

## I. The Importance of a Working Knowledge of God's Word

Last week, we got into Proverbs 23:1-3. I talked about building a working knowledge of the Word of God in your life, how absolutely important that is, and truly the key to your Christian life. Having a Bible, having the right Bible, does you no better or any good than having the wrong Bible if you do not let it work for you. I tried to show you how God will give you a truth, and then throughout the Bible, He will show you that truth in action, whether it is good or whether it is bad. From that, we always get a course of action. What He does through those things is establish that truth.

Most of God's people will never get to that point. They will make some mistakes in their life. They will have some issues in their life that they will move past, but they will never get to the point where they will allow the Bible to work for them. They are always blaming somebody else for their problems. They are always focusing on their issues. They will never get to the point where the Bible will truly do for them what the Bible, by God's design, was designed to do for us, and that is to give us a course of action, to show us a way to go.

We all get ourselves into dumb situations. We all do stupid things. There is not one of us that is not guilty of that. What we are guilty of is when we allow those things to happen in our lives, then we do not allow the Word of God to establish a course for us to get out. We stay in it, hold on to it, we try to make it work ourselves, and it only compoundingly gets worse.

Letting the Bible do the work for you means learning the art of not just seeing, as we talked about last week, but the art of observing: seeing what is around you, seeing your situation not from your own pity party, seeing your situation from the Bible principles, and then getting the course of action to move out of it. This is the concept of working smarter, not just harder. It is our ability to see things the way they really are, and we are famous for not wanting to do that.

It is that "mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the prettiest of them all," and the mirror lies to you right up to the point where Snow White shows up and you are out of business. The bottom line is this: the Word of God is likened to a working glass. What people do not like about the Bible is that the Bible will show you your true reflection. It will show you what the real problem is. When most people do not want to deal with that, they want to stay in a little pity party. They want to stay in a little world of self-absorption. Then they will always look at things from their own standpoint as they appear, and they will never see it as it is. Therefore, they will never get a course of action to get out of it.

We saw all of this last week under the example of a feast that was set up to deceive somebody and, obviously, to get someone killed. Doctrinally, I showed you last week that that was the nation of Israel. Then I showed you how it fit for your everyday life too. Those principles of sitting down and diligently considering what is before you will work in every aspect of your life, especially if you are going to work with people. When you first sit down with somebody, you

always want to be observing. When a person gives me a situation that they are struggling with, I go into my observing mode, and you have to consider diligently what is before you.

## II. Introduction to Proverbs 23:4-8

Today, as we move through this, we are going to look at Proverbs 23:4-8. I want to read it to you, and then we are going to come down and make some observations.

*Proverbs 23:4-8*

*Labor not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.*

*Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.*

*Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:*

*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.*

*The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.*

## III. The Vanity of Worldly Labor and Riches

In Proverbs 23:4, there are two concepts we want to look at. First, he says, "Labor not to be rich," and there are some really important principles here.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the theme of that book is "under the sun." A lot of people get confused about that term, but what he is showing you in the book of Ecclesiastes is an understanding of things that take place on planet Earth, which is "under the sun." There is nothing mystical or magical about that phrase. He is simply going to talk about life on planet Earth as we exist under the sun, which is in the sky in a physical sense. The book of Ecclesiastes will talk about a lot of things. It will talk about knowledge, it will talk about wisdom, always in a worldly sense. What you will not find in the book of Ecclesiastes—I think there is one reference to it toward the end, but not in the way the book is going—what you will not find in the book of Ecclesiastes is the word "understanding," because the book of Ecclesiastes is a picture of the worldview of everything.

If you want a great contrast to what most people look at and how most people do not use the Bible, the book of Ecclesiastes over here and the rest of the Bible over here would be a great example. You have 65 books in the Bible that give you everything you ever want to know about whatever situation you find yourself in. Then you have the book of Ecclesiastes, which is man trying to figure it out for himself. Man forsaking the Word of God, going through all the theologies that man goes through to try to find the answers of life to be happy, but never finds them. The great theme of the book of Ecclesiastes is simply the theme of vanity.

Everything is vanity. You will find out that the things that man will pursue throughout his life, the things that a woman will go after and pursue through her life, in truth, will be worthless. The

key to the book is understanding that all things "under the sun" that man pursues, that he chases, that he tries to bring into his world, are vanity.

