

# Proverbs 8:17

Sunday 7/27/2014

Today is Anniversary Sunday, so everybody would have a chance to see, without a doubt, our children are the most important commodity we have. I don't have a special message today. Normally, when you do a special day, you prepare a special message. I had thought about doing that. I had a couple of things I really wanted to talk about, but there's nothing that I can't lay out later on down the line someplace.

I thought today, on Anniversary Sunday, we should probably do what we always do, and I just teach the Bible and teach the truth of God. It's what we do, and it's what we're all about. I think today, based on where we're at, where we've come from, and what you saw today at camp—for those of you that experienced camp, what you went through—I think today's message will help you in a great way.

Last week, we began Proverbs 8:7-21, and it was our second lesson on Proverbs chapter 8, if you remember. I told you Proverbs chapter 8, without a doubt, is the deepest chapter in the Bible. There's no question about it as far as its spiritual depth is concerned. It all deals with the person of Christ, the doctrine of Christ. It's an incredible chapter. I told you last week it really lays out the person of Christ, typified through wisdom and understanding, which ultimately, that's what Christ is.

I think Proverbs chapter 8, in a lot of ways, deals with the central core, the heart of New Testament Christianity and the believer, because no matter what we know about the Bible, no matter what we try to do for God, or what we even do for God, all of that means nothing if you don't have a personal relationship with God on a daily basis. I've known many, many people in my life who knew the Word of God, who knew the book, but they never took the time to learn the author of the book. They never took the time to build that relationship that is central to everything. It was all about head knowledge. Of course, head knowledge is valuable, but heart knowledge needs to override head knowledge, and that's where it starts.

You remember last week we talked about six major principles:

1. The importance of words in the Bible, just one-syllable, two-syllable keywords that are found in the Scripture.
2. How that the Bible is a plain book to understand, nothing complicated about it.
3. How that Christians have to have a sense of right versus wrong as laid out in the Bible, the right thing that the Bible teaches us.
4. The aspect of the true riches versus the false riches.
5. Thursday night, I talked about the seven areas of stewardship found in the Bible. Somebody asked a question, and we went through those and laid those out for you.
6. One of the things we talked about last week was the witty inventions that man comes up with to get us all around the Word of God, and how that the Bible lays those things out, shows us the truth versus error.

Then the thing we talked about was the strength of God in our lives. We want to be strong for the Lord. We talk about Christian maturity and Christian strength. But we learned last week that the strength of God in our lives only comes from the wisdom and the understanding of God in our lives. We've got to have the principles.

Today, we're going to look at yet another great truth found in Proverbs 8:17. We're going to kind of work our way through this chapter slowly because there's so much in here. If you're remembering from last week, this will be, I broke it down into this chapter in seven sections. This will be section five. I gave you four last week. We're going to do five today. We'll probably get through this today, but I think it'll help you.

Proverbs 8:17 says:

*Proverbs 8:17*

*I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.*

Now Father, help us today and bless us as we come to your Word. We love you. We thank you for all the things that you do for us and that you've given us. We thank you for the 11 good years that we've had here and the many, many people that you've brought our way that make this ministry what it is. The men and the women who love you and love the Word of God, who stand side by side with me and labor in this vineyard that you've given us here. Lord, we just thank you for all the young, fresh blood that we have of young men and young ladies and young couples that want to ensure this church goes forward until Jesus comes back. Lord, bless us today. Give us, Lord, what you have for us, and we'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name. For His sake, we ask it. Amen.

## I. God's Love and Our Relationship

In the Bible, it's very clear that God loves everybody. That's His children. I understand that. If you're saved and you're God's child, then God loves you. Yet, it's also clear that even though God loves all of His children, saved children, He loves some of them and has a deeper relationship with some of them than He does with others.

Let me start out by saying this: when that happens, it's not because God doesn't want to have that deep relationship with you. To the contrary, it's the fact that you don't want to have that deep relationship with Him. You want God in your life, but you kind of keep Him at arm's length, so to speak. You want God in your life, but He's somebody who you don't really want in all of your life. That's just the way that it works. That's why there are some people who have a deeper relationship with the Lord than other people.

That's hard for most Christians to grasp today. It's foreign to them because they have really no knowledge of God, of what it takes to really love the Lord. Love is a cheap word today. You see it in marriages, you see it in family. One of the fundamental principles about true love is love has to be associated with a true action. We see that that's not true in Christianity. We see a lot of people claim to love God, but they show no action based on that love.

A couple of weeks ago, I talked about the Apostle John. He's one of my favorite characters to study in the Bible. I showed you how that John, out of all the twelve apostles, had a closer relationship and a deeper relationship with Christ than the other twelve did. It's one of the most amazing studies. In fact, in my mind, I've always looked at it as a model of what Christianity probably is.

