. Look at 1 Samuel 3:2-7:

1 Samuel 3:2-7

2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

4 That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

5 And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.

6 And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD revealed unto him.

Now, 1 Samuel 3:3 says the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord. I do not know what you know about the Bible from Exodus 25:31 and Leviticus 24:2, but that should never happen. That lamp was to burn continually forever, never to go out. That lamp represents in the tabernacle the light of God through the Word of God. It illuminates the inside tabernacle for the priest to do his work, just like the Word of God illuminates for you and I to do the work of God. But the lamp is out; it is gone, darkness now. That is a picture of the time we live in. No more light from God, no more Word of God, no more doctrine.

Here is the real problem. Samuel here is a picture of a young Christian who has a tremendous desire to serve God. Now he is in the right place with the right guy, but he cannot understand when God calls him. 1 Samuel 3:7 again says the Word of the Lord was not yet revealed unto him, and he did not yet know the Lord. We have already explained that. That is a picture of so

many of God's people when they are young Christians. He is confused. He cannot discern the voice of God from the voice of Eli. Two times God has called him, and he ran to Eli saying, "What do you want?" In a process of getting where God wants you to go, sometimes it can get confusing. As I have said, God is not the author of confusion. Eli simply says, "Go back and go to sleep. I did not call you."

See, Eli knows a few things. Eli is far from being perfect, but Eli knows the process of God, and he knows how God does some things. He says, "Go back and go to sleep." In other words, just keep on doing, Samuel, what you are already doing because the ministry and learning to do the ministry and learning the right way of ministry, that is a process of growth and getting to the place where you can discern the calling of God in your life through the wisdom of God, knowing the book, the understanding of God, knowing how to use the book. That will lead to the discernment and the perception and you keeping it the rest of your life.

3.) Look at 1 Samuel 3:8-11.

1 Samuel 3:8-11

8 And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

Now, God called Samuel two times here. Both times when he runs to Eli, Eli says, "Go back and lay down, go back to sleep." See, Eli is the man of God. He knows God, and he knows how He works. Eli does not go off the deep end and give him some spiritual recipe to do. He does not give him some pragmatic spiritual application to process in his life. He says basically by going back and going back to sleep, "Just wait on God, continue to do what you are doing, and God will reveal Himself to you."

Then God called Samuel the third time. Now this time it is different, is it not? The Bible says now Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Why is this third time different? The first two times he just told him to go back and lay down. Why did he not tell him the third time? Because Eli knows how God works. He obviously knows "the third time is the charm," as the little phrase goes. Eli's perception is based on a biblical principle, a pattern. Number three in the Bible is the number of spiritual completion. Seven may be spiritual perfection, but three in the Bible is spiritual completion.

Last week I told you, if you want to, my goal was to get everybody, maybe it was the week before, 1 Timothy 4:13, three things shall I come. Give attention to what? Reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. That will make you complete as a Christian. You get those three

things working down in your life, you are good to go. You want to talk about Christ? The proper way is three parts to His name: the Lord, Jesus, Christ. All three of them mean something differently. We talk about studying the Bible. We have to study in a doctrinal application, historical application, inspirational application. For it to be complete, you have to have all three. God is omnipresent, omniscient, and all-knowing. You talk about the gospels. The gospel of the New Testament is the Gospel, the Acts, and the Epistles. You talk about the Old Testament, it is the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets. Everything breaks down into threes. You and me are the body, soul, and spirit. God is a Father, God is a Son, God is a Holy Spirit. You look at time, it is past, present, and the future. Nothing is complete without the third part.

When old Eli sees the third time God calls him, because he has got perception, he knows now God is in it. Oh, let us see what he did. I bet he sent him right off to Bible college, did he not? I bet he sent him right off to the seminary. No, he did not. When he knows that God is in the thing and God has called the boy, he did not send him off to Bible college, he did not ship him off to the seminary. He simply says, "Okay, son, God is in this now, go back to sleep." You see, Eli knows the only true process for God developing you is the ministry. You getting involved in making the investment of your life in the ministry, and it takes time.