There are people whose whole lives they have gone after the wrong things. Their whole lives they have invested and done things that are totally outside the Word of God, and at the end of their life, they lose everything. Their life can be summed up in one word: vanity. I am talking about God's people, not the world. God's people are famous for laboring at all the wrong things, doing it the wrong way, doing this, doing that, and then at the end, scratching their head and saying, "I wonder what happened?" The truth of the matter is, you spent your whole life pursuing the wrong things.

The book of Ecclesiastes will list for us, if you want to go through them sometime, the 10 vanities that are on this earth:

1. The vanity of wisdom (Ecclesiastes 2:13)
2. The vanity of purpose (Ecclesiastes 2:26)
3. The vanity of ambition (Ecclesiastes 4:4)
4. The vanity of fun (Ecclesiastes 7:6)
5. The vanity of fame (Ecclesiastes 4:16)
6. The vanity of self (Ecclesiastes 4:7)
7. The vanity of covetousness (Ecclesiastes 6:9)
8. The vanity of reward (Ecclesiastes 8:10)
9. The vanity of labor (Ecclesiastes 2:18)
10. The vanity of money and riches (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

He says in Ecclesiastes 2:18 concerning our labors:

*Ecclesiastes 2:18*

*Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.*

He is saying that when you labor in the wrong things and you spend your whole life going after things that are the wrong thing, there is vanity, and you surely labor in a wrong way. You are wasting your time because once you are gone, somebody else is going to take it, and your labor is in vain.

Then he says in Ecclesiastes 5:10:

*Ecclesiastes 5:10*

*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.*

He is saying here that when you love riches, when you love the things of the world, the possessions and the things that money can buy, there is nothing satisfying about it. That is why you have to keep adding to your pile of worthlessness. That is why after 20 or 30 years, you amass all of the material possessions, and you are still as empty as you were the day you started.

He says in Ecclesiastes 5:11:

*Ecclesiastes 5:11*

*When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?*

That is a great principle. He is saying that all the money, possessions, and riches that we have will never make you a better person. There used to be a commercial on TV that I thought was pretty good. It was about learning a foreign language, and I think learning a foreign language is an excellent thing. They were trying to get people to do that, and the commercial started out with, "Will buying a new pair of shoes make you a better person? Will buying this make you this or that?" Then they brought it around to, "But learning another language will," because, obviously, learning a language means you have to expand yourself into a lot of different areas. Of course, all of these things will never make you a more committed Christian.

It says in that verse that it only benefits you in a false sense, that you deceive yourself with all that you have, thinking that you are really better off. He says in Ecclesiastes 5:11, "beholding themselves in their own eyes." "Look at me, look at what I got, look how good I am doing, look how much money I am making, look at my house, look at my car, look at my boat, look at this, look at that."

## IV. The Danger of Covetousness

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:10:

*1 Timothy 6:10*

*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Let me explain that. It is not the money itself that is the root of all evil; it is the love of it, and that means covetousness, coveting what we do not have. You realize our whole society, you drive down the street, you see billboards. They are there to show you what you do not have. You watch commercials on TV; they want to entice you by showing you what you do not have.

When they used to have the beer and cigarette commercials years ago before they banned them, they used to always put the beer commercials, like the Lowenbrau, where you had all these young kids sitting around at the beach doing clam bakes, and they were all friends, laughing and having a Lowenbrau. That suggested that it was a great time, that a bottle of Lowenbrau, clams, and a bunch of people would make you happy in life. They did not show the end results of that.

They used to have the cigarette commercials where you would have the Marlboro Man, and he would be riding a horse out there on the range with leather chaps on and a hat, a real man's man. Then he is out there, there are 10,000 cattle, dust coming up, and he is riding along there, smoking a Marlboro cigarette, and everybody is watching that saying, "I want to be like him." Then he looks around at the end of the commercial and he says, "Come to where the flavor is," and 10 million stupid people run out and buy Marlboros to get where the flavor is. Let me ask

you a question: Have you ever been around 10,000 cows? That is where the flavor is. People are stupid.

You go to the mall. They have window displays. They have sales. Why? Because they want to show you what you do not have, and you will say, "I need that," and you do not need that, but that is the way it works.

Hebrews 13:5 says:

*Hebrews 13:5*

*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

That is what the Lord is saying. You do not need to covet all those things because I will always be here to make sure you have everything you need.

You ask people a question: How much money will it really take to satisfy somebody? The problem is, if somebody said, "Well, if I had 10 million dollars, I would be happy and I could do everything I want." No. Anytime you get a million dollars or 10 million dollars, your living scale goes up. Where right now you go through McDonald's and spend five dollars and think nothing of it, if you had a million dollars, you would spend 10,000 dollars and not think anything of it. It all pushes itself up, and you will be out of money before you know what hits you, and it is just the way that it goes.

