

Proverbs 11:23-31

Sunday 3/29/2015

Last week, we looked at Proverbs 11:19-22. We are coming through the book of Proverbs and have gotten our way up to chapter 11 here. I laid out five new principles, and that is really what we have been doing: just taking our time laying out biblical principles that really apply to our lives. We have now gotten into Proverbs itself, which is a great series of principles.

I showed you how the Bible, in a doctrinal way—and I have told you this many, many times—but also in an inspirational way, will build itself around key words and key phrases. That is really what we have been doing here in a practical application, looking at a key word that opens up the New Testament principle to give us what we need. We saw how the righteous tendeth to life last week. We looked at the man that pursues evil, where he winds up. We looked at a froward heart versus the man who is upright in his way. We looked at the great concept of hand joining hand. I think that is probably one of the best practical verses that really shows you a lot today why things are the way they are with people and Christianity in the world. Then we saw the illustration of an unsaved woman who the Bible likens to a sow. I told you and showed you over there where an unsaved man is likened to a dog. He uses those concepts to show us that unsaved people, like the pig goes back to its wallow and the dog returns to its vomit, how unsaved people just keep going back to their sin and going back to the things of the world.

Today, we are going to look at the next section of verses in this chapter. We will not get it all finished today, but this last section will close out Proverbs chapter 11. I need to tell you today that I think these verses will be a real help to you to figure out your own relationship with the Lord, and really beyond that, your relationship to our church, or if you belong to another church, any church. I know of no greater message today that Christians need to hear than the message of Proverbs 11:23-31. I wish that in one setting I could just give you everything and lay it all out, but that is impossible because there is so much here. We will probably not get past the first verse today, but the first verse is really the key to it all.

I. The Pastor's Goals and the Eight Steps of Ministry

Now, it goes without saying, and everybody should basically understand this, that every pastor should have goals that he sets for his church. That is one of the first things that a pastor ought to do when he contemplates starting a church or when he starts a church. There are some things that he should want his congregation to succeed in, in some vital areas. His job as pastor is to develop the people that God sends him. I mean, that is pretty basic and pretty simple. Ephesians chapter 4 gives us a kind of capsule view of that where he talks about the job of the church, pastors and teachers, is for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ, and we all know that.

I have told you before that fundamentally there are about eight absolute steps to being a pastor. If he can do these well, he will get some things done. If he cannot do these, then he will not get anything done, and it will just be another church that never gets off the ground or a megachurch that never really does anything. I have given them to you before, but I have never really taken the

time to explain them. Now, as we are moving into this chapter and this key chapter in what we are going to talk about as far as we as Christians, what we should not only do, but what we should be, I want to kind of walk you through it.

I have told you before that one of the first things a pastor has to be able to do is relate to people: building relationships with your people, becoming one with your people. Most pastors, and they are taught this, most pastors think that it is wrong to get close to their people. When everybody went to Bible college or whatever they taught them, they teach them that there is that God concept, the idea that God is untouchable, so the idea that the pastor is untouchable. You can never get to him to talk with him. He does not know who you are. He has a myriad of little worker ants in his church that take care of all your problems, and they do not do a very good job. He kind of second-guesses you out and second-strings you out to everybody out there. Many times, he is just very uncomfortable around people.

I have known pastors, been around pastors all my life. I have seen some of them that I absolutely wondered why they ever were in the ministry. They did not like people, they did not want to be around people, they were intimidated by people, they were uncomfortable with people, but they liked the idea of being God. They liked the idea of stepping up into the pulpit on Sunday morning before throngs of people, and many of them were good preachers, many of them had something to say. When it came down to the real fundamental aspects of what a pastor should be, he should be more than just somebody who is a good preacher. He should be somebody who can relate to his people, spend time with them, giving them what they need. Most of these guys, they do not spend any time with their people. They have their preacher buddies that are around the country in churches like theirs, and they get away and they talk about crying in their beer, complain about this, complain about that. It is just a little world that they live in, and they lose touch obviously with the most important commodity that any church has: the people.

The second thing a pastor has to be able to do is to regenerate people. You have to be able to get people saved. You have to have an evangelistic lifestyle yourself and develop a philosophy that whatever you do, I do not care if it is volleyball, I do not care if it is going down and passing out hot dogs, I do not care. Whatever you do, the bottom line is conveying the gospel to people and telling them about what Christ has done for them. It takes an ability to be able to penetrate different cultures, to be able to see that soul winning, winning people to Christ, is a lot like fishing. In fact, Jesus said, "I will make you fishers of men."

You guys who are fishermen, and I am not, but I know this much about it: you do not always use the same lure. You do not always use the same bait. I love looking down through the sports section. They have where all the state lakes, they tell you what fish are biting on what and how good it is: fair, poor, great. I always enjoy watching that because it changes. This time they are biting on this, they are biting on that. I do not know what these things are called, but you use this in deep water, you use this in shallow water. In other words, when you go fishing, it used to be you just took a can of worms. You do not take a can of worms now. You get those shiny things that spin, you get things down there that have stripes on them that look like other fish. You get stuff that looks like a frog, you get other little fish and cut them up and you use those for bait. You use liver, you use all kinds of stuff, and you catch different fish on different lures. Well, soul

winning is the same thing. You do not always use the same bait every time you go out to win somebody to Christ. You have to be versatile enough to know that you have to be able to use different things because different cultures, different people, have to have a different strategy. The end game is the same, the gospel, but how you get the gospel to them, how you penetrate where they are, that is the key. The Bible says that our job is to bear fruit, and that in John 15:16, not only do we bear fruit, but we get our fruit to remain. It takes an understanding of a philosophy, a strategy of ministry to be able to do that.