God had great plans for Samuel. 1 Samuel 3:11 says, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle." I want to tell you something, God has got great plans for you. The problem is you do not have great plans for God. Boy, these are some great parallels, quite incredible. You see, God's system of ministering in the Old Testament was service in the tabernacle. God grew Samuel up through that. God's system of ministry and maturing us in the New Testament is that process of spiritual growth of going through and ministering through your local church and your service in it through ministry.

The first thing, you have to have the right place. You have to be in the right church. You have to have a church that teaches the Bible. You have to have a church that believes the Bible. You have to have a church that gives you the opportunity to grow. That is what Samuel had. You know, in any church, you will see a real contrast between the people who are fully invested in ministry of their church and the people who are not. It does not matter where you go. It is the ministry that matures us.

Hebrews 5:14, that great passage that talks about the time we ought to be teachers, that somebody has to again teach us the first fundamentals of the Bible. That says that strong meat, that Bible doctrine, strong meat, the doctrine of the Word of God, belongs to them that by reason of use, somebody who uses it, have exercised their senses to discern. There is your discernment. It comes from the ministry and the church where God has put you under the man of God or God has provided for you. That is where you stay. That is where you grow. God will do a great thing in your life. There will be a time in your life when God will take you and do whatever He wants to do with you, just like it was with Samuel.

IV. The Role Of A Spiritual Mentor

4.) Samuel had recognized the importance of the man of God that he had put into his life. It is an ongoing process. Timothy had Paul. My father in the Lord was Mel Shabaka. He had Peter S. Ruckman. I had Mel. Unfortunately, you got me. Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Now he not only learns the ministry from him, but Samuel is smart enough to know to rely on the old man's experience of walking with God. He gets his advice from him on how to discern what God is doing in his life when he does not understand it yet.

For this example, I cannot think of a better example than I could give you than my own personal example of my father in the Lord, Mel Shabaka. My father died when I was 19 years old. My mom got remarried shortly after that time, moved out, I was on my own. But God put a man in my life. God saw my need. Obviously, for what it was, I have no idea, but He saw something in me that He gave me a man. That man took me under his wing.

I am dumb in a lot of things in life. There are a lot of things that I am stupid on, there are a lot of things that I will never figure out. But I thank God every day in my life that God gave me the ability to understand and to realize that the man that God gave me was a man. I preached his funeral with a bunch of other guys a while back. I used the verse out of the Bible. I simply said this, the Bible says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." I preached the sermon on, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was Mel."

God put him in my life. I recognized that. I understood it. I realized that I knew nothing, and he was a lot farther down the road than I was. He was never easy on me. He was probably harder on me than anybody else. He never cut me any slack in any way, shape or form. I never got upset about it. I never got mad about it because I knew what God was doing in my life. I knew that if I was going to have to endure the rigors of the ministry and all the crap you have to put up with, somebody was going to have to build some steel in my backbone. Boy, he was the guy to do it.

He told me later on one day, "You know why I was harder on you years later?" He said, "I was harder on you, Bob, than anybody else because I saw more in you than I saw in somebody else." He said, "I never cut you any slack, not because I did not love you, because I did love you, and I wanted you to be the best that God could make you to be." I never argued with what he said, never second-guessed what he said. I knew that I was stupid and knew nothing. I knew that God had put him in my life, and he knew everything that I needed to know. I knew the reason to learn it. I had learned this passage. The reason I knew that he was there is because he had what I needed. I could spend my life arguing with him and going my own way and say, "Well, you do not know what he is talking about." Or I could recognize that God put him in my life for that very purpose of meeting my need. Boy, he did. He did.