You take any twelve Christians you'll find today, probably one of them will not be unsaved. In our study, that would be Judas. He was the phony. Then, of the eleven left, there were three of those apostles who, in studying the Bible, we would call the inner circle: Peter, James, and John. If you would go through the Bible, you would find that when all the major events like the Mount of Transfiguration, the rising of Jairus' daughter, the major events in the New Testament, you'll find that those three men are there. I don't know where the rest of them are at, but they're not there. They make, in our study, the inner circle. They experience greater things than the rest of the disciples did. They saw the power of God to a greater degree and even experienced it to a greater degree.

But even of the inner three, there's only one who goes all the way, and that is the Apostle John. When Christ is crucified, we know Peter denies Him. James is nowhere to be found. It's John who goes the distance. We talked about that a couple of weeks ago. I told you how that John writes the five wisdom books for the New Testament, like you have five wisdom books for the Old Testament, and I remember giving them to you. One of the books he writes is the book of 1 John.

The book of 1 John is the greatest book in the Bible that defines for you how you have to love God. It's so powerful that every commentator I ever read on the epistle of 1 John will always tell you that the theme of 1 John is love. You'll get that in almost every book that you read or every sermon that you hear. They'll start out by saying that the theme of this book is love. I've never really understood that other than the fact that most guys don't really study the books of the Bible before they preach them. They get an idea from somebody else or read this and that and go with it. They never really base their messages on it.

I don't know how a guy could say that the theme of 1 John is love when it's only got five chapters in it, and they're short chapters. Twenty-seven times in five chapters, you don't find the word love, you find the word "to know," "knowing." The great theme of 1 John is not loving God. The great theme of 1 John is knowing God because this is what happens with Christians today. We try to love God without even knowing God. We fall into love with people today. Because we never take the time to know that person we fall in love with, then it doesn't last. With God, it's the same way.

You come to a church service, and you'll hear some fiery sermon, or you'll hear some song that moves your emotions, and you'll make an emotional decision to trust Christ and be saved. I'm not saying you were or you weren't. Honestly, I'm just saying that's what you do. But because you never get into a process where you learn to know God, someplace along the line, you fall out of love with God just like you fell in love with God. Real love takes the basis of knowing. That's what John represents for us. It's an incredible study.

God loves all of His children. I understand that. But He develops a special relationship with those who develop a special relationship with Him. A couple of New Year's Eves ago, probably three or four or five by now, I can't remember when I walked you through the book of Song of Solomon almost verse by verse. I showed you, it's in a book back there now, and I showed you how that the book of Song of Solomon shows us, gives us exactly the format that we are to have to follow to develop a relationship with God.

As I said, it's not based on God choosing this person to have a close relationship with and this person not to. It's not about that. God wants to have an intimate, personal, one-on-one relationship in the sense of fellowship with every believer that's His child. The problem is not God. The problem is we don't want that. We don't want to go do what we've got to do. We'd rather spread ourselves out in all that we do instead of giving everything to the Lord.

I've talked to people all my life that if you would ask them, "Do you love God?" "Oh, I love God." Sometimes, just to be coy or cute, if I know the person—and I won't do it to a stranger—but I'll ask them, "Well, that's great. Name me the seven things in the Bible that God loves." I mean, if you love Him, you ought to know what He loves. Most of them don't have a clue. Don't have a clue.

Consider that it would be hard, even with your own child, it would be hard to love your own child if you never saw them in your house. You never spoke to them except maybe once or twice a year. You develop no real relationship with them. When they do call you on the phone, they want something from you: "Dad, send me some money," or "I need this," or "I need that." "We need the rent money." If you were an honest parent, I think you'd feel somewhat used and abused. If you were totally honest, I think you would say that the relationship probably is certainly one-sided. I mean, you would love them, but you could never develop that into the real personal relationship that probably every parent desires to have with their child.

You see, love is an incredible thing in the Bible. If that child wanted to be by your side in everything that you did, only wanted to talk and have and hang out with you, wherever you go, they want to go be with you. They want to be like you in everything that you do. I think again, if you're honest, you'd say that that would develop into a more incredibly deep relationship and love than the first illustration. You see, love to work has to flow both ways. It can't be up here, God loving you and me beyond all belief, and you holding God back at arm's length. God will love you, but He won't love you to the degree. Of course, the examples are very numerous in the Bible.

It's the same way with God. Some of His children, they never come to His house, this being His house. Or when they do, they come once a month or once every three months or whenever it's convenient for them. They're like the child we talked about. They never talk to Him. They never go through the day telling God how much they love Him. You never read and cherish the 66 love letters that He wrote to you. You never sit down over a meal and before you bury your face in it, stop and take time to thank the One who provided it all for you. We use Him. We take all that He wants to give us, and we give nothing back. Then we talk about how much we love Him.