Then the third thing a pastor needs to be able to do, and he needs to do this well, is to motivate. A strong leader will be able to motivate people. He will be able to give them a vision, keep it fresh, keep it alive, through making the Bible, through his preaching, come alive, be able to paint a picture with what he is trying to preach. He needs to preach to where people live, getting them the Word of God, getting them in touch with the things that they really need, the principles that are going to change their life. He does not need to be answering questions that nobody is asking. He needs to understand where his people are, what the needs are, and then be able to motivate them around the Word of God.

No place in the Bible, in the Old Testament, God's people were absolutely, had to have a good leader. When you gave them a great leader like Moses, Joshua, Caleb, they were a great people. When you gave them a lousy leader like Ahab and Jezebel and the rest of that crowd, they were a terrible people. Nobody on this planet ever needed strong leadership in the Old Testament more than the nation of Israel. It carries over in the New Testament. If there is anybody who needs strong leadership today in churches, it is God's church. This is the problem. I look at a lot of goofy things in Christianity that are absolutely worthless. I think that 98% of what goes on in churches today has nothing to do with the Word of God. I think it is a bunch of fluff. I think it is a bunch of goofy stuff. But you look at the people, and I know some of them get caught up in it and all that, but the bottom line is this: it all goes back to the leadership. Your people will let you motivate them to be. If you motivate them to be an idiot, they are going to be an idiot. If you motivate them to be strong and in touch with the Bible, love the book, get into the Word of God, that is what you are going to have. You have to be able to do that. Give them real life illustrations. Not words out of a meaningless message to their lives, but the very words of life that they need. When you are able to see that and understand that, you begin to be able to motivate people.

The fourth thing he needs to do is to accelerate people. A pastor has to know how to take what he has learned, get it to somebody else, so that what has taken him 40 years to learn, he can give it to somebody else a lot quicker. Listen to me. The pastor's job is to take complicated things and make them easy to understand. He does not have some guys that they will take the simplest thing in the world, and by the time they are done with it, you are so confused that you do not even know what they are talking about. You have got to be able to have the ability to take the most complicated things in the Bible and break it down in its most simplistic form: the lowest common denominator, as I call it. Being able to give your people and accelerate them in their growth by taking what God is giving to you and then give it to them on a quicker footing, on a quicker... I understand the Bible says that you have to study to show thyself approved. I know

that you cannot, there is no fast track to the Bible. I get that. I am not saying that. What I am saying, what I have taken 45 plus years of my life to learn, I better have a plan to be able to give it to you a lot quicker. You do that by seeing the needs of your people, seeing what you have, and then learning how to take those things and break them down into pieces that everybody could understand it.

The fifth thing is to elevate people. Encourage them. Edify them. To be able to look at your good qualities even when you still have some not so good qualities. Just pack where you struggle, but see where you really are. I have told you before, most pastors, they stand up at the top of the stairs and the people are down here on three or four levels down, and they will scream at them to get up to where the spiritual level they are. Then they will give them all kinds of grief because the people will stumble up those stairs, not make it up fast enough. When the real job of the pastor is to walk down those stairs and put your hand around them and bring them up one step at a time, whatever it takes, whatever they stumble with, whatever they struggle with, and help them through it.

I was watching a couple of days ago, flipping through the television, and they had some kind of athletic event with little girls who were about, oh, I do not know, probably maybe Maddie's age. They did not look much older than her. They were doing incredible things. The thing that I watched was the high bar. You know, the bar that is up there and it is about nine feet up and it has got a bar across. I watched this little girl, and she was tiny. The coach lifted her up, and she grabbed the bar. When she got moving, I mean, this kid was doing hand flips, standing up, turning around on the bar, swinging back around, pulling her leg back up, going up, standing up straight, coming down through this. When she dismounted, she came up, twirled around, did 17 somersaults, stood up and said, "Hi, Mom," and then hit the ground perfect. I saw that and I thought to myself, you know what? That is what being a pastor is. That is what uplifting people is. See, all I have to do with most of you is lift you up and get your hands on the bar. When that coach lifted her up and she grabbed that bar, you know what that coach did? He got out of the way, and she took over from there. You know what the job of a church is or a pastor is? It is to help lift you up that you get your hands on that bar. When you get your hands on that bar, I am getting out of the way. God is going to, you are going to take, God is going to take you, and you are going to show everybody what you have with the Lord. But you have to be uplifted to do that. You cannot do that by somebody just beating you down all the time. I have seen parents that beat down their kids continually. By the time the kids get to be in their 20s or 30s, they have such a bad self-image of themselves that it is unbelievable. Smart parents will elevate their kids. They will lift their kids up. A smart pastor will learn how to do that. He will raise up a core of leaders that way. He will build the church around them, around those leaders, but he will be continually taking new people, lifting them up, and broadening that base.

The sixth thing, he has to learn to educate people. There are some things about the Bible that you need to know. There are some things about life you need to know. There are some things about Christianity that you need to know. You need to take the blinders off sometime. You need to realize that when you start dealing with the reality of the ministry and Christianity, not everything is always as it seems to be. You need to educate people to be aware of their

surroundings. The thing I love about you is that you have been to other churches, and somebody has gotten up there and preached something that was goofy, and you spotted it just like that. That is because you are aware of your surroundings. You are not, you know, there are some things that are not always right and not always good. There are plenty of things that are good, but you may be able to see the difference between the two. Ninety-nine percent of God's people today are illiterate when it comes to understanding why they believe what they believe. You want to have the funnest time of your life? Just get somebody who blows his stack about some great thing that he believes in and throw him a Bible and have him show you why he believes it.

