

# Proverbs 17

Sunday 10/30/2016

Our kids are something else. You ought to see them in action. Well, you just did, but I mean, you ought to see them. If you have your Bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn to Proverbs chapter 17.

Last week, we took some time, and as we do from time to time coming through Proverbs, there will be some passages that are just invaluable in helping us put everything, concepts that we can understand. We saw an incredible passage on the wicked man. We know this refers to the Antichrist, or any wicked man in general, but in Proverbs, it specifically points to the Antichrist, and how he uses and has used down through history, bribery to get everything he wants to stay in power and to control, to get control of the whole world.

Inspirationally, we talked about that being the world system. We talked about it in politics, certainly in business, and unfortunately, we talked about it in the religion of the world and what people do in churches and Christianity. Doctrinally, as I have already stated, we know that it is the Antichrist and how he has positioned himself down through history. We talked about the seven garment changes that really all history can be built around.

Then Thursday night, Josh Gibbs had called in a question. Of course, they cannot be here because of their two twins who cannot yet leave the house. So they are pretty much locked down and Skyping in or coming through YouTube. He asked a question about the eight manifestations of Christ. I showed you how that, not only down through history, did the devil manifest himself seven ways to do what he did, but Christ manifested himself eight ways. We went through that and I showed you how that all works.

Of course, the key to getting all of this has been really the theme of the book of Proverbs. I have been hitting it hard and will continue to do so, simply getting to the place in your life where you get God's understanding and God's wisdom. Really, this is my ministry for you, to you. This is what I want to accomplish in every one of your lives. Obviously, I am not going to do it in every one of your lives; it will not happen. But it would be my goal in a perfect world to get everyone to the place where you utilize God's wisdom and understanding in your life every day, in every circumstance and situation you find yourself in, to be able to figure things out. Simply, it is the ability to see what is really happening around you so you do not get deceived.

Most of us live in a world that does not exist. We do that because we are outside the framework of the Bible. We think that situations are okay when they are not. Many people think that the coming election is going to make the country a better place, and it is not, no matter who wins. We get the idea that things are not as bad as they seem, and the truth of the matter is they are worse than they seem. It comes down to you having the ability to be able to see something, understand something, and have the wisdom of God to see what is really going on.

## I. The Importance of God's Wisdom and Understanding

There are two books in the Bible that I really rely on a lot. I hesitate to say—I almost said it—that they are my two favorite books in the Bible, because that changes on a daily basis. But there are certainly two books that I rely on a lot. One of them is the Book of Judges. The Book of Judges is one of the most insightful books that you have ever found in your life. The Book of Judges mirrors where we are living today. The Book of Judges is a period of time when some of the goofiest stuff you ever saw in all of the Bible happens. It is a thing where it just seems that everything that is going on is completely contrary to what God intended it to be. It is an incredible book. You see God's people just getting into one mess after the other, and it is just an absolute debacle of what transpires with the nation of Israel during this time.

As you read through that, you begin to see that that book mirrors the time that you and I are living in. The Book of Judges is a great book in a practical way to show you and me the Laodicean Church age that we are living in. The whole Book of Judges can be understood and grasped in one verse at the end of the book where it simply says that the problem with Israel and the problem with the Book of Judges is that there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

*Judges 21:25*

*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*

The problem in Christianity today is we have no final authority. There is no king. Every church, every Christian, everybody out there doing their own thing in the name of Jesus Christ, in the name of Christianity. God's people, because they do not have any wisdom, they do not have any understanding, they get caught up in it. I deal with people at times who are fed up with churches. I deal with people at times who are fed up with pastors. I deal with people at times who are fed up with Christianity. I understand that. But you know why you are fed up with them, why you are mad, why you are angry? Because you got deceived. And you know why you got deceived? Because you never got the wisdom and understanding of God to be able to see what is real and what is not. You cannot blame what is wrong with the world when it affects you if you did not do what you needed to do to find out what is real and what is not. That is your responsibility as a child of God. Your responsibility is to get the wisdom of God, the understanding of God, so that in any scenario you are faced with in life, anything you see, you understand it from God's standpoint.

The other book in the Bible that is a favorite of mine is the book of Esther. The book of Esther is the only book in the Bible where God is not mentioned. There is no reference to the Lord, there is no reference to God, there is no reference to the Trinity, there is no reference to God doing anything. It stands as a book in the Bible, again, one of the weirdest books that you have ever seen. It is a book where, seemingly, God is doing nothing because He is not mentioned anywhere in the book. But in reality, when you study the book and you see it, God is behind the scenes orchestrating every event, doing everything, getting ready to get those Jews back to that land where He wanted them to be.

You find in the book of Esther a type of Christ, or the guy by the name of Haman. Haman's goal is to wipe out the Jews. You find in the book of Esther a wedding in a king's garden, seven days

and seven nights. You find all of the things that show you and I that the Book of Judges is a picture of the Laodicean church period where they have no authority and everybody is just making it up as they go along. The Book of Esther, however, shows you the Laodicean church age where, in a Christianity that looks like God is doing nothing and is so screwy and messed up, God is behind the scenes orchestrating every event for the Jew to get back in the land, for the Antichrist to show up, and for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are incredible books. That is wisdom and understanding. That is the ability to take the Word of God, let it do what it does in your life, and then look at life around you and understand what is going on.