How many possessions do we have to have before we are finally happy and satisfied? You get a new car, and boy, you love it. That new car smell. You have it for a year or two years, and it smells like you now. You go to the car wash, the Green Lantern or the Pink Pumpkin or whatever you go to, and they will ask you, "What kind of aroma do you want in your car?" Nine times out of ten, people will say, "I want that new car smell." We all go through life wanting that new car smell because by the time you have had the car, that shiny, bright, sparkly car that you all love, after two or three years, it does not satisfy you anymore. Something happened; it is not as bright, not as shiny. You do not get that same thrill. When you got in it that night you got it, you could not wait to go to work the next day, get in that new car and drive. Two years later, "I have got to go to work tomorrow." The fact that you have that car does not do it for you anymore, and that is the way it is in everything in life. There is a great principle in the Bible found in Romans 7: there is no satisfying the flesh. There is no satisfaction in it.

The Bible says in Isaiah 55:2:

*Isaiah 55:2*

*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

That is a great verse. We, as God's people, spend our whole life laboring for things that satisfy not, and then wonder why we are not happy. We do not think, and then when we do, we want that

instantaneous fix. We want our pastor to be David Copperfield. "Make all my problems disappear." He made a 747 disappear; he can make an elephant float in the air. "Why can't my pastor just take me and make all my problems go away just like that?" It always takes longer to get out of something than it takes to get into it, but everybody wants the fast fix today. Not only do they want the fast fix, they want it their way instead of the Book's way, and it will not go that way. We have labored all of our lives, and now here we are with all the problems that we have, and we are still not satisfied.

## V. The Downfall of Misplaced Priorities

Let me be the first one to say, there is a great balance in having money and possessions. I am not saying you cannot have nice things. I think if you have a nice house, great. I wish I had a nice house. There are no nice houses in Raytown, but I have got as nice a house as I can get living in Raytown. There is a gothic street; there are two houses that are up for sale. They went in and did them. I was walking yesterday, and a guy pulled up and he says, "Hey, how is this neighborhood?" I said, "Let me get down here because the bullets sometimes come right over the top of the car. It is fine."

I remember years ago, we had a drug house across the street. This is when I had my brown lab, Buddy. Buddy did not like anybody other than me. Somebody else would come, he would go crazy. Steve Bracken's dad, Steve Bracken Sr., came over to my house to see me, and he came through the basement. We had a gate up, and Steve has been around dogs all of his life, and he went over to pet him before I could say, "Do not!" That dog bit him and pulled him over that gate. I said, "I will see you later, Steve." I went upstairs. Buddy did not like anybody. We had some people across the street that were drug dealers. I do not think it was anything heavy, just marijuana. You could smell it at night. I would go up there, and I would come back in, and Barb would say, "Are you all right?" I would say, "Strawberry Fields Forever," "Yeah, I am fine." But there were five or six of them in the driveway, and they were smoking over there. I would take Buddy for a walk, and Buddy, I would start to take him down, and boy, he sees those guys over there, and he is going crazy. I said, "Come on, man, let us go." That kid's eyes got real big. He said, "What kind of dog is that?" I said, "Oh, that is a police dog." He says, "Really?" I said, "Yeah." "What kind of police dog?" I said, "That is a drug sniffing dog." He says, "He was going crazy." I said, "Yeah, I think you have got drugs over there." All nine of them closed the door and went down in the house.

Nothing is wrong with having a nice thing. I do not think you need to live under a car on a 435 bridge in a cardboard box for God's blessings in your life. If you have got a nice house, praise the Lord for it. It is a balancing thing. God blesses you with things, and you do what is right with them. It is when we make the blessings happen ourselves and put more into it.

I will show you the downfall, the balance. For me, everything has to come out of the Bible someplace. I look at Solomon. Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived. He certainly was the richest man that ever lived. I look at that, and I see a man who has everything with God, but then there is a downfall in his life. Most people miss this downfall. They think it was the women that

he brought from all the other nations. I am not saying that that did not mess him up, but that is not where it started. It started long before that.

In 1 Kings 6:38, when Solomon was designated to build the temple for the Lord, the Bible says that it took him seven years to build the house of the Lord. Then in the very next chapter, 1 Kings 7:1, it tells us that when Solomon built his own house, it took him 13 years. The downfall began to come in, and it will come in anybody's life when you start spending more time doing things in your life than you do for the things of God in His world.