The seventh thing, this is my favorite by the way, placate people. That means you put up with them. That is showing us. There are so many people that we just like to write off right out of the chute so quickly. I have learned that getting to where I want you to be is a maturing process. I realize that there is an adolescence at being a young kid in Christianity, adolescence. I realize that when a kid grows up and they are four and five, they do stupid things, six or seven. They will do dumb things. You do not throw them out of your family. I hope you do not. You understand that they are going through a process. When they get to be junior high age, oh, it makes horror movies for most of your kids at that point. It makes *The Walking Dead* look mundane. But it is a thing where they are going through a process. You do not throw them out. Well, the maturing process in a person's life is the same thing. Many pastors can look at somebody and all they see is the problems they have. They see how worthless they think they are. When they do not like that person, it just adds to the thing that they look to find wrong. I never look at the wrong in anybody. I may have to deal with the wrong in people, but that is not what I focus on. I may be forced to make a hard line stand with something, but that is not what I focus on. Even when I have got to drop the hammer on somebody because they are stupidly doing things wrong and will not change it, my heart breaks because of the fact even though I see that, I see the potential that they had if they just would really do what they need to do. You have got to be able to help people along. I have certain qualities that I look for in people. Even though a person may be coming up through that adolescence or coming up through that junior high years of Christianity, I want to look beyond that. I want to push that aside, and I want to see if I see those core values.

II. The Fundamental Job: Duplication

Then the last thing, this is the most important, and this really launches us into our message today. Not only a pastor has to have the ability to duplicate people. This one is the fundamental job of every Christian, every church, is to duplicate ourselves in others. The bottom line of New Testament Christianity is simply moms and dads duplicating in their children what they have in Christ. Then once the family gets set, the kids raise up, the kids are in ministry with you. They are doing everything that you are doing. They love the book. They love God. They love church. They love everything about it. Then you take that and then you invest that in the lives of other people through your church. That is the way it works.

We have a CD machine back here. I do not know, I am going to guess here. Scott, how many CDs did that machine we have make at one time? Nine. Nine for fruit bearing. I love it. Could

you imagine when you are standing in line back there and we only have one CD and we have got to run it off one at a time? We invested in a machine that does nine CDs at one time. You know what? When you get your church to the place that just as we can duplicate a CD nine at a time, when you get 25 people in your church duplicating themselves in other people, it is not one at a time. That is just one person over here. When you get 40 people in your church that are duplicating themselves in somebody else's lives, when you get 50 people that are duplicating themselves in somebody else's lives and it is just the one, that is when you are going to get something done. That is when it gets to the place where you are now really going someplace and doing some things for the Lord.

But I need to tell you this. These eight things become the essence of a man's ministry to set a high bar, a high standard for his people. His success as a pastor honestly rises and falls on these eight things. But you just do not grow into these. I did not learn these because I just woke up smart one day or found a book. You do not just grow into these. These things are handed down from generation to generation in solid Bible-believing churches that are not around very much today.

2 Timothy 2:2

The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

History is a list of the transfer of truth from spiritual father to spiritual son as he duplicated himself, from a woman to another lady as she duplicated herself and what she learned all down through the history of the church. In the Bible, you see examples of Paul, what he did with Timothy. You realize that when Paul wrote to young Timothy, he wrote to him after he was in the ministry. He had spent the time giving him everything that he needed, and now he writes him 1 and 2 Timothy to keep the instructions going. Titus, Philemon, they were men that he duplicated himself with. It just does not happen because you go to a Bible college someplace and somebody tells you, you do not learn it that way. You learn it because when you are in a New Testament Bible-believing church who follows the line of tradition of teaching and believing the book and the principles that have been handed down from generations to the great men of God who understood it, who preached it, who believed it and built the core, a character, a preacher today and he gets duplicated and passed down. That is how you do it. That is exactly how you do it.

1 Timothy 4:11

These things command and teach.

Paul told Timothy. The goal I have for you as this church are the same goals that my father in the Lord had for me. I learned them well. I learned early on that God had put that man in my life to show me what I did not know. I never got to the place like some of God's young men do today that I ever thought I knew more about it than he did. I realized that I was the student and he was the teacher. I realized that God had put him in my life.

John 1:6-7

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

In my life, there was a man sent from God whose name was Mel. He was not that light, but he was sent to bear witness of that light that through him all men might believe. Wherever you are at in this church, if you are by my side in ministry and you are working and you are doing the things of God and you are duplicating yourself in others, I am going to tell you one fundamental thing about you. You got there because somebody invested their life in you. That is the only reason you are here today. It is the only reason you are doing anything today. Somebody took the time to duplicate themselves in you because that is what it needs to be. Mel got them from his father in the Lord, and so on it goes down through history. You know the importance of a man of God or a woman of God in your life that duplicates themselves and gives you what you need.

Even after I got into ministry, as I said a moment ago, how Timothy got the letters from Paul after he was in the past, I do not know. I would have never made it into ministry. I would have never made it into ministry after I came to Kansas City if I would not have had my father in the Lord to fall back on. Not only did he teach me the things I had when I was with him, but I always had a place, and boy, if I thought for a second that I understood the ministry before I got to Kansas City, my eyes were open just two days after I was here, and I always had him to fall back on. I always had him to say, "Hey man, I am sorry to call you again, but what do I do with this? How do I handle this?" It was an ongoing process that I realized that I never got to the point where I ever let him get out of my world even years later. I never let it get to the point where I always respected what he was and what God did with him in my life, and I realized the importance that I would not be, if I am anywhere today, I would not be where I am at today. I would not have what I have today in my family, in my wife, in my kids, and in you. I would not have what I have today if it was not because a long time ago when my father died and went home to be with the Lord and I was pretty much on my own, some man took me in and duplicated himself into my life. That is the job of this church. Not the job of every one of you here today. That is the job that God saved you for.