You know, learning the ministry is a lot like learning how to fly. When you want to fly, you have to go to ground school. You learn the basics, the fundamentals of flight, aerodynamics. You get a seasoned teacher that will teach you all the things on the ground. Then after you pass that, you go to flight school. Then you get a seasoned instructor who knows all the aspects of flying. You will spend \$200 in a cockpit with him. He will put you through all the aspects of the things you learned in ground school. He will add things to that and build upon it. He will teach you how to take off. He will teach you how to land. You will do endless turns, endless ups and downs, upside

down. He will reach over sometime and turn the engine off just to see what you will do before the plane stalls. He will throw everything he knows how to do. He will throw at you to make you a pilot. Then you will put it in your life, and he will make you land again and land again. You are thinking to yourself, "I have done this 40 times. Why do I have to do it again?" Because if you really want to be the best at what you have to do, then you will really do everything somebody who already knows what to do tells you to do.

One of those days after grinding four hours in the airplane, he will land down there, and he gets out. He gets out there, and you walk around the plane, and he looks it over, and he checks it out, and he throws you the keys, and he says, "Okay, time for you to solo." You are climbing that plane all by yourself. You know what you wish at that point? You wish you would have had a few more landing practices. You know what you wish at that point in your life? You wish you would have practiced takeoffs a few more times. Because now what was so mundane to you, and you were so bored, having to do it over and over again, now when you look over in that left seat, there is nobody there, and you are behind the controls, and you are down the end, and you are revving her up, and you are going to go down, and it all comes down to what you did with it.

You see, I could give you ground school. I can take you through Discipleship One and Discipleship Two. I can teach you all the scenarios in the Bible like we do on Thursday night and like we are doing right now this morning. I can even take some of you, a lot of you, like we do in the people ministry, and I can throw every kitchen sink I know at you. I can give you the hardest scenarios and just break your back by throwing things out there and just giving you stuff and throwing you out there of stuff that you, I can do all of that. None of that will take the place of the day you have got to step out on your own, and you have got to fly. You have got to become that. You will make it or you will break it based on what you do with everything that God provided for you, your attitude about it.

When God looks down and sees your attitude about Thursday night, Sunday morning, I mean He looks at how literally you blow off coming to church on Sunday morning or Thursday night Bible study because this is there or this is that. I am not saying things do not happen. We had one guy one time, I guess he did not think I was stupid. His mom died six times. God looks down there and says, "She has got the right stuff. He has got the right stuff. That kid will not quit. That kid gets pounded on and pounded on, and that kid, he just will not quit. They slam the door in his face and say they asked for this. He wants to learn God. They keep shutting the door down. I keep having that door slammed because I just want to see what they are made of, and you know what? That kid has got the right stuff. I am going to get them someplace that they are going to get every desire in their heart when they come to that Bible." That is what He does. Those are the things I see. That is my job. The sermon comes from God exercising your senses.

5.) The advice that Eli gives him is simple. "Okay, Sam? God has called you. I get it. God has His hand on your life. I understand. And God is going to use you mightily. I see that. Now go back to sleep." He is saying, "Samuel, I see God has His hand in you, and I know now we are moving up the ladder here, but the information and the advice is the same. Just keep doing what God has called you to do right now because it is what you are doing right now. Whatever it is. This afternoon, the mission tonight, discipling somebody, working with this person, working

with that, doing with it, whatever you are doing right now on whatever level it is, is where God is going to take and God is going to begin that process in your life." It is just that simple. You do not have to wait until you get someplace where you figure it all out. God wants you to start right now. Just do right now what you can do because it is that process of you ministering here in this tabernacle that God will use to grow you up, staying faithful to what God is doing with you right now.

V. The End Result: Growth And Establishment

Look at 1 Samuel 3:19-21.

1 Samuel 3:19-21

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

Now, 1 Samuel 3:19 is the key to you retaining the wisdom of God and the understanding of God. Not losing it. This is the whole concept. 1 Samuel 3:1-18 shows you the process to get it, wisdom and understanding. But 1 Samuel 3:19 shows you the process that you keep it. 1 Samuel 3:19, "And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground." There it is.