I think a good rule to follow—and hey, I was kidding you, we have got a very nice house. It is primitive America, bathrooms are out in the backyard. It is great, I love it. So cold in the wintertime, but it is okay. I think there is nothing wrong with having things, and I want to stress that because I do not want anybody saying, "Oh, he is just picking on me." No, I am not picking on anybody. I am trying to show you a Bible principle. You have to decide where you are at with it. I am certainly not. I am just showing you what the Bible said.

I will give you a good rule to follow. The Bible says that Christ lives inside you, and in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it talks about some furnishings that we provide for Him living inside, so we do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, that He is comforting. A good rule of thumb, I would think, is this: Do not furnish your house, do not finish off your house, do not put all of those things, all those beautiful little things in your house, which are fine, as long as you are providing for God in His house all the furnishings that He needs. Denying the Holy Spirit of God the comfort of His home while we live in the luxury of ours.

What I am talking about, and the greatest trick the devil ever pulled off, is to get God's people to think that it is good to spend your whole life laboring for things that simply will not satisfy. The wisest man that ever lived said, "All that is vanity, all that is vanity."

## VI. The Illusion of Worldly Pursuits

Then the last part of Proverbs 23:4 says, "cease from thine own wisdom." There lies the issue today. It really does. There lies the issue: seeing it from your personal perspective instead of God's, your understanding instead of coming to the Word of God and getting God's understanding.

*Proverbs 3:5-6*

*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Boy, that is an easy one to quote and memorize, but that is a tough one to follow: changing the way you understand things. I do not know of any situation that you will not get yourself into in life, that I will not get myself into in life, that to turn that thing around, it is not going to be a major incident to do that. The number one issue we all face with God's people is the refusal to look at your issue from God's understanding. You just want to keep your own dream world going. You will refuse to look at the principles. You will refuse to look at the reality. You will

refuse to look at the circumstances. You will just always go in your own understanding. I will tell you something: it is that same understanding that got you in the mess in the first place. We just hang on to it. I have told you many, many times, you will never solve the problems in your life with the same thinking that caused those problems. Most people will not go there. They will hang on to their own understanding. They will look at something, and they will freely admit, but they will not change what they have got to change. They will not do what they have got to do.

Proverbs 23:5 says, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" Oh, what a great one! Yes, we will, Lord. Yes, we do, 24/7, all the time. We do it in life. In life, we set our eyes on things that mean absolutely nothing, and we pursue them like they mean something. We do it in relationships. We forget the fact that the most intimate relationship we should have, the most perfect, pure relationship on this planet, should be the one that we have with the Lord Jesus Christ. We put Him aside and go after Bozo the Clown or Mary Magdalene. Yes, we will. We will do it all the time. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon things that are not?" You bet you. You think this guy is something, and then you find out he is not. And what do you do? You still do the same thing. You see this gal and find out she is not what you thought she was. What do you do? You go after the same thing.

You spend your whole life laboring for things that will not satisfy you. Then, at the end, when you lose your kids, when you lose your marriage, when you lose this, when you lose your health, when you lose all this stuff, you actually sit down and scratch your head and say, "I wonder what happened?" If some of God's people would labor as much in the Word of God as they do following the things that will never satisfy, they would be unstoppable. But because they do not, they get stopped. Putting as much value in God's truth as in the things that will not satisfy you, pursuing them—that is the great illusion of things in this life, as the verse says, money and possessions that we labor to get.

Wow, what I could do! I have got to tell you, I am as human as you are. I saw the news the other night with that guy in New Jersey who won 376 million dollars in a New Jersey lottery. Now, most pastors preach against the lottery. They say it is gambling, that is sin. But I do not know a pastor in this country if he was in his church who would refuse to tithe. See, I would handle that differently. I would say, "It is sin, but since you fell into sin, this is the penalty for it." I would get the church secretary to write up a penalty ticket for the lottery. "How much is it? 10 percent on 376 million." No, he got out of that 376, a walk-home paycheck for that, 175 million dollars.