III. The Loss of Truth and the Church's Compromise

About two or three years ago, the last World War I veteran died, and we have forgotten the sacrifices that those men made in the war to end all wars. The World War II vets, they are dying at 1200 men and women a day, and we have forgotten. I remember reading a book on World War I, it was probably one of the best books that I ever read, and it was a tour of the World War I battlefields, and it was done in the 80s, and it showed you the towns and the places, and remember now World War II was fought right on top of that, many of the places were obliterated. But I love the title of the book because this guy was trying to show the war that was the most horrific war in the history of the world, and he wanted people to remember, and the title of the book was simply **Before Endeavors Fade**.

Pretty soon the World War II vets will all be gone, and we have already forgotten. Who knows what, who, and what, and where Monte Cassino was? Who knows what happened at Guadalcanal or Iron Bottom Sound? Who knows anything about Bataan, Corregidor, or even the Bataan Death March? They mean nothing to people today, and the World War, and the Korean War, and the Vietnam boys, they are in their 60s and their 70s and they are in their 80s, and there is a time coming when they are all gone that we will lose the value of the lessons that all of those men made and a sacrifice for. When the World War II vets go, this country will lose the greatest commodity that it ever had, the greatest generation that kept the real spirit of America alive by and through their sacrifice. You see it already, you see it already, the decay and the eroding of the American way of life, how she once was great. Now she is a shambles.

I will tell you something else. We have also lost the Billy Sundays, the J. Frank Norris's, the Bud Robinsons, the B.R. Lekens, the Bob Jones Seniors, the Sam Jones, the Dallas Billingtons, the Mel Sobakas, the R.G. Lees, the J. Vernon McGee's, and the Oliver Greens. They are all gone now. We see the same thing in Christianity with the men that God used, and those men who held the line and taught the truth and handed it down are now all gone, and they are forgotten. Now the absolute goal and purpose to us and for us who have the truth is to reproduce it, to duplicate it in other people's lives, or it, my friend, in time will become and completely disappear. That is where it is headed. That is what is wrong with Christianity. Just as the sacrifice of America was lost from World War I, the sacrifice from our boys in Europe, in Japan, in the theater, in the Far East, it is all gone now because the old boys who held the line and preached the book are all gone. They have been forgotten, and the truths have been forgotten, and Christianity stands as the prophecy in Proverbs says that we have lost the landmarks, and now we are in the fields of the fatherless. All you believe stuff, but you do not know why you believe it. Well, that is what God has called each of us to do.

Now this next section in Proverbs shows us how to keep it going. It is why it is so invaluable. This is what churches are called to do. This is the single fundamental goal of my church, any church: reproduce ourselves in others. Bring that fruit and make sure that fruit remains. The job of the church is not to build great buildings. I do not know where that came in. I know where it came in because once that generation was gone and we forgot what our goals were, once it ceased to be passed down from person to person to person, then you come up one morning in Christianity and you think the goal is to build big churches. No, the goal is to build strong people. What good is it that you have a 65 million dollar building that will hold 20,000 people? They do not even know what they believe. Excuse me. If you have not figured out yet, today is going to be a rough one.

We are so foolish as Christians. I am afraid that that biblical system of handing down truth has long been abandoned today. Like almost everything else in Christianity and the Bible, it has been replaced by a worldly system, a non-biblical process. Oh, still connected around churches, still connected around the Bible. It is just nothing is true anymore. The Bible has ceased to be a coffee table emblem, but not a final absolute authority. You know, there was a time when the word separate simply meant what it says. We as the body of believers, or the body of Christ, at salvation, were separated from the world, but it is not true today. Christianity now has become

one with the world. It is a fact of history repeating itself. You would think we would learn the lessons. One of the seven laws in the Bible is the law of repetitive history. If man does not learn the mistakes of history, then he continues to make the mistakes in the future. In church history, we see the exact same thing. You would think we would learn from it.

Revelation 2:12-17 talks about the church of Pergamos. Now I do not have to go into a lot of detail on this because you have been around here for any length of time. You know that Revelation chapter 2 and 3 breaks the 2,000 years of church history down into seven legitimate periods of church history. They coincide and line up with history exactly. You know that when you get to Revelation 2:12-17, you are in the church at Pergamos. Now that is the third church in church history. If you go back in chapter 2, you had Ephesus. That is approximately Acts chapter 20, 60 AD up to about 150. Then the second church was Smyrna. That is about 150 up to 325. Then we come to Pergamos, about 325 up to the beginning of the dark ages in 500, and we go through several more churches. The name Pergamos means "much marriage." In history, it is a time when the church hit the skids for the first time. It did it twice. The church went into apostasy twice, just like Israel went into captivity twice. The second time Israel went into captivity, it is going to get shut down by the second coming of Christ. The second time the church went into captivity, it is going to get shut down by the rapture of the church. But we do not have time to get into all that.