I watch some of you hang on to everything that is taught around the Word of God here. I look at some of your Bibles when you do not see me looking, and I see that most of you never let any words fall to the ground. You hang on to everything God gives you. Letting nothing of God's word fall to the ground, do not miss the thing that He says to you. The contrast between some of God's people who soak it up every time they can and the other ones who just take what is convenient or take nothing at all. But the absolute importance of developing an ear to hear everything that God said.

The Bible says in Matthew 11:15, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." He says in Revelation 1:2-3 to the churches, "Let him that hath ears to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The key is keeping it, never letting the word fall to the ground. That will be the first mistake you make. You stop taking everything down that God says and listening to everything God tells you, you are halfway out that door. You know why? You stop listening to God, then you are going to start listening to somebody else. It is just that simple.

I have had people come in here, and they want to grow. All my life they want to grow, they want to do this, they do really well. They do really good. They do really well. They get growing, they get going, they do really well, and they start to get up the ladder and start to do things. You know what? And then they will quit listening to what God says and want to do their own thing, and

somebody else will talk them into something, and everything they are. It is simple. You quit listening to God, and you start letting His word fall to the ground, and you are going to listen to somebody else. It is just a matter of that tract. The absolute importance of hearing the Word of God.

6.) Note it all goes back to the Word of God and its doctrine to you that you take of it. 1 Samuel 3:21, "And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD." This is a period in time in the Old Testament unlike any other time. No visions, no prophets, no Urim and Thummim, just the Word of God being revealed, just like it is today. Shiloh means "peace giver." The place where the ark and the tabernacle were kept until David brings it in a little later on in 2 Samuel. That stands for the place in our lives where God meets us and reveals Himself to us to tell us and call us to the ministry to grow to the plan and put it all together in our lives, and every child of God will meet God in this format and either accept it or reject it. Everybody, everybody will.

Now, Samuel, and this is why I love it, Samuel reminds me of so many of you. In 1 Samuel 3, you see the process of getting God's wisdom and understanding, and also Proverbs chapter 4 says the process to never lose it. In the wisdom of God, know the book; understanding of God, know how to use the book; and then keeping what God gives you.

VI. Five Qualities God Looks For

Yet one last thing, and I want to leave you with this. Why Samuel? I talked about how God looks down and sees some things in us. A good picker, when he is picking things for the collector, will learn to look for the right things. Samuel has got the right things. Go back to 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 35, and I want to show you the five things that God saw in his life. It is the five things that I see in so many of you. Five areas that God looks for in us, and five things that I have learned as God's picker to look for in people.

Now, he says in 1 Samuel 2:35:

1 Samuel 2:35

35 And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.

Five things here. This is what God looks for when He looks down deep inside you. This is what He looks for when He sees when you will not quit, when you will not get discouraged. Many times, as I have told you, He will put you in churches, He will put you in scenarios, and He will dangle that carrot out there because He wants to see if you have got the right stuff.

1.) One thing He says, "I will raise me up a faithful priest." Faithful in what you are doing for God right now. Matthew 25:21 is a great principle. It says if you are faithful in a little thing, God will make you ruler over many things. You have to start being faithful in the little things in your life. Right now, whatever it is you are doing, if it is wrapping hot dogs, if it is doing this, if it is sorting clothes, whatever you are allowed to wear, whatever God has you, if it is discipling

somebody or being disciplined, if it is committing to learn the Bible in some kind of process, faithfulness in the little things that leads to you being the master over the big things. A person that God can trust with the Word of God in ministry.

It never ceases to amaze me. People all the time, all my life, they have sat down with me and said, "You know what my problem is? I just cannot trust God." You know what? That is a stupid thing to say. I would not even, I would not even act, I would not even betray myself as such an imbecile to say that. The issue is never, "Can you trust God?" You know what the real issue is? God cannot trust us. That is the problem. You can trust Him. That problem is He cannot trust us. That is the issue because we are not faithful.