In the Bible, there are two men—and I'm not going to get into this, but you can study it on your own, and some of you probably would have—in the Bible, there are two men that illustrate this view of God loving someone with a deeper relationship. They really make the case. I would call them the two standards for loving God. One of them, obviously in the Old Testament, is David. Of all the kings of the nation of Israel, do you know that God always compares every king that Israel had back to one king, David? David, sure, he wasn't perfect, and David had his problems, but what David did have that overrode all of the issues in his life—because we're all going to have issues—is he loved God and he loved His Word. At the end of the day, in Acts 13, God said that he was a man after My own heart. The second one is the Apostle John that we've just talked about. Both of them center around the Word of God.

So you're going to see the first part of this verse really talks about that God wants to have a relationship with you and me. He wants to have that love relationship with us. But it's us that do not want to have it with Him.

## II. Seeking God Early

Then he gets into the last part of the verse. Here really is the heart of our message today: "Those that seek me early shall find me." Now I want to tell you before I get into this that this is probably one of the most profound places anywhere in the Scriptures. The depth of this goes right along with the depth of Proverbs chapter 8. Yet, just like most things deep in the Bible, this is probably one of the most misapplied verses in all the Bible, and you hear it all the time used wrongly.

The concept of seeking God early, I've heard many, many preachers say that, take that verse, and this is all they could get out of it was the fact that you had to get up early in the morning and start your day with God. That you ought to start your day with God in the morning, 4 or 5 a.m., 6 to 7 a.m. And that'll make you spiritual because the verse said, "If you seek me early, you shall find me."

Now, I'm not saying you shouldn't read your Bible in the morning to get your day started. I'm certainly not suggesting that you don't. I think you probably should. That's a good thing. Or pray in the morning to jumpstart your day, to get you going. I'm all for it. I get to spend probably a couple of hours every morning just getting into the Bible before my day gets up and moving, and I really enjoy it, and I think it sets the tone for the whole thing that you do. I get it, I get it.

But the truth of the matter is this: biblically, God's day doesn't start in the morning. Now maybe our day starts in the morning, but if you remember your Bible back in Genesis chapter 1 and 2, the Bible says that God's day begins at night: "The evening and the morning were the first day." "It was the evening and the morning were the second day." You see, our day starts in the morning, but God's day starts in the evening.

Job takes it one step further where Job says, in Job chapter 33, verses 14, 15, and 16:

*Job 33:14-16*

*For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.*

*In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;*

*Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.*

The verse says that God's day begins at night. Now, I'm not saying you shouldn't get up in the morning and get into the Word of God and pray. I think that's great. What the Bible says is if you're talking about when God's day starts and you want to make that verse mean that seek God early, then you got to do it at night. Because the Bible teaches that the last thing you put into your mind before you fall asleep—and sleep in the Bible is an incredible thing. Sleep in the Bible is the only time where you and I, where your mind, you're not in control of anything. Now you're out of control. You're out. It's the closest you ever come to dying. When you sleep at night, you're not conscious of anything. The Bible says your body goes down to a minimum. This is why you should not eat before you go to bed because then your body works all night. This is why you wake up in the morning and you don't feel rested because while you were sleeping, your body was trying to work on nine cheeseburgers and 16 fries and all the things that we put in there before we went to sleep. In fact, you should not eat at night before you go to bed. The first meal you should have is breakfast, which is simply break the fast of you not having anything to eat all night. During that time, God's Spirit takes the last thing you put in your mind and structures your next day. That's how it works in the Bible. But how many people do that? Now that's a good thing, but I'm going to tell you the verse is not even talking about that. I'll just throw that in there to explain that it ain't about how early you get up.

But in our text, it's even more than that. It's talking about—and this is why I'm glad you children are here today, and I'm glad this is why I had the camp thing going, and this is why I'm glad your parents are here this morning—because it's talking about man, you and me, seeking God early in life and finding Him before the world and sin descends on us.

In Ecclesiastes chapter 12, verse 1, the wisest man that ever lived said:

*Ecclesiastes 12:1*

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

The principle is really simple. The longer you wait to get saved, the harder it will be for you to get saved. You get saved while you're still tender to God, not after the world has hardened you toward God, and the world will simply harden you toward God.

Now the Bible says in that verse, "Those that seek me early shall find me." I want to talk this morning about that concept: bring your child every advantage as a parent. Our church is in a great situation. If you've been around most churches, you find that most churches, their average age is about 60, 70, or 80. You don't find any young couples. Our church is just the opposite. 80% of you are young couples married with kids or singles that are going to get married with kids. The baby rate around here is unbelievable. It's a thing where this is the longevity of our church just by what God has given us, the lifeblood. That's why I spare no expenses when it comes to the kids going to camp or investing my life into the young couples or the young singles

that want to learn and want to grow. For the greatest aspect of our church is that 20 to 30 to 40 crowd.