I know where you are at. I know I saw it. I did. I watched it, and my jaw dropped. Even my two labs, they were on the couch, they got up and looked. They thought, "What he could do for me with that money!" I know how your brain goes. I am thinking, "If I just lived on a million dollars a year, I would have enough for 175 years." So I am not going to live 175 years. "So I will live on 200 million dollars a year and cut that in half, and I will make that." Your mind goes everywhere. I understand. I get it. I get it. I know we all think, "What can I do with that? What I could buy! Why, I could move out of this Raytown neighborhood. I could get away from this. I could get all out of here. I could, I could, I could. Oh, and I would do something for the Lord. I would flip in 50 cents or something like that." But what I could do, what I could buy! You see, it

is like a glutton's appetite. There is no end to it. You win 375 and walk out with a 175 million dollar payment. That sounds good.

You may sit there like I did for a few moments, thinking about all the things. Then, I guess God had me watch that news program because He knew I was going to preach this Sunday, and I went through withdrawal just like you. I thought to myself, "Wow, what a guy could do with 175 million dollars!" You do not have to pay taxes on that. You would have, I tell you what, you would have more friends and relatives calling you on the phone that next week than you did not even know you had. You would have every investment guy in the world trying to call you. "Well, you can invest that 175 million dollars, and you could live comfortable the rest of your life." "Yeah, I give you the money, you make it off of mine, and I am going to live comfortable the rest of my life." I have got news for you, I have already figured, done the math. I can spend a million dollars a year and live comfortably for the next three lifetimes. I do not need you. Everybody wants to be your friend now. I get it. If you win the lottery, I am your new best friend. I will mow your lawn. I will walk your dog. I will come over personally, pick up your tithe check.

As I sat there and I thought about what we all think, "What we could do, what we could buy," then it hit me. 175 million sounds good, but let me tell you this morning what 175 million dollars will not buy:

- It will not buy your happiness.
- It will not buy your joy.
- It will never buy your contentment.
- It will never buy a peace of mind.
- You may find if you have a health problem, you can afford the greatest doctors in the world, but it will not cure whatever illness you have if it is terminal.
- You cannot buy forgiveness.
- You cannot buy the blessings of God or the favors of God.
- It will not help you in relationship with the Lord.
- It will not buy you true friends.
- It will not make you a better father or a better mother.
- It certainly will not keep your kids in church.
- It will not give you wisdom.
- It will never give you understanding.
- It will never give you love.
- It will never provide for you the peace that passes all understanding.
- It will never build your character.

That is why many of God's people labor with love to build the right house with the right things, realizing that the things of this world will not make you a better person. There is nothing wrong with them in a balance, but brother, do not get your home better furnished than you do where God lives.

I will tell you, based on Revelation 3:17-18, the most miserable Christians on the face of this planet, the most disastrous families, the most disastrous Christians you ever saw, were the ones

who trusted in their own selves and said, "We have possessions, we have this, we have buildings, we have all this, we have needed nothing," and did not know that they were poor, blind, naked, and miserable. They get to the point in their life—their life, their family, their kids, their marriage—it all winds up a disaster. It all comes down to two great principles: Why labor for that which does not satisfy, and then setting our eyes on that which is not?

## VII. The Judgment Seat of Christ and Our Labor

In the book of Haggai, that is a great book. The book of Haggai is one of those places that establishes this truth. In the book of Haggai, they had—Haggai is a post-captivity book. He writes after they go back after the 70 years. What happened was, when they went back in Ezra and Nehemiah, they began to rebuild. At some point, they stopped building. Haggai writes his book 16 years after they go back, and it is really a pretty tough book. He really gets in their face because he says, "Why have you stopped building God's house? Why have you stopped?" Not only have you stopped building God's house, you are now taking all of the things that God designated to build His house, and you are building your own homes with them. He pleads with them. He preaches to them, and he tells them, "Do you not understand that you are not building just a building in the temple of God? Do you not get that you are not just building a church building or a temple? What you are building is your nation's future, because your relationship with God depends on that temple, and you are not finishing it. You are not building it, and you are taking the very materials that have been designated for it, and you are making your houses look really good that you are living in."

You find in the church age today so many of God's people stop building their temple. They just quit. They will go on for a while, and then something else will catch their fancy, and they are done. They are done with discipleship. They are done with this. They just—their attention span is so small when it comes to building the right things, and they do not see it either, just like Israel never saw that the physical temple they were building was their future. God's people today do not see and understand that building your temple, your body, is your future with God as the Judgment Seat of Christ. We lose sight of it. Why? Because we are so busy laboring for things that satisfy not, and we have got our eyes set on things that are not even real.