2.) The second thing, "I will raise me up a man that will know God's heart." A faithful priest that will know God's heart, the heartbeat of God. Finding in your life in time what God really cares about and making it what you really care about. This is what you get from Thursday night and Sunday morning and your discipleship, all the things that you learn that God loves, and then you make those things the things that you love. But, of course, you know that that kind of requires you to put some things out of your life that you should not love. See? Right stuff.

3.) The third thing, "I will raise me up a faithful priest that will know God's mind." An absolute final authority. Not just learning what God cares about, but learning what God thinks about every situation in life and then using the Bible in that format to make it what you think about it and how you use it to solve problems.

4.) The fourth thing, "I will raise me up a priest, a faithful priest who will let God build him a sure house." Wow. Now, that will be your temple, your own body first. Then your house, your family, a sure house. You have to love it, man. Your house, how is it today? How is your family today? How is your sure house today? Or is it an unsure house? Your house, your family, a sure house. My house is sure. Your house is sure to serve God that He may, that forever He may and can say what He does say about God making your house sure. How many people can say that in Christianity today? If there is anything that is wrecked and ruined, not in the world, in Christians, it is the homes. It is moms and dads who lose their kids. It is moms and dads who cannot control their kids. It is moms and dads whose their kids are all over the planet. It is moms and dads who do not take the steps to deal with it. Sure house. I love that phrase, a sure house. We use it in the world. That is a sure thing. The Word of God will make sure you have a sure house, sure in the fact that it is going to serve God for the generations to come.

5.) Fifth thing, "I will raise me up a faithful priest who will walk before God forever," never going back to the world. All will struggle. We will have some battles, but ultimately we have the victory. Never losing the wisdom of God, the understanding of God, hiding it into your heart, letting it flow out through your life and your children in generations to come. A sure house.

That is what you look for in people. You look for people who want to have a desire to accomplish those things. That is what God saw in Samuel. When God saw him, He said, "That is the right stuff, man. That is what I am talking about. That is somebody I can do something with." So He enacts the process. I would be a fool not to stand up here and tell you my heart this morning that I want all of you to make it. Certainly everybody gets the same chance, but I would

also be a fool to tell you this morning that the bottom line is not everybody is going to, but it is by your own choosing.

God gives you salvation. He gives you the Holy Spirit. He gives you the Word of God. He gives you a pastor. He gives you a church. He gives you Christian friends. He gives you ministry. He gives you service, but you will either walk into it or you walk away from it. It is your choice. My job is like Eli. I wait and see. You come to me and you say, "Well, I think God is doing some of my life, Bob." "Go back to sleep. Just keep doing what you are doing." "Well, I think the Lord really is speaking to me about this." "Well, I do not know if He is or He is not. So just go back to sleep, and we will find out."

But there comes a point in time in everybody's life when you see it. You do not maybe see it, but I see it. When I see God's hand in your life, when I see God beginning to move in your life, and I begin to see what you look at as turmoil or problems with this or that, and I see it as God wrenching you out and getting some things that I have, then I have a big decision. You know what I tell you to do? "Go back to sleep. Just keep doing what you are doing." That is the process. There is no magical formula to it. God will grow you up through the ministry, and the reason why you are not growing up is because you are not in ministry. It is just that simple.

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:20 that God has vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor. You get to choose which one you want to be. You get to choose. Now, look at the end result in Samuel's life. It will be the same for you. Look at 1 Samuel 3:19-20.

1 Samuel 3:19-20

19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

You see, God will establish you. You do not have to establish yourself. You do not have to go out and buy a 65-pound King James Bible and put it around on a truck behind you. God will establish you. It is the greatest single thing that God can do for you other than your salvation. He will establish your marriage. He will establish your family. He will establish your ministry. He will establish your relationship with God, and then He will establish it in the eyes of everybody else, and God will establish you.