We found in Revelation chapter 2 that the first church, Ephesus, Ephesus means "fully repurposed," was a church that was shut up by the apostles and ready to go. But we find in that verse an anonymous tone that sets the whole theater for what is about to happen. Because the Bible says that they left their first love. They did not lose it. They left it. The first love was their Word of God. Right now is when we begin to see the creeping in in Bible Christianity, what you see today. We begin to see it fall apart. We begin to see heresy come in, bad teachings come in. By the time you get to the Pergamos church period, the church now has fully embraced the world even though it is still a church. It has brought in worldly concepts. It has brought in everything that the world is. The church of Jesus Christ has married itself to the world. That is where we are at today. Simply trying to make the things of our flesh, simply trying to make the things of the world be compatible with the things of the Spirit of God. Do you know how absolutely impossible that is?

We have now seen the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets in Isaiah 5:20 where Isaiah said that there will be a day when evil will be called good and good will be called evil. We now see the prophecy of Isaiah 4 where he said there is no truth, there is no mercy, and there is coming a time when there will be no knowledge of God. We are seeing the prophecy of Isaiah in Isaiah 59:14 or 57:14 where he says in prophecy that there will be a day when truth will be fallen in the streets.

I use this as an illustration because it is a time when Eve last week was cutting her client's hair. She does hair. As Eve's bubbly little personality is, she engages people in talking, and they see this guy is a Christian, and he goes to a large church in Lee's Summit, and I would not tell you what it is. That is not important because it could be any church, and just about is any church today. He was telling her about a new men's ministry in their church. Eve, always looking for an

opportunity to better what we do here, was all ears. She said, "Well, what new ministry is this?" He said, "Well, it is called Beer and a Bible." Amen. Good recovery, Bob. Beer and a Bible. It is a thing where now they get a bunch of guys together, men's ministry, go to a bar, all get a beer, study their Bibles, and his reasoning, I understand his reasoning, is, "Well, we go into where the sinners are." I have no problem with going where the sinners are. My problem is you doing what sinners do. Eve asks the question. She says, "Well, let me ask you a question." First she said, "What?" Pretty close. Pretty close. Then she says, "Well, let me ask you a question. That is the stupidest thing I ever heard. What do you do with someone who is an alcoholic?" And his answer was, "Oh, that is a very good question."

Now I do not know who put the ministry together. It probably comes down to chain of command because stuff like that usually flows downhill. You prove my point. You are smarter about it than the pastor is. You thought it through in what, 30 seconds. He still has not figured it out. Do you not know that would be problematic? Where do you draw the line? You know someday in Missouri, not too distant future, they are going to legalize marijuana? You know what, once you open the door to your flesh and make it equal with the Bible, do you know where it is going to wind up going? You do not, Romans says you cannot mess with the flesh, you cannot play with the flesh, you have to crucify the flesh, and you certainly can never get the flesh and the Spirit of God together. That is where we are at today. I am not criticizing anybody. I am just telling you the truth. I am telling you the truth.

But I have got to tell you, that is a good name for this new ministry. I said it is very clever, whoever thought of it, because there was a time less than 100 years ago, proves my point, there was a time less than 100 years ago when the Bible and beer could not be in the same universe together in a church. But we have forgotten. You know what we forgot? We have forgotten in the 1920s who Billy Sunday was and what he did, and why. We have lost it. We are in the fields of the fatherless. We have lost the concept of separation. We failed to hand down from generation to generation the absolute truth. Pastors have failed in the eight concepts that they need to be in, and now we produce churches, Christians who have absolutely no idea what it means to be separate from the world. Somebody today has to hold the line. We have got the ox cart mentality in ministry, like back in Samuel, 2 Samuel, where the ark was supposed to be carried one way, but they decided a new way to minister is when they put it on an ox cart and Uzzah got killed. You do not replace the way God says the ministry has to run.

But here is the problem. We do not like evolution. If you go into these churches and you say, "How many of you people believe in evolution?" Oh, you would get a whole busload of people. The whole church would be against it. Yeah, right up to when it comes to your Bible. You do not believe in Darwin's evolution, but you believe your Bible keeps evolving through a new translation. You are no better than Darwin was. Now, when you take that position, whether you know you are taking it or not, you will wind up in trouble.

Matthew 5:13

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

We are the salt of the earth. We were to be the preserving agent in this world through the Bible and its principles and our separation to keep the world focused on the Bible. But the Bible says when the salt loses its savor, because the salt has lost its savor, the church has lost its savor, the word of God.

IV. Antipas: A Model of Standing Against the World

Now, I have got to get this, and now we are going to crank it up a little bit. In the Pergamos Church period, there was a man. Let me say this, there will always be a man. I do not care how dark it gets, I do not care how bleak it gets, there was not a time in the darkest part of the nation of Israel that God did not have His man. There is not a time, no matter how bad Christianity is, and it is bad, that God does not have His man. That is because the job of the church is to keep building them.

Now look at Revelation 2:13, right in the middle of Pergamos, "much marriage."

Revelation 2:13

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Now this guy is a hero of mine. He is one of my favorite heroes in the Bible. Now he will not be most people's hero today, I need to tell you that. But he is my hero. He is not talked about anywhere else in scripture. He is unknown as to who he is in church history, there are no references to him anywhere. But he is our example of God's man who stood for the truth in a Christianity in Pergamos when it was busily getting married to the world. His name says it all, Antipas, which simply means "against everything." Here is a guy that nobody knows, but he represents the millions of unsung heroes down through history that when the big time boys fell into apostasy, men like him stood against it. He is negative, totally negative toward the marriage of the church to the world. I told you God's people would not like him. He rocks the boat. He flushes phony Christians out like a good bird dog does a covey of quail. Oh, I know who he is now. Here is what you and I ought to be. When I grow up, I want to be just like him. My favorite criticism about myself I hear all the time is that Bob is negative. Amen. You pray for me that I will get worse. I will tell you right now, no bones about it. I am against everything in Christianity that goes against that book. I will tell you something else, you can always tell where a real Christian is, where he or she is with the book and the Word of God by what they are against. What are you against this morning? Oh, I know you are against the people who stand for something. Any church, Bible-believing church, will only be as strong as the stand that it takes against what is wrong.