I showed you the devil's plan last week. I showed you how in the Old Testament he ran the world through nations, and in the New Testament, he ran the world through religion. He has a church with his own Bible. I laid out the changing of his garments to switch from the Old Testament scenario to a New Testament one, and I told you, nobody even caught it. The great historians of the world, the great theologians of the world, every one of them missed it, every one of them. Of course, you will never get it without the wisdom and understanding that can really decipher it all for you.

I gave you a great verse in Job 41:13 when it talked about who can discover the face of his garment.

*Job 41:13*

*Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle?*

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 says:

*2 Corinthians 11:14-15*

*And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.*

*Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

We are totally oblivious today to the devil. I guarantee you, no matter what Bible college you go to, no matter what church you go to, wherever you want to hang your hat and you want to learn your Bible, you would be hard pressed to find any classes, any teaching, any Bible studies that lay out for you the devil's work down through church history. It is like he died. It is like he went to Panama. It is like he went on vacation someplace. The most active person in the history of the world, other than God, against Christianity, is the devil himself. When we look at that thing, we just think like he is non-existent.

God's wisdom and understanding will give you an incredible insight into what really is going on. Not only in the past—that is history—not only in the present—that is the things that are going on around you—but in the future—that is the things that are coming your way. This is why the Bible is laid out, and I talk about it all the time, that there are three applications to your Bible.

1. There is a historical application. It happened in history.
2. There is an inspirational application for you today, right now as you are living.

3. There is a doctrinal application that deals with the things that are coming your way.

Now today, with that being said, we are going to finish up Proverbs 17, and we will close out with some, I think, good practical material for us to be able to use in ministry. I want to close out Proverbs 17 by reading verses 25 through 28. Here is what it says:

*Proverbs 17:25-28*

*A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.*

*Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity.*

*He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.*

*Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.*

Now Proverbs 17:25 says, and this is where we want to start, "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him." You will find in the book of Proverbs, per se, a lot of verses dealing with a son that will not do what is right. In fact, if you wanted to start through the Bible, the list is endless. I am coming through the Word of God. You had Jacob's sons; he had twelve boys, they had all kinds of problems. Samson probably was the best disgrace of a son you could ever want anywhere in the Word of God. You remember going back there talking about Eli and Samuel, and his boys were a mess. Samuel's boys who took over after Eli, his kids were a mess. David, who was a man after God's own heart, his kids were a mess. Solomon here, his own son Rehoboam, he is a mess. When you get over there in the New Testament, you have a story about a prodigal son, and he is in a mess. Every one of those will illustrate for you and for me Israel's spiritual condition. They are all pictures. They are types of the nation of Israel. But nothing will bring grief to a father and a mother in a greater way than a son or a daughter who grows up and becomes a fool.

## II. The Foolish Son (Proverbs 17:25)

Historically, this will be Rehoboam. Rehoboam is Solomon's son who takes over the throne after Solomon loses the throne. Rehoboam is a fool. He is a total disgrace to his father and his mother. He is a total opposite from his father Solomon and his wisdom. He makes every mistake a man could make, and he is a terrible king. He is a total embarrassment. He is a foolish king. In 1 Kings 12:1-22, when he comes to the throne, the first thing he does is split the kingdom. Right there, he set the end for the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel goes on 300 more years after he did that. But it is a mess and finally goes into captivity because he divided what God wanted to stay unified. It is just the way that it worked. He is a terrible guy.

I have seen it in ministry. Rehoboam had a father who was the wisest man that ever lived. I wonder many times how he turned out to be such a fool with a father that knew all that he knew. Yet I have seen the same thing in families. I have seen dads and moms that were really wise in a lot of things and they never got into the things of the world, but their kids do. I have seen it in ministry all of my life. I have seen guys that were under a pastor who really knew what he was

doing. I know several guys that have turned out people that started churches, and those guys really knew what they were doing. They really knew how to train somebody. They really knew how to give the material that a young man needs to have. Yet I have watched guys go out in the ministry when they have been trained right and they have gotten the truth of what it all is. I have seen those guys make every mistake a guy could make and just be a total disaster. It is true in everything you see.

Inspirationally, this will be any child today who plays the fool and becomes an embarrassment to his mom and dad. I have seen the heavy load that a wayward child brings on parents. Oh, I have dealt with it all my life. Yet I have seen saved moms and dads find themselves in that very situation and yet not be able to follow the principles to have any chance to ever fix it before it gets too late. Well, you cannot fix it. I have had parents sit in my office, weep and cry over a wayward daughter or a wayward son, whatever. They knew that they were responsible for it. They knew that they did not do what was right to put the right things in their lives. Now here they are. They are going to church, the kids do not. They want to get involved, the kids do not. They sit there, and I have seen this, I have seen it so many times. They sit there, they pray to God, they want God to change it. And then what happens? God begins to change it. God begins to do something in those girls' lives or those boys' lives or that child's life, bringing them back and getting them involved. But then Mom and Dad just throw it all away, going right back to the same things they were doing. You do not get a second chance with kids like that. You have to thank God that He gave you the chance to get them back. You blow that chance, you do not get a second chance. But I have seen it. I have seen it.