Look at the rest of Proverbs 23:5: "for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." Your money is going to sprout wings and fly away. How many times have you seen in your 401k, in just one week, when the market tanks, you can lose ten thousand dollars? Those little Ben Franklins are gone. You get your statement, "Oh, wow, look, I lost ten thousand dollars in a week!" Do not tell me God does not have a sense of humor. That is why in America, whose god is money—somebody wanted to take "In God We Trust" off the money. All the Christians got upset about it. I think they ought to do it. What a hypocrisy! A country putting on their money, "In God We Trust," when money is your god to begin with. So I think it is a great irony and a great comedy of tragedies that on American currency, every dollar you have, you have an eagle with his wings stretched out, ready to take off, so that money will fly away.

When you labor to get all you can get, and can all you get, and want that, and hoard it over here, and this, and buy all these things, let me tell you something, I can do a rabbit too. But do not

miss this little nugget: it flies away. So look at the verse: Where does it fly to? It flies to heaven. It will all be waiting for you when you get to the Judgment Seat of Christ. Somebody said, "Well, you cannot take it with you." No, but you sure do send it on ahead.

1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5 talk about the Judgment Seat of Christ. The foundation is gold, and you labor to build on it gold, silver, precious stone, or you labor to build on it wood, hay, and stubble. But it is all there when you get there. The true riches of the Word of God versus the false riches of the world. Then we actually, with a serious faith, ask ourselves, "Why is my life such a mess?" Bad investments of our lives, pursuing the things that satisfy not, the things that are not bread.

I have preached it to you before. We have talked about it on Bible studies. There are some things in the Bible, I have just got to tell you, they scare me to death. They scare me to death. They really do. I hate to preach them. I do preach them because it is my job, but I do not like preaching it. If you think I like to preach everything in the Bible, I do not, because some of those things just overwhelm me, and they scare me to death. I do not talk about it much. Why would you want to talk about something that scares you to death? But there are things in that Bible to terrify me. There are things in that Bible that will just turn my hair gray.

There are some places, and I look at Job 26:1-5. It has got to be, for a Christian, the scariest place in the Bible, because there you have six questions that God asked. I have told you this before, and I preach a sermon on it, that the six questions God is going to ask at the Judgment Seat of Christ—I preach that message all over the country, literally all over the world, for 45 years. I have had people come up to me that do not like that message or do not agree with that analogy, and they will come up to me. I had a little old lady come up one time. She said, "Brother Lezander, I love you to death, and I pray for you, but I just do not believe that message you preached tonight." I put my arm around her, pulled her close, and I said, "Praise the Lord, darling, I sure hope you are right. I am with you, but I do not want to believe it either."

But I have learned in Job 38:3, the Bible says that when God asks a question, somebody is going to have to answer Him. I realize that these six questions, the only one that can answer these, if you look at them, is a born-again child of God in the New Testament. Because in question number one, He wants to ask the question—and hey, whether you like it or not, believe it or not, I could care less, it scares the fire out of me, and that is a good thing—but I will tell you something, I have got a sneaking suspicion that this is the way that God works things when we get there. I know what we think the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be. I know, God, it is not going to be that way. God has got an angle in that thing that He has not revealed to show anybody, because He knows you and He knows me, and He knows that right now, while you are laboring for the wrong things and investing in all the wrong things, He knows what you are doing. You are preparing your cover story for when you get there. You are going to get there. You are going to, "Okay, I am next. Okay, I have got this down. Okay, here He comes. Hallelujah, hallelujah! What is up to you? What is up to you?" There you come, and you have got to have that thing down there, and He says, "Okay, I just got—we will make this quick—I just got six questions for you." I do not think those six questions are, "Okay, what are they?"

- 1.) What have you done for unsaved people?
- 2.) What have you done for baby Christians?
- 3.) How did you counsel people who struggled in their life?
- 4.) How did you declare the thing as it is? How did you preach the truth when you laid it out, or did you dance around?
- 5.) Whose spirit, in everything that you did, whose spirit came from you, your own human spirit, or God's Holy Spirit?
- 6.) To whom have you uttered words?

Now you look at those questions: How you helped an unsaved person, how you strengthened a baby Christian, how you counseled him that have no understanding, how that you preached the truth, and what spirit came from you, and what words you were saying, how you helped an unsaved person, and what words you uttered. I am just going to tell you right now, do with it what you want, there is only one group of people in the whole Bible that fits into that category, and it is me and you.

Words. Talk about the words we speak. Einstein, part of his theory on relativity, said that whatever we speak, the words that go out of our mouth, they are just endless. They never end. When we put out radio broadcasts or we do something that goes out into space, and it keeps going and going and going and going. Einstein did not know where it was going, but he said if you could get in a rocket ship—this is 1933—you get in a rocket ship and fast far enough, you could actually catch up to the words of the Gettysburg Address that Abraham Lincoln said, because they are moving out there. Now that sounds nice if you want to make an atom bomb, but what bothers me is where are they going?