The older men and women, the Bible talks about your place. It talks about the older women teaching the younger women and the men being the examples and helping the young guys along. Everybody's got their place. But let's face it. I'm 64 years old. I got more time on the other side than I got on what's coming up. You guys got it all coming up for you. My job now is to get you ready to take over everything that God is doing at a time when it's someplace down the line that this church will have to go on and will have to go on without me. This verse is for you in helping your child find God early in life.

### III. Guaranteeing Your Child's Spiritual Success

Now we all like guarantees. Salvation is 100% guaranteed. There are not many guarantees in life. Salvation is 100% guaranteed. But I also want to give you along with that, for you young couples here, that there is 100% guarantee in that Bible that your child will become everything that God wants them to be. There's 100% guarantee.

I've had parents all the time, you know, think about having kids or couples having kids, you know, say, "Boy, you know what? I really, with the world the way it is, I don't know if I want to bring kids into this world." Well, if your mom and dad would have felt that way in their world's worst generation, you wouldn't even be here. The bottom line is you can't look at life that way because that Bible's got some guarantees in it. I want to talk to you out of Proverbs chapter 8 how you can guarantee 100% your child will be everything that God wants it to be without any fears or reservations. I'm not saying you won't go through some struggles. I'm not saying you won't have some issues. I'm saying the guarantee will come through for you. It's just that simple. This will be a 100% guarantee that they will be all that God wants them to be.

Now the Bible is very clear in the fact that we train our children.

*Proverbs 22:6*

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

That's a great verse.

*Proverbs 29:17-18*

*Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*

*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

Now, Proverbs 29:18, you hear all the time pastors using about putting a vision out for the church. That's 100% correct in doing that. But if you look at the context, the context, even though I can use that as a pastor to lay out a vision of where we're going, the context is parents laying out a vision for their children, providing a vision of the life with God for your child, providing a vision for your child to find God early. The Bible says, "Those that seek me early shall find me."

Let me just start by saying this, that responsibility lies with the parent, the Christian mom and dad, to put this process in place for your child that they have the ability to seek God early. You do it. This is what I want to talk to you about based on Proverbs 8:17, finding God early, seeking Him early and finding Him for your child. It's based on five basic stages that your child goes through. Crazy enough, it's the same five stages that a person goes through when they get saved, only in an adult situation. But we're not going to focus on that today. We want to focus on what we've got here.

Now I'm going to give you some key principles here that I want you young parents to remember. I have them circled in red in mine so I won't forget them, and I will draw your attention in case you want to zone off for a while, I'll bring you back for each principle. Because the truth of the matter is if you just get home with these principles, you'll be a lot farther than you probably are right now. But I hope you'll learn, stay for all of it, and stay in your mind for all of it.

I want to talk about these because as I said earlier, our children are the most important commodity we have. I want to say this, as a mom and dad, that your children and your family are the most important commodity that you have. I'll talk about that more as we come down through this.

These five things you're going to add to your child as they come through these areas of life as they grow up. They're going to build on the former one and add the new one until they come to a complete, a biblical training life in their life that they completely understand and they have found the Lord. That's the way it works. As I said, it's the same way with an adult Christian.

2 Peter 1:5 says that after you and I get saved, there are some things that we need to add to our faith. Remember that verse? In other words, it didn't just get saved and move on now and go. After you get saved, there are things that you add to your faith, and he lists seven things in the passage there that after we get saved, we add to our faith as building blocks to get us moving down the line. Well, when you have your child and that child begins to grow, these are the five building blocks that you want to understand and you want to put in their life. The five stages of getting your child to the point of seeking Christ early, and you as a parent have to add these to your life.

Quickly, I'm going to go through five and then I'm going to come back and talk about them so you can get them out.

7. The discipline stage.
8. The relationship stage.
9. The fellowship stage.
10. The responsibility stage.
11. The ministry stage.

Let me preface what I'm about to say by saying this: there are many variables in training children. Not every child is the same, not every child is alike. Children in your own family, they're all going to be different. They don't always mature at the same rate as the person sitting next to them. Not all children are the same in character and development. I take that in, and you

have to understand the ages that I'm going to give you from this are certainly going to vary some, so you don't want to walk into that. What you want to see and understand here that these are the five fundamental building blocks to fulfill Proverbs 8:17 of your child finding the Lord early. It's up to each parent on an individual basis to know your child, understand your child, and based on the many other principles and factors that are found in the Bible, to be able to apply these things as they grow.

#### IV. The Five Stages of Child Development

- The Discipline Stage (Approximately 6 months to 4-5 years of age)
- The Relationship Stage (Approximately 5 to 12 years of age)
- The Fellowship Stage (Approximately 13 to 16 years of age)
- The Responsibility Stage (Approximately 16 to 19 years of age)
- The Ministry Stage (Approximately 20 years through life)