Parents, honestly, can sometimes be the most selfish people on this planet. They will want what they want at the expense of their own kid. I know parents make sacrifices. Many of them make sacrifices in the wrong places. It is an incredible thing to see.

Doctrinally, all this is Israel as God's son. You remember back in Exodus 4:22, the Bible says that Israel is "Israel, my son." Israel is a corporate nation. It is likened to God's son. This is a picture of Israel in its spiritual condition that is bringing grief to their father, the Lord God, and then bitterness to his mother, which is Jerusalem. You see it all the time. There are a number of ways in your Bible to study the nation of Israel.

- The nation of Israel, you can study as God's wife.
- You can study as God's son.
- You can study it as virgins plural.
- It is like the church.
- You can study the church as Christ's bride.
- You can study the church as God's son.
- You can study the church as a virgin.

Lots of different ways to study it. What happens when you put it all together, you get a complete composite and picture of what God is dealing with. And the mother, Jerusalem, is about to pay the price for her son's foolishness. Around 606 BC and 587 BC, bitterness is a good word

because when Babylon and Assyria come down, she goes through grief at the expense of her son, the nation of Israel. It is incredible. These verses are so true in all three applications.

### III. Punishing the Just and Striking Princes (Proverbs 17:26)

Now look at Proverbs 17:26: "Also to punish the just is not good, nor to strike princes for equity." There are two good things here. I think they are great things: good, solid principles in helping people. It says here, first of all, "Also to punish the just is not good." You do not hurt people who are trying to do good. You never hurt people who are trying to do right.

Now I say that fully knowing that when you start to work with people, you are going to find some people who do not want to do right. I get it. They will waste your time. They will always be so self-centered and selfish about themselves, they will never get past themselves. I get that. I understand that. But I want to tell you something: in dealing with people, you are going to find some who want to do what is right. You are going to find some who want to change things about themselves and do what they need to do. It is those kind of people that you want to try to help. You never hurt people who are trying to do good.

The Bible says in Philippians 2:12, it talks about that we are to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."

*Philippians 2:12*

*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Most people do not understand that verse. They get thinking, "Well, that means you have to work for salvation. You have to work to keep your salvation." He is not saying that at all. He is giving that to the Philippian church. They were already saved. What he is saying is this: when you get saved and you begin to build a relationship with God, there are some things you have to work out between you and Him. There are some things you have to come to grips with. There are some things you have to come to terms with. There was a man in the Bible for whom, even after he received God's salvation, the process of working through things to get where God wanted him to be did not immediately start. When you get saved and you turn your life over to God, hey, there are some things you have to work out concerning your salvation. You now become a new creature in Christ Jesus. You now become faced with a lot of things that you have to let go, things that have to change. You have to work through that. Nobody just got saved on a Monday and walked out Tuesday and had all their problems solved. There are things you have to go through. It takes time to work through some of those things. Some of you will struggle with things for all of your life, maybe. No two people are the same when it comes to personal levels. You do not deal with them the same way. One person may have no problem with anything and just move on and grow. The other person may struggle with things. No two people are alike.

But when you begin to see in somebody's life that they want to do what is right and they are committed to it, and I will tell you right now, you get a little farther down the line in this thing of working with people, you will be able to tell pretty quickly because there are some things that

you look for in a person's life that will tell you if they really want to do what is right or they are just kind of halfway into it. There are some things that you look for. When you find those things and you realize that here is a person who may be struggling with this, maybe doing this or not doing everything that they need to do, but you look past that and you look down inside them and you see the character qualities that they really want to be what God wants them to be, you never hurt people like that. You always try to help them.

Sometimes we are so quick to judge somebody who we think should be farther along or getting a handle on something. I understand, I get it, there will be people for time and eternity in the ministry who just want to play games and waste your time. I understand that. But sometimes because of where people have come from, sometimes because of the bad experiences they have had in their life before salvation, they sometimes carry over into their life and have to be dealt with. Sometimes you just have to understand that. I know the verse in 2 Corinthians 5:17. I laid the foundation out and taught it to you, and it is the foundation for what we do in our discipleship too.

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

I understand that. But if I have learned anything in 40 plus years of the ministry, it is one thing: you have to be patient with people. You have to be patient with people who are trying to do what is right, even when they fail. People will have their struggles. I have mine, and you certainly have yours. People will develop patterns over the years in their lives. Those patterns become a way of life. Things they have to struggle with, and you do not fix them overnight.

The greatest cure, I am going to tell you something. The greatest cure for what ails most people when they are struggling, the greatest cure on the same par with all the great Bible verses that you could ever throw at them, the greatest cure for somebody who is beat up, somebody who is busted, somebody who has been disillusioned with all the things of Christianity, the best thing you can show them is a real church with real people in it. The best medicine for them. Let them know that there is a place where they can go, that they can get what they need, that nobody is going to judge them. Nobody is going to hurt them. Nobody is going to bring into their life things that they have to deal with that is something that they are struggling with.