I have got a sneaking suspicion that you are going to have your little piece of paper, I am going to have my little piece of paper. I am going to open it up, and I am going to have my answers here, and about that time, every word I ever spoke in all of my life, I am going to roll in at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Category over here—I am oversimplifying this—category over here: fishing, golf, sports, whatever, job, on and on and on. And over here will be the category: the words you spoke with Christ. How about after they took all the cuss words out, you only had about five or six words out of the 15 million words that you spoke in your lifetime about Him? Your little piece of paper will not help you in that. That will show anybody paying attention that you labored for the wrong things.

Now he talks about riches in the passage today: "Labor not to be rich." You have got to have money to be rich. I will tell you something else. I would preach this. I would lay this out. Boy, this would scare the fire out of them. What always bothers me about money, I do not care if it is a dollar bill, a 50 dollar bill, I do not care what it is, I do not care if it is down to a penny, I do not care about the nickel or dime. Any country I ever went to, in any period of time, I found Roman coins that were third century BC that had Constantine's picture on it. I found them all the way with Trajan, the Roman emperor. There was not a piece of money that was ever built or made, a minted coin, that did not have somebody's super inscription of the head on it.

What if, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, every dime, every dollar, everything we ever had, came rolling down to that thing and rolls down on our feet, and the head on it speaks for what it was spent for? What if, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, it is not this who condemns you? How about if it is Abraham Lincoln or Jefferson or Ben Franklin or Jackson? How about if every piece of money God ever gave us to be stewards of rolls up at our feet? At the great Judgment Seat of Christ, how about if you spent more money on chlorine for your pool than you did to put the Gospel out of Jesus Christ? There will be some of God's people there that all their life spent more money on dog food than they did to get the Gospel out. What a day that is going to be!

## VIII. The Evil Eye and Dainty Meats

Then it says in Proverbs 23:6, "Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats." Let me tell you doctrinally here, this is the Antichrist. We saw it last week in the false feast. The evil eye of the Antichrist, for those of you that are caring about it, will be found in Zechariah 11:17. But inspirationally, it will go back to Proverbs 23:5, and the evil eye will be to the man who will set his eye on that which is not—the things that are not real, the things that are not even there.

Look at the last part of Proverbs 23:6: "neither desire thou his dainty meats." In other words, do not covet what he has. Do not look at somebody's big house or somebody's this or that, to have a million dollars or have all this stuff, and walk away saying, "Man, I would love to have that." Be content with what you have.

A guy said one time, "I wish God would give me a million dollars. If He gave me a million dollars," he said, "I would give Him a hundred thousand dollars of it." I said to him, "Why would you not give it all to Him if He was good enough to give you the first million? He is good enough to give you a second million." But that is what we do. "God, you give me, I will give you a little piece of it, and then look what I am going to do." In other words, do not covet what he has. Do not desire all those things. Do not be fooled. Do not be deceived. Do not labor for that which satisfies not. Do not sit around all day and dream about what somebody else has.

What we do is go through our whole life as Christians focusing on things that we do not have and never look at the things that we do have. The Bible says that godliness with contentment is great gain. If I have learned anything in life—and the problem really lays it out—I will tell you something: in this world, all that glitters is not gold. The truth of the matter is, if you want to get right down to it, and I will just say this and then I will move on quickly, it is not the fact that we need more money to be happy. It is not the fact that we need more money to be content. We are in a mess because we have not done right with what God has already given us, and we want to add more to that pile.

"Neither desire thou his dainty meat." I want to tell you something, there is not anything that anybody has out there who has millions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars. I do not care who it is. I do not care if it is J.P. Morgan or Donald Trump or whatever millionaire out there, some movie star. Let me tell you, you have got nothing that I desire. When you stop and

consider, we sing the song, "Count your many blessings, name them one by one." When you do, you desire nothing that they have got.

You have salvation this morning, do you not? You have 99.99 percent of the world beat right out of the gate. You have the right Bible this morning. That is a good start. If you have a working knowledge of it, man, you are way beyond everything else in this world. Your family in church this morning, they are sitting next to you. Are they in ministry together, going down to restart? Are they saved? Your kids love the Lord. Man, you have got it made. You have the hand of God in your life. Is God leading you and guiding you and directing you? You have a good Bible-believing church that preaches the Word of God. Your life, your pathway in life, is filled with men and women that you labored with, disciplined, counseled, helped, stayed with, and brought them through. Are you going to be desirous of those things? I do not think so.