I read a book years ago by an old English divine, and he said the job of every Christian, the job of every Christian, no matter what age he lives in, is to find out what the prevailing spirit is in the age for which he lives and then take everything he has and go against that spirit. Incredible. When there is nothing wrong anymore, when there is no sin anymore, when everything is okay, when you are married to the world, then you have nothing to stand for. When you have nothing

to stand for, you will fall for everything. My goal for this church, my goal for you, is simple: to provide you with a base of fundamental truth about God and that book and then build you on that truth the rest of your life to reproduce and duplicate yourself with that truth in others. Some will love it and stay, some will hate it and leave.

I have never understood, and there are some things in life that I am confused about, really. Why God's people would claim to have gotten saved but then openly hate the things that God saved them for and get married to the world when the Bible clearly says we are to be married to Christ. They never do anything for God. You know, there is something really wrong with Christianity today.

Luke 6:46

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

That was a question. I think he is confused. What follows in Proverbs 11:23-31, that was just the introduction. It was the process of being a successful Christian. I read a book years ago by Wilbert Pickering. He is long dead now. But he wrote a book called **The Identity of the New Testament Church**. This is what has failed a church today. They have lost their identity. Remember now a successful Christian is one who gets saved and then does what God saved him for in his life. If you want to be an Antipas, here is the greatest section in the Bible that shows you the inner strength of a guy like him.

I love the movie **Spartacus**. I do not think Spartacus was even a real guy, but Kirk Douglas played the original classic. You know how the story goes. The Roman Empire is oppressing everybody. Spartacus is a slave, and he leads a slave revolt, builds a slave army, and he kicks the crap out of the Roman Empire. But at the end of the movie, he gets betrayed, and he gets almost wiped out. His whole army gets destroyed. There are about 300 people left. They have got him all surrounded, and finally they captivate him alive, and Spartacus is the one taken alive. They want Spartacus. The Roman Emperor hates Spartacus. He wants to kill Spartacus. He wants to do terrible things to his body. He wants to just rip him apart from them. So he goes up there with all these 300 guys or 200, whatever it was, all there, soldiers, everyone, loves Spartacus, and he says, "I will let you go and send you home to your families if you just give me Spartacus." You know what? Spartacus is alive. He is right there in that crowd. He obviously thinking, "I am not going to make these people pay." So he stands up and he says, "I am Spartacus." Guy next to him stands up and says, "I am Spartacus." Guy over here says, "I am Spartacus." By the time they were done, all 300 people had stood up and said, "I am Spartacus." You know what happens to happen in a church like this? Everybody just stand up and say, "I am Antipas! I am against everything!" That is what it takes. That is what it takes.

V. Proverbs 11:23-31 and the Power of Desire

Let us read Proverbs 11:23-31 here.

Proverbs 11:23-31

23 The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

27 He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: and the fool shall be servant to the wise in heart.

30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

Lord, if You can help us today, Lord, if there is ever a message that any church needs, it is this message. Lord, if it is a message that we need today, it is this message because we too, as hard as we try and as focused as we try to be, it is so easy in all that we have to put up with all day long that we lose our edge and lose our focus. Let this message pull us back online. Let this message sharpen us up again and let us never forget the great sacrifices that were made for us to have this book to preach the Bible, and let us commit in our heart to duplicate ourselves in other people that keep alive, at least in this church, keep it alive as it goes back down through history up into the future until Jesus comes for us. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for His sake we ask it. Amen.

Now I think to me this is one of the greatest places in all the Bible, tucked away in Proverbs chapter 11, that lays out the eight areas of my life that are key to success as a child of God. You come down through here, there are eight things I want to talk about. I am not going to get through them today, but we will when we get down through it all. Meeting people through the process of building yourself first then reproducing it in others. That should be the number one goal of this church. That is my number one goal for you, for the church that we have here, to help you do that. That is what God saved us for.

Now verse 23 says, "The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath." If there is one element that sets God's people apart into two specific categories, it is that single word. Here is the key word we want to talk about this morning. It is the word "desire." Desire. If there is any one word that separates God's people out from God's people who have a desire for the things of God and God's people who have no desire for the things of God, it will be that word desire. Let me be clear, I am not going to be talking about a convenient Christianity today. That is what everybody wants. That is what everybody has to have. Your desire is to have a Christian life that there is no trouble in. Your desire is to have a Christian life where your comfort zone never gets bumped around. Your desire is to have a nice life where nothing ever

happens bad in your life. That is what Christianity wants. That is what preachers want to preach to. You do not need a convenient Christianity. You need a sacrificial Christianity. You need a Christianity in your life that you understand that you are a living sacrifice for the one who became the sacrifice on Calvary's Cross for you. That is what you need to get to.

When a person desires something, he has a passion for it. A drive that keeps him moving after that desire.