I will tell you this, and this is a true statement. I do not know what your sin was before you got saved. It was your problem. I do not know what it was. I do not know what your sin was before you got saved, but I want to tell you something. After you get saved, the biggest sin you had before you got saved will be the biggest problem you have after you get saved in most cases. In most cases. It is just now you have a way to deal with it, you see. It is not that God takes your problems away. We get that idea. We get that from preachers. "Well, get saved and all your problems will be over." You get saved, and I want to tell you something. All your problems are just going to start. "Well, you get saved and you can be delivered from this or this or this or this." Let me tell you something. Getting saved will not deliver you from anything. Getting saved

simply gives you now the ability to get into a book that will transform you into what God wants you to be. You will come to the place in your life where you say, "I do not need this anymore."

I could fix every problem everybody has if you just listen to me. I could solve every problem you have in 10 seconds or less. If you would just listen to me when I tell you, whatever is going on in your world right now, listen to me: you do not need it anymore. But it will not work that way, will it? You have to come to the conclusion that you do not need it anymore. My knowing that you do not need it anymore is not going to make it not a problem anymore. You have to come to the conclusion that you do not need it anymore; you have to come to the place where you do not need it anymore. That takes time. That does not happen overnight. I grant you, sometimes it never happens at all. I understand that. I am talking about people who have those things that you look for. But I want to tell you, I would be less than dishonest with you if I did not tell you this: there are people in this world who have played a game so long, getting into a fantasy world that does not exist and staying out of the reality of the Word of God, that they just get everything all messed up and never get back. Just the way it is, just the way it is.

Becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus will instantly change your soul and your salvation, but it does not instantly change your flesh. You have to work out your salvation. It is just now that you have the ability to do it, where before you did not have the ability to do it. He is not going to come down and take your problems away. No, no, He is going to give you a book that will give you everything you need, but you have to work out your own salvation. Let me add the last part of that verse: "with fear and trembling." My job, the job of this church, is to help you, to help you do that. Keep you accountable, absolutely. Hold you responsible, you bet I will. Not let you have a victim status, mentality, and mindset. Absolutely not. Allow you to blame your problems and issues on somebody else? Never happen. You have to take responsibility for those things yourself and work through them, but help you, bring you along. The key word is patience. One of the seven things that we should add to our faith over there in 2 Peter 1:5, after you do get saved.

Now look at the second part of that verse, the last part: "Nor to strike princes for equity." This is a good verse. You probably never really think about this the way it really lays itself out, but that is what I am here for. The word "equity" is the word "balance." We know that from other places we have been in Proverbs. The "strike" here is like to hit somebody, punch them out. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:3 that a pastor cannot be a striker.

### *1 Timothy 3:3*

*Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;*

It does not say anything about shooting them, but you cannot be a striker. What he is saying is this, for the first part of the verse: be patient with people who are trying to do right. Do not hurt them. For the second part of the verse: if you have a person in your life—maybe a pastor, maybe a teacher, maybe someone who mentors you, maybe it is a boss at work, or just people in your life who are well-balanced and they are dealing with people and fair and honest in their approach to issues—do not complain and clobber them just because you do not like what they say.

Let me tell you something. Finding somebody in your life that is fair and balanced with you, who will not judge you, who will love you unconditionally, who will take you the way you are, help you work through the problems you have, and stand by you through whatever you go through, that is invaluable. Instead of clobbering somebody or striking somebody like that, you ought to get on your knees and thank God for a person like that. You have got something special in your life. Somebody that, when dealing with you, is fair and balanced.

Most people, most pastors, most Christians, they look at others and only see what their faults are, what they do not like about them. They will judge that whole person, who they are, based on that precept or concept of what they see in them. But wisdom and understanding is now the ability to look past that and see them as God sees them. Then, through God's understanding, realize that there are good people trying to do good, and then you try to help them every way that you can, any way that you can.

So finding someone with a good balance in dealing with people who will operate on principles instead of what others say is like finding a T-Rex in Central Park in New York. It is impossible. It is such a rare thing because nobody is operating on the principles today; everybody is operating on their emotions or how they view things. A well-balanced person who deals with people will keep his personal ideas and ideologies and feelings out of it. He will follow the principles of a book. He will not jump to conclusions or make a problem where there is no problem. He will not label somebody just because of what they say or what they do or what they look like. He will have patience, and through that patience, he will prove all things. He will look to learn what you see in people, knowing that this person is worth the investment.

I have told some of you who have come over and talked to me. We went through some things in the Bible together. You probably did not think I would just say this because I say it to everyone, you think I say it to everybody, and I do not. Sometimes I have said it to people. Most of the time I have thought it to myself. I will sit down with somebody, some young guys, some gals, some couple, and I will sit down with them and we will go through, and they will lay out where they are at and they will talk about where they are going and what they have done, where they have been, and about the Bible and the things that they are learning and things that they are getting. I will say sometimes to that person, "You let me know what you need because you are worth any investment that I have to put in you." I do not say that to everybody. You say, "Well, you did not say it to me." Well, maybe I thought it. I think it a lot of times. I do not say it very often. So do not go out here despondent if I did not say it to you. I probably was thinking it. No, tell me I would not. But anyway, just kidding.