He says in 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." A workman. A workman through a process of being approved of God. Then what God does, He establishes you. When you do the work in the Bible and when you do the work in the ministry, God approves you and establishes you. It does not matter what anybody else says about you. It does not matter then what anybody thinks about you. Because at the end of the day, as long as God establishes you, you do not need to worry about anybody else. He is the only one because He is who you work for.

When God reaches down from heaven and He sees in you those things and He picks you, not based on the fact that I will pick you, I will not pick you, based on your willingness to let Him have you. He begins to put that process in your life. He puts you in the right church. He gives you the right pastor. He gives you the right people. He gives you the right Bible. He gives you the right ministry. Then let God just move up inside you and tear your guts out inside and out as God changes you and molds you and makes you. Yes, it will get confusing. Yes, you will have some struggles. Yes, you will have some issues. You will have problems. You will read them as, "I am having a problem because of this." I will read it because I will see you are having a problem because of what God is changing about you inside you.

Have you ever noticed your kids? Some of you have younger kids. When they hit junior high age, this is where their arms get longer than their legs. Their fingers get longer than their toes. Their bodies have not caught up with their emotions yet. This is where they do not want to wear this particular outfit to school when it looks just fine because they look stupid. This is where they look into the mirror, and they start to get pimples, and they cry. You have to spend \$100 on Clearasil or something to scrub them off. Sandpaper and steel wool do the same thing a lot cheaper. This is where they get to that age when they are out of whack. They are over there, and all you have to do is say the wrong thing, and they are just breaking into tears. This is where they think they are ugly. This is where they do not have any friends. This is where their bodies are growing, and they are coming to the point where they do not understand what is going on. They are emotionally many times. Their bodies are changing. They are going through puberty. They are going to the point where they are coming into being a young man or a young lady, but their bodies are still down through here, and they are going in, and they are growing, and they are out of whack, and they are out of proportion, and everything is going on right there, and it is all emotional pulls on you. You know what? You can take that, and what they need in that life at that point in time is a strong leadership of the parents to take them and hold them and to make sure that you walk them through that.

You know what? That is exactly what God's people go through. You go through a puberty stage in adolescence in Christianity just like your children do. You go through a point where you get out of whack, and everything acts weird. You look in the mirror, and you do not like yourself anymore. You look in the mirror, and you say, "Well, I am not really doing what God wants me to do." You start second-guessing yourself on everything. That is the natural process. Now somebody will look at it and say, "Well, there is nothing, there is weird," and I would say, "Yeah, that person is nothing that weird," but take a normal person, and that is not the case. The normal case is that person is just going through all the emotional trauma of what is inside. They are growing, God doing what they cannot understand it, and at that point they need somebody strong and firm to simply say, "You know what? Just keep doing what you are doing. Do not second-guess yourself. You are doing just fine. Let me help you with this. Let me help you get this. Let me put this in your world, but I am telling you, just keep doing what you are doing because it is going to be okay."

I told him, I said, "You know what? If I programmed what I wanted and somebody into a computer, and the picture came out, you would be walking out of it. You are exactly where God

wants you to be, and you are exactly what God wants you to be doing. Just stay faithful to it. And God will take care of the rest." It is what He does. It is what He does. But I told you last week, 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5, if you are going to run this race, you have to run it lawfully. You have to do it by the book, and you have to do it God's way. One thing about Christianity that I really like, works for me. It is the only thing in life that I cannot do my way anymore. I have done things my way all my life. Boy, when I met the Lord and got in that book, my first reality was my way is done. Because if you are going to accomplish this, you have to run lawfully. You have to do it God's way. But that is the way it works. I see that in so many of you. That is why God brings you here. This is the training ground. It is all it is. This is just a small part of God's overall collection. God has got some collection. He really does. But He sees in you. He looks down and He sees those characteristics of you staying with it. That you will not quit. You may not have it all figured out. You may have some issues in your life you have to work through. But at the end of the day, you are not going to quit until you get what God wants you to have. That is what God looks for.

Father, we thank You and praise You today for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for this great passage. Lord, it personally means so.