Psalms 38:9

Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

Proverbs 13:12

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

Proverbs 13:19

The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

Isaiah 26:8

Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

A great question to ask yourself through this message today as we come through it: What is your desire today? With who and with what? Ask yourself if your Christianity is a convenient Christianity or a sacrificial Christianity. I have had to ask myself all week as I put this together. You only have to do it for the next 20 minutes or so. You see, desire for the things of God is what sets God's people into two very clear categories. The verse says, "The desire of the righteous is only good," not only to obtain good, but to be good and to do good. In building strong Christian men and women, families that in these last days can duplicate and reproduce themselves in other Christians, other families, if you look around in our church and you see Lincoln, Nebraska, Wichita, and the people that we work with here, that is exactly what we are doing. For a man or a woman to move up the spiritual levels to get to a place of real leadership with others, there has to be a real, to be able to take a real piece of the work. It takes a desire.

I can lay out the Bible for you, and I have. I can teach you church history and how it relates to you, and I have. I can lay out types, dispensations, character studies. I can teach you how to preach, how to teach, how to minister to others, and I have. But I can never, I cannot or never will I be able to teach you how to have a desire for the things of God. That has to come with you. You have to decide at some point in your life when you see and understand and 100% give yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ and leave the world behind, leave your friends behind, and sometimes even leave your family behind to make that sacrificial Christianity in your life.

You know, desire in our lives is so many things. It will develop itself once you have the desire to be what God wants you to do, once you have the burning desire that nothing is going to stop you. It will develop itself into so many aspects that it goes back to the central theme of your desire because desire will be passion, desire will be motivation, desire will be steadfastness, desire will

be courage, desire will be determination, it will be focus, it will be commitment, it will be endurance, it will be purpose, it will be the ability to make really hard decisions and choices when an easy way out is just to compromise. Desire is the number one ingredient that I look for in leadership. A desire for God and the things of God that will be the core value of a leader. It is vital in ministry and doing the work of God.

So many of God's people get so sidetracked so easily. We see it all the time. It is easy to say, "Well, they are just lazy." We see somebody over here and say, "Well, it is a lack of commitment." We say, "Well, it is a lack of discipline." "Well, they do not really have a structure in their life." "Well, it is a lack of wanting to understand." You can take all those things and you can put them in one word. It is a lack of desire. When you desire the things of God, nobody will stop you. But I have seen some of God's people never finish anything that they start. I have had people come to me and say, "Oh, I want to be discipled. Oh, disciple me. I never had a fair shot. Please disciple me." And I will say, "I will disciple you." Three lessons in, they are gone. You have dealt with people. "Oh, fix my problem. Help me with this. Help me with that." Once they are faced with a real problem and they have to face the real desire, they are gone. They are gone. I have had people say, "Oh, I want to disciple somebody. I want to disciple somebody." So I give him somebody. Three lessons in. You cannot find him when a person has not heard from him. Desire. When there is no desire, there is no commitment. There is no passion. The things of God get easier replaced in our lives.

Some of you here today, bless your hearts and I love you. You will hear this message. You will get all fired up. You will say, "I am going to be that. Boy, that is me. This is my time. I am going to do it." And you will go out of here with your rear end on fire, and you will have a flame out by Wednesday. Because it is a convenient Christianity, not a sacrificial Christianity. A strong Christian, a true leader, will be identified by his or her desire to be the all that he or she can be for God. Listen, desire will keep you focused on the goals of ministry when chaos descends in the midst of ministry. And brother, it will. There will be times when it seems like the whole ceiling has fallen in when you are trying to do something. But your desire is what will keep you focused. Even in the ministry, when you make a mistake, we all make mistakes. It is that desire for the things of God that will keep you from staying down, keep you from making another mistake, to compound the last mistake. "The desire of the righteous is only good."

I will tell you something else. Desire will separate you from people who have no desire.

Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

A convenient Christianity will never be able to abide alongside a sacrificial Christianity. If you do not get anything else I said, take that home with you. A person with a convenient Christianity will never get along with you who has a sacrificial Christianity. The desire to do good will cause you some issues with people, God's people in your life. The verse says, "but the expectation of the wicked is wrath." You will have other Christians in your life who do not care about the things of God, do not have a sacrificial Christianity. They have a convenient Christianity, and you know what? They expect you to be just like them. That is their expectation. When you will not or you

do not, you will see how fast your relationship disintegrates. You are either going to fulfill the expectation that God has for you or you are going to fulfill the expectation that other people have for you. It is just that simple. It is just that simple.

Desire is a number one category that sets a real Christian apart from the phony ones. It will separate you from your friends, and it will sometimes separate you from your family. There are some great lessons on dealing with family issues in the Bible and the ministry when you want to serve God with a desire and other family members do not. Jesus experienced the same thing. He had some of His own brothers and sisters who would not believe that He was the Son of God. He told you in Matthew chapter 10 that your desire to follow Him is to be a family. Father against son, daughter against mother. People look at that and they say, "Why does that have to be? Why is it that way?" Let me explain it to you. Here is the problem fundamentally. You may be of the same blood, but you are not of the same spirit. You cannot get a convenient Christianity or a God-given relationship. You cannot get a convenient Christianity alongside a sacrificial Christianity if you stay up all night and try to do it. It just cannot be done. Somebody says blood is thicker than water. That is the old phrase we have all heard all our life. It is true that the world just changed it around because in the Bible, blood is the blood of Christ. Water is your physical birth. Taking a stand for the things of God should always override the things of God. It should always override the things of your family when they are not of the same spirit. But that comes because of your desire and their lack of desire.