You see things in people. You learn what the basic fundamental things have to be in somebody's life for them to make it. I do not care what your problems are. I do not care what you are dealing with. I do not care how black your sunrise was this morning or how dark your sunset is. I look beyond that, and you have to be able to see inside that person, "Here is something you can work with." Here is something that gives you a ray of hope that you can focus on this. There are areas in a person's life that you have to look at. When you see those things, you grow it. You cultivate it. There have been times that people have walked out of my office or times that people have, after going through the Bible together, and I have said to myself, "The Lord has said to me,

'Whatever it takes, you give that person whatever they need because they are going to be profitable for Me in the ministry.'" That is just what you do. It is one of those incredible things of understanding that people are people. You just realize that a well-balanced person who deals with people through patience, he will prove all things, but he will look for the key areas of what a person is really all about. He will learn to see those things because he has got wisdom and understanding and he knows how to use it when he finds somebody.

#### IV. The Art of Listening (Proverbs 17:27)

Look at Proverbs 17:27: "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." This is a great principle. "He that hath knowledge spareth his words." In dealing with people, I want to give you a little bit of advice if you want to be successful at working with people. The Bible says that we perfect ourselves daily, I get all that. But let me tell you one thing, if you are going to really be good at working with people, one thing you need to really perfect, it is the art of listening. Listening to what somebody says. So many times we have our preconceived ideas about the situation of the person that we do not hear what they are really saying.

I tell people all the time when I deal with them, I say, "I do not care what you have done. I do not care where you have been. I care nothing about that. All I care is where you are at right now. But here is the deal. I am willing to help you and do whatever I have to do to get you where you say you want to be. But here is the fundamental bottom line: do not lie to me." I do not care how bad it is. I do not care how bad you think it is. If I am going to help you and you do not tell me the truth, then you send me down a road that is going to waste my time and your time; it is not going to fix the thing. You have to come to the place in your life as a Christian and as a person in dealing with people that you learn to listen to what they say. You understand that what they say is a process by which you are able to help them.

Dealing with people, we need to perfect the art of listening to what they say. I will listen very intently. When somebody comes into my office and they are sitting down and telling me something, I will not say a word. I will not say a word. I will listen absolutely intently and hang on to every word that they say. Because I know that in what they are saying to me lies the answer, lies the circumstances, and lies what I need to know if I am going to be able to help them. You have to listen to what they say. It is not about just letting somebody spew it out and get it out and not paying attention and then you give them what you think they want. You have to listen to everything that they say.

I will tell you why that is. In the Bible, there is a process of how people say what they say. If you understand this process, then it puts a whole new dimension on listening to somebody. It is as simple as that. First of all, the Bible says, now you want wisdom and understanding, here it is, the art of listening. First off, Matthew 22:37 tells you and me that we are to love the Lord thy God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, and all of our soul.

*Matthew 22:37*

*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

When a person does that to the best of their ability, then the second part of the formula kicks in, Proverbs 4:23. Once you do that, then you keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.

*Proverbs 4:23*

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

You realize that you have to keep your relationship with God that you are loving with all your heart, mind, and soul because out of your heart, you will have to face all the issues of life. Every issue that you struggle with this morning is in your heart. The third stage is Proverbs 23:7, based on what I just gave you. The Bible says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

*Proverbs 23:7*

*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: as he eateth, and drinketh, so is he.*

You are this morning what you think about. When you love the Lord thy God with all your heart, mind, and soul, that is who you are. Whatever you love this morning deep down in your heart, number one over God, that is who you are. That is what you are. Because as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Then the fourth concept is found in Matthew 12:34. It simply says, we think in our heart what we have in our heart will translate into what we say, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

*Matthew 12:34*

*O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*

See how easy that is? See why you have to listen to what somebody says when you have a real heart-to-heart conversation? Because if you are listening, what is really going on is going to come out. You just have to be in a place to understand and perfect the art of listening based up against the principles, so you know where you are at. Somebody sits down and starts talking to me and laying things out, I listen very intently, and in my mind I am bouncing up the principles of the Word of God, but based on what they are saying, at some point in this, I am going to be able to help them by bringing what is in their heart to the Word of God and make them match together and give them what they need. But you have to listen. You have to listen. You cannot be talking all the time.

I can sit down with a charismatic and I can sit down with a Church of Christ. In 30 seconds I can know exactly what he is all about. We were talking in the singles ministry yesterday, we were talking about some things and we were talking about the day that the devil came and deceived Eve and put the world into sin. I was telling them, when the devil showed up, I get the idea that he showed up looking like we all think he looks like in a red suit with a big tail with a pitchfork and horns and all that stuff; that is not how he showed up. In fact, I have said it many, many

times, if you had been in the garden that day and you just saw the Lord Jesus Christ walking in the cool of the garden coming toward Adam and Eve, and you just saw the devil himself walking down the road the other way coming toward them, you could not tell them apart. I already gave you the verse that he transforms himself into an angel of light. There is only one angel of light. When the devil showed up with Eve, he looked just like Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, how in the world can you blame her if he counterfeited and looked like Him?" The same way you blame people today and Christians, because the devil counterfeits himself today.

How should Eve have known that he was not the real deal? By what he said. She spent Bible studies with God. She knew everything that God said. He did not say one thing that did not change what God already said. How do you know what is phony today? Not by what they do, not by the big churches they have. Listen to what they say. When they change based on what God said, you are done with it. You are done with it. Why, she should have sent him packing, man. The folly she had to hear was what was in his heart. It came out of his mouth, and she should have realized it did not line up with what God's heart was and what God said. End of story. She did not do it. God's people do not do it today either. You have to listen to what somebody says. You have to listen to what somebody says. 99% of God's people or anybody is not smart enough to guard what they say when they say it. If you are listening and you are paying attention, you develop the ability to listen. You listen to what they say. That will always reveal where a person is at and who they really are.

Most preachers, honestly, they do not listen to anybody. Most preachers are famous for keeping on speaking when there is nothing left to be said. If you will just listen to what somebody says, you can get a read on where their heart is at through the art of listening because the heart will always reveal it.

## V. Nine Qualities of a Good Pastor

In the ministry, as a pastor, there are nine things that a really good pastor has to be able to do well. If he does not understand these nine things, he has to sell cars someplace and get out of the ministry because these nine things are what a good pastor has to understand and do well with his people. If you are going to build a work that is going to be God's work and a work that is going to do what God wants it to do, you have to have these nine things in it and you have to know how to do it and you have to understand how to make it work.

4. He has to be able to relate to his people. He has to be one with them. You cannot expect people to be part of your ministry if you do not want to allow them to be part of your life. It is just that simple. A pastor has to be approachable. Most churches, you cannot get to the pastor. He wants your tithe, he wants you to come to church, he wants you to get involved in ministry, but if you have got a personal problem in your life, you will never get in to see him. He will have somebody else, some second stringer down there that you will have to go see. He is too busy to deal with you. You get a pastor like that that you do not have his cell phone number in your cell phone, you have got the wrong guy.
5. He has to be able to regenerate people. The job of his church first and foremost is to preach truth. The second aspect of this church is to win people to Christ, bring them into the

kingdom. A pastor has to know—most pastors, they have no clue how to build a church. They have no clue how to reach people. You look around our church, you will see that the average person here is probably 40 years or younger. A lot of young couples in our church. But I tell you something, that did not happen by accident. You as a pastor have to know where the lifeblood of your church is going to be. You have to target that age group and you have to go after them. Then you have to come to the point where you understand how you do that. You just do not get up and preach. It is not like you have a shotgun where you just shoot into a crowd and hope you hit somebody. No, no, no, no. You have to have a rifle with a telescopic sight and I can drop you at 500 yards. That is what you have to do. You have to have a target group. You have to know what you are going to go after. Most churches—do not mean this wrong, and I love all the older folks here—but the truth of the matter is, most of you were young at one time when you were with me. I know you are old, John, and your wife is not very old. She is like 20 years younger than you. Jean, most people do not know, Jean was quite a basketball player 40 years ago. Why do not you, Jean? Do not be shy. He was a great basketball player. He could dribble that ball. He was a good shot. He was great. He is old now. I am old now. He was not always old. Been with me that long where hanging out with me just has a tendency to do that to you. I do not know what to tell you. I appreciate all the older folks who have a real stability in that. But on the softball field, on the volleyball court, where you have young couples out there that have bad marriages or struggles in their lives that do not have this or do not have that, you know who is going to really get out there and mix it up with them? You younger ones. I still play, but I have to see my drug dealer all day long before we play. Man, I am so high by the time I get on that field, I do not feel anything. Somebody says, "Well, did you win your game tonight?" Man, I do not know. I am just here. "Where is the car?" I am just looking for the place. Man, I have got three Valium in me. I have got 4,500 milligrams of Ibuprofen. I have got hydrocodone and I have got OxyContin, and I am just high as a kite, man. "How was the ball game?" Well, from my altitude, it was really good. I saw everything. You have to understand how you reach people. You have to understand where the lifeblood of a church is. You have to understand how you take young couples, take them, get other young couples, work with them, bring them along, help them. When I am talking young couples, I am talking 50 down, man. Maybe 55, 60 down, depending on how you reach people. 55, 60, I do not know how old you feel you are. Thank you. I do not even want to look up and see who said that.

6. He has to be able to educate people. The greatest example of that was last week. I want you to be informed. I do not want you to be sheep. Just dumb sheep. I want you to be sheep with an IQ. I want you to understand what is going on around you in the world. I want you to understand what is happening. I will take time on Thursday night, take time on Sunday morning, where I gave you a great piece of information last week. They are tied in to Amy's question a couple of weeks ago on Thursday night and then bounced into the next Thursday and then we just happened to slam into last Sunday morning. You got an incredible group of information that helps you understand. I want you to be educated. I want you to know what is going around you. God's people for the most part, and I say this to our shame as Christians, God's people for the most part are the most stupid people on the planet when it comes to what is going on around them. They are just like the blind leading the blind. They have no

idea. They get caught up in the wrong issues. They get caught up in the wrong fields. They do not see it for what it really is. I do not want you that way. I want you—we get accused all the time of being a cult and everybody says, "Bob just tells you what to think." I do not ever tell anybody what to think. I just want you to think. I just want you to think for yourself. I give you the right book and give you the truth, and you get thinking for yourself. I will not have to tell you what to think. You will figure it out for yourself. That is how it works. That is how it is supposed to work. But I want you to be educated. I want you to understand about how the devil changed garments down through history. I want you to be able to relate to that. I want to see how the eight manifestations of Christ. I want you to see where the two lines of the Bibles come from, the two churches, the two Bibles, the two Christs in the Bible. I want you to understand all that.