Listen, when a Christian refuses to do right, whether it is friend or family, and you desire God and the things of God, you make them look bad. I have had people who left this church who left some family members in our church. They did not like this, they did not like me, they did not like that, they did not like that. The greatest deterrent to their argument is part of their family still staying in the church and still growing, still moving, they are still ministering, and they are not. You know how that is like a big hairball in their throat. Have you ever had a hairball in your throat? If you have got a cat or a dog, try it this afternoon. Just mix it up. It sticks. You cannot get it up. You cannot get it out. It just chokes you. When you have a desire to serve God and somebody else does not, it just sticks in their throat. They are going to have a problem with you. They just cannot understand why you can continue to grow and minister and work with people and be so happy in a church that they could not be happy and successful in. The answer is simple. Desire. Desire.

I had a young man here, oh, six or seven months ago. He is here this morning, and I will not embarrass him in any way, shape, or form, but he called me on the phone, came, talked to me one time. His family wanted him to do something that was still—it was not a sin, but it was outside what the Bible taught in another church. He struggled because it was something that went against every value system that we taught here, and he knew what the Bible said. He knew. It was not a question of what I know is right or wrong. It was a question, "What do I do? Should I do it? Should I not?" I just played it cool and backed off because I like to see when you are in those scenarios how you do it. He took the right choice. He made the right decision. But it caused a ruffle of flurries in his family. But you know what? I have always loved that young man, and I have always thought he was a great character, but his stock went up about 20 points because all

by himself he decided he was going to do what the Bible said over what religion wanted him to do. You know why? Because he had a desire. A desire. A desire.

"We hate your Bible. We hate your church. We hate your pastor. But we like you. So let us bond together." Try it sometime. I had a lady one time, loved our church, loved coming, had a husband. He was a nice guy. I liked him. I think he liked me. But he sure hated my messages, my preaching. He refused to come to church. He wanted her to go to another church. She said, "I am not," and they fought about it for a long time. Finally she said, "Look, here is the deal. I will leave that church. I will go wherever you want to go, but you have got to do one thing." Saliva coming out of his mouth. "What is that?" "Tell me one thing that Bob preaches that is wrong." He thought. He says, "Well, that is the problem. Nothing he preaches is wrong. I just do not like it." There you are. There you are. I got him a website where he wanted to sign up to be with the Taliban. I think he is over in the Middle East someplace right now.

Hey, whenever in life you as a Christian will go or do for God, it will always come back and depend on one thing, your issue, your desire to do good. For a man like Antipas to be against everything in time, in his time of Christianity, one of the most terrible times in all of church history, but exactly like today. The church throwing out its first love and then marrying itself to the world, beer and a Bible. Yet he is a role model for all of us of what it takes to be God's man today. He makes me look like a liberal. The great unknown unsung heroes of his day doing what he knew the Bible said in the face of a Christianity that had lost its way completely. He never gave up. He did not quit. He never complained. He certainly never lost his focus. He certainly was not a coward. He never put his tail between his legs and compromised. He just stayed with it because his Christianity was sacrificial, not convenient. He had a desire to do good, and his prayer obviously was, "Lord, all my desire is before Thee." I could give you a list today down to the history of the first, second century. Dante, Novatius, Manet, Peter Waldo, all were men of his character. That when the things even got worse, they had a desire and stayed with the book. I guarantee you, he lost his friends, probably lost his family. His stand, ultimately, he paid the ultimate price, and it cost him his life.

Revelation 2:13

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Now, here is the thing I want you to see. "Slain among you." God's people killed him. In his day, God's people killed him physically. Today, they will just assassinate your character spiritually. But it is the same crowd. My, my, what a verse. He did not as a Christian just play church, pretend he was okay, make Christianity work around his lifestyle, marry his Christianity to the world. He stayed separate from the world. In verse 13, he took the fight right to where Satan dwelleth. In the church, in his Christianity, in Revelation 2:13, it says, "where Satan's seat was." He took it right, he took the fight right to him. He went and somebody just stood over here and said, "Oh, I do not, you know, this person has a problem in our church, but let us go to lunch together. Let us just bond. Oh, you do not like our Bible, you do not like my preacher, you do not

like this. But let us just all go kumbaya together." That is not him, that is you. That is you. When it was wrong, it was wrong. When it was against the word of God, it was against the word of God. His Christianity was not a convenience like most of God's people's are. It was sacrificial. A sacrifice means you have to lose some things. But God's people are willing to lose them today. He took the fight right where Satan dwells. I guarantee you, you open up your mouth and you put the word of God to those people. It will be your last lunch, but you are gutless. He paid the ultimate price because the desire in his heart took him all the way home.

Oh, desire, desire, the desire that we have to do what God wants. It will take you everywhere. It will do everything. It will separate you from everybody. If you are anything today, if you are ever going to be anything, if you are ever going to do anything, if you are ever going to duplicate yourself and put yourself into people, it is going to take the desire. That one word should stir the heart of every red-blooded child of God to take his stand. It ought to be the battle cry of every blood-washed child of God, male or female. You are saying these last days, "You know what? I am Antipas! I am Antipas! I am Antipas!" Because we as God's child, we are in one camp or the other. You either have a Christianity that is convenient for you, or you will have a sacrificial Christianity where you make whatever sacrifice you have to make to get the job done. When God calls you to duplicate and replicate yourself in people, that is what you do. But you have to be something first. You have to have something first. You have to have something that will carry you through that you are going to hand down to them. It is desire. It is desire. Your desire to do good.

Well, that was verse 1. Next week we will move into the rest of them and come down through them. But you can see, this is the message in the day we live of what we need. Please do not forget, this week, take time to sign up this morning back there. Remember, we need hot dogs and buns, and we need Easter eggs and candy, all that stuff. Help us with that all this week.