7. He has to be able to motivate people. If the pastor does not, no church will ever go any higher than the spiritual mindset of the guy in charge. I have guys come in and see my ministries all my life and they will say, "How do you get your people excited about the Word of God?" Like it is some special formula. I get you excited about the Word of God because I get excited about the Word of God. Everything rises and falls on leadership. You are not going to get excited about it. If that book is the number one in my world, it is certainly going to be number one in yours. I cannot make it number one in yours when it is number one in mine. You cannot do that. It just does not work that way. Leaders motivate by example. You lead from the front. You do not lead from the rear. You never will be excited about the Word of God if I am not. It is just that simple.
8. He has to be able to accelerate people. He gets you to grow faster than you normally would. You are looking at the kids that these, our older guys and gals are working with. It is accelerating their spiritual growth. I was at the singles ministry yesterday, and I am always just flabbergasted by that. Nick taught yesterday. Nick taught, I mean, everybody who has done it is just incredible. I asked Nick afterwards, "Well, how long have you been in the church?" "A little over a year," he said, "year and six months," something like that. I could not believe it. I could not believe it. It was one of the most detailed, laid out things on one of the toughest places in the Bible on the cities of refuge. He took the cities of refuge back there out of Numbers and Exodus and he laid that thing out as Christ and the refuge for us. It was incredible, and he has only been here. Lauren, where are you at? Where is Lauren at? What did you say afterwards to me, Lauren? Yell it out real loud. Well, we knew that. He said he has figured it out more than anybody who has come out of Bible college, and it is true. You know why? Because he has had his growth accelerated.
9. He has to be able to duplicate people. Building people. I have said it before, this church is not for everybody, I have never claimed it to be. I am here for a reason, I want to build some things. I want to build people. I know what to look for in building people. Now I am not much of a carpenter, we have good carpenters that are in here. You know that if you have to build something, you go down to Home Depot and you go buy some lumber. You know that you are always doing it, you are looking at making sure the two by fours are straight and you do not want them with holes in them, and you want to get the very best building materials you can build to build whatever your project is going to be. Okay, you guys are my project. When I build somebody, I look for the very best building materials I can find. God has a way

of bringing some great building material into this church. My job is to recognize it, my job is to take it, and my job is to shave it down, fashion it, cut it, put it together, nail it together, and form something that is going to last for God. That is what you have to do. It is not hard. You have to be able to duplicate what you have in somebody else.

10. He has to be able to elevate people. Every one of you is invaluable to me whether you know it or not. Some of you, unfortunately, you will never get to that point in your life where you ever realize it, because you cannot get past yourself, or whatever your issues are. But I recognize one great thing about our church and about you. It is no accident that you are here today. God brought you here for a purpose. God brought you here for a reason. If you do not fulfill that, that is on you. But He brought you here for a purpose because He has something that you have to offer to this church. You have something that I need in the scheme of things of what I am doing. Everybody is unique. Everybody is different. But you have to learn to elevate people, making people feel special and important to you and your ministry because you truly are. They are special because God gave them to you.
11. He has to learn how to placate people. What does that mean? Placate means to put up with stupid stuff that people do. When people come in and they get young and they are growing in the Word of God, I know I did, I did some stupid things. I want to look back and see Mel just hanging up the phone, laughing, and falling out of the chair at some of the stupid stuff I said and did. I mean, I could give you a whole list of stuff that I said and did that I thought was great ideas. It was not very good ideas, but that is where I was. People come up with that. You have to find a way.

Then the last part of Proverbs 17:27: "a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit." In the ministry to people, your spirit has to always be of an excellent nature. You have to learn to be 100% positive, even though on the inside you are not. You find some people that they have something go wrong in their life and it shows in everything that they do. Even when you are not 100%, you cannot show it. Because an excellent spirit will become infectious to others. It is that iron sharpeneth iron concept. It will encourage others. In the ministry, there is no room in the pastor's life for defeatism, being defeated. You have to live above the circumstances. Mel used to say, "If your Christianity is not contagious, then it is contaminated." That is so true. So it is all based on a spirit, an excellent spirit. In ministry, you maintain an excellent spirit in the face of the good times and the bad times. Because you have wisdom and understanding. You realize that you are a leader and you have to lead. You have to lead where you have the ability, where somebody else can fall apart, you do not have the ability to. You have to stand strong. Sometimes there will be some things that will knock you on your knees. You have to get back up and you cannot show it, and you have to keep moving on. You maintain an excellent spirit because you do not take the negative personal. You realize you are working for the Lord.

Listen, I want you all to do right. I really do. I want you all to learn the Bible and get every problem solved in your life. I really do. I want that for everybody here. I want God's blessings in your life. I truly want that for all of you. But my responsibility is to love you unconditionally, give you the truth, and do all I can to help you. But at the end of the day, if you do not want that and you want to continue in the way you are going, hey man, it is not going to affect my spirit

one way or the other. I am going to stay where God wants me to be, even if you do not. That is the way it works.

## VI. The Wisdom of Silence (Proverbs 17:28)

He says, Proverbs 17:28: "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

*Proverbs 17:28*

*Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.*

In other words, going back to what we said, we are known by what we say. We reveal who we really are by what we say. Ecclesiastes 5:3 says, "a fool's voice is known by multitude of words."

*Ecclesiastes 5:3*

*For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.*

Proverbs 10:19 says:

*Proverbs 10:19*

*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.*

For a Christian, he should have all the wisdom and understanding that God has, the mind of Christ. This separates him from the world system. Then he should come to the point where he learns how to use what he says sparingly, because he is listening.

1 John is a great little book, and it really deals with my relationship with Christ. You will find in that little book in just five chapters, 36 times he says that we are to know something. The Bible-believing child of God, through his relationship with Christ and His Word, should know some things. When he has a workable knowledge about God and the Word of God, he knows how to use understanding and wisdom, then he will know some things.

Most of God's people—and I know many of you, if not most of you, are in a process of learning and growing and you are building it, so I am not talking to you—but come on, the average Christian out there who is saved claims to know God. Do you really know Him or do you distinctly think you do? The Bible says that there are seven things that we are to add to our faith. Do you know what they are? Are you in the process of adding them? How do you add them when you do not even know what they are? The Bible says there are seven things that you and I as a child of God are not to be ignorant of. Yet in my life, in my experience, those are the seven things that most of God's people are totally ignorant of. We talk about in discipleship too, the seven things that changed the day you got saved. Do you know what it is that impacted you, and why you are not the same person you used to be? There are seven periods in church history that form the basis for where you are at and what is going on in your life today. Can you even lay it

out? In Hebrews, there are seven aspects to the Word of God that impact you in everything that you do. Seven stages of spiritual growth. What stage are you in? "I did not even know there were any such stages." So, "I really love God. I really have a relationship with God." Good, what are the seven things that God hates? And what are the seven things that please God? See, how do you have a real—this is 20th century Laodicean Christianity. We have a head knowledge of God, but no heart knowledge of God. We say we love Him, but we do not know what He loves. We say we want to live for God and do what is right. We do not even know the things that He hates. If I asked the average Christian, "Do you want to please God?" "Oh yes, I do." They could not even tell you the seven things that please God. Then we pretend we have a relationship with Him.

A Christian is to know some things. When he gets the Word of God and the wisdom in his life and he starts to build it around the Word of God, he will know what he believes. He will know why he believes it. He will know who caused him to believe it. He will know the relationship of what he believes to all the other beliefs and truths found in the world. Remember, talking comes by natural nature. Silence comes by understanding and wisdom. Every Christian in one form or another has a quiet time where you just get along with God. To you, if you have that, that is your special time where God speaks to you. That is how you learn and that is how you minister. You minister by listening much more than you minister by talking. When you listen more and talk less, when you do say something, you go straight to the heart of the matter based on the fact that you have wisdom and understanding and you have listened. The art of listening. The Bible says over and over again, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

My dear friend Greg McClintock, whom I met years and years and years ago when I held a first revival up in Moberly, he was a prosecuting attorney then, and he was a good one. He went on to become a judge, served a full life as a judge, and then he retired and now he is pastoring in that little church up there. I won Greg to Christ. I remember the first time I ever met him. We had a team go up there to pass out tracts to a little Baptist church, and he stopped by, and I cut out from the team and went over and hung out with him and watched television and talked, and that was the beginning of a really good relationship, and I won him to Christ after that period of time, after a while. I had him preach one time years and years and years ago. He said something I never forgot, and it is so true based on what we are saying today. I do not remember what he was preaching on. I do not remember the text, I do not remember any of it. I just remember the one thing he said: "Every Christian is a witness, and sometimes he should use words."

Every Christian is a minister. You minister by your excellent spirit. You minister by understanding where people are at, understanding what they are going through. You minister to them by listening to what they say, making them as special as they really are, realizing that you do not care where they have been, what they have done, what they have been into. You accept them on the basis that God accepted you and me the day He took away our sin. Because I guarantee you, you say, "Well, that person, that guy does not look too hot," or "that guy does not look too hot." I guarantee you, you and I did not look very hot the first time God laid eyes on us. But He loved us unconditionally. He looked inside every one of us, and we were still in our sin. We were still deep in the world. He saw those character qualities that He was looking for. Just

like some carpenter—maybe that is why He was a carpenter—walking through Home Depot, He picked out the best material for building. If you are here today, you are here by no accident. God sees something in you. The only question is, do you see anything in you? God wants to do something with you. The only question is, do you want to do something with you? God wants to take you and mold you and make you and build you from a substandard human being to a mighty man of valor where you can stand for God and do something for God before He comes back. I do not have any problem with God. My question is, where are you at with all that? Work out your own salvation. He saved you for a reason. He saved you for a purpose. He has given you a church. He has given you people around you. He has given you the Bible. He has given you everything that you need that you can work out everything in your life to become everything God wants you to be. It is up to you.

Every head bowed, every eye closed. Father, we do thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you today.