Are you going to envy a house, a boat, a Harley Davidson? Are you going to covet somebody's bank account or what they have got? Man, if you have got those seven things right there, you have got it all. Those are the labors. Now, you have money, you have friends. So your money runs out, so you cannot buy the drinks anymore. You invest your life in somebody to disciple them and teach them the Bible, and you watch them do somebody else. The legacy of your investment and your labor is endless. The other one is gone when the money is gone, and you are going to envy that? You are going to envy a guy who has got a hot wife who is unbelievably beautiful, but when you marry her, you have got to get a prenup agreement because you do not trust her. Wow, you have got something there.

We spend our whole lives wanting things that are not real, laboring in things that will not satisfy, pursuing all the things that are not. Then when you lose your marriage, you lose your kids, when you lose everything, when you are not happy, and now you have been married for 10, 15, 20 years, have been saved that long, and all those things are gone, "What happened? How did this happen to me? Why did this happen? Why, why, why, why, why?" I will tell you why: because you labored with the wrong things. That is why. You invested in the wrong things. You spent your whole life in the wrong things. That is why. You invested in the wrong things. You spent your whole life pursuing things that were not real. They were not there. Now you are surprised that they were not there at the end of your life. Hey, buddy, they were not there when you started going through them. They did not start and then dissipate. They were as phony and unreal when you started as they are at the end of your life. You just got so caught up in labor, you just piled it on, and now here you are, and you actually wonder why you have the issues you have.

Because you will not deal with it, you will go through your whole life from this point on blaming it on everybody else. "Well, it is this person's problem," or "it is this," or "it is that." You will never take ownership. My old drill sergeant used to say stuff, and I cannot put it in the language he did, but he used to say this: "If it is a crap sandwich and you made it, you have got to eat it." That is not the word he used. But not us. We like to divvy it up. "Oh, there is a gross sandwich. Everybody has got a knife. I want to share this with somebody." You envy what? You envy those things out there when God is giving you everything that you could ever want. They are going to go through all their life—hey, it even gets worse or better, however you look at it—they are

going to go through all their life fooling themselves in all of those things of the world. Then at the end, when it all fails them, what happens? They get to go to hell for all of eternity.

On your worst day, no matter how screwed your life up is, no matter what mess you have made, if you are truly saved, at least at the end, you get to go to heaven. You have invested your life in the right thing. You have got a legacy of people that you have taken and trained and disciplined and counseled and brought them through tough times, and you get to see the fruit of your labor. I will tell you something, your investment has paid off, where the other people have invested in all the things and the possessions. They have it all gets old. You have to shove it. You have to keep updating it. You have to get the newer model. You have to do this. When you invest your life in a person and somebody else—and how many times have I told you, there are only two things in this world worth investing your life in: one of them is the Word of God, and the other one is the soul of men.

Listen, it does not take a rocket scientist to see who is building what. I have watched some of you guys and gals come into this church. You are incredible. You just blow me away. You are absolutely incredible. I have watched you come in, and in six months' time, you are moving. In a year, you are unbelievable. Two years later, three years later, you are just untouchable. You are so on fire. I have watched some other of God's people, five years, seven years, ten years, twelve years, struggling with the same stuff. Why is that? I am going to tell you here in a minute.

## IX. The Heart's Treasure and Its Manifestation

Two great keys to it. Proverbs 23:7 says:

*Proverbs 23:7*

*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.*

Two great keys to the Christian life, only two, in a real simple one:

11. What are you laboring in today? What is your building program like?

12. Where is your heart attitude with it?

Number two will always be in direct relationship to number one. There will be no peace. There will be no joy. There will be no happiness. There will be no blessings. There will be no "Kumbaya" with the family. There will be no satisfaction in life without these two things in the right place. Everything else will just be, as I have talked about, Haggai 1:6, "a bag with holes." You put it all in, you go through life, and when you get to the end of life, the bag had a hole in it, and it all fell out, because when it comes to you and the world and your flesh, there is no satisfying the flesh.

*Luke 6:45*

*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*

Your mind and your heart and your attitude, it is going to be a good treasure or an evil treasure.

*Matthew 6:21*

*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

How simple is that? The Bible teaches that when a man labors to be whatever he labors to be on the inside and building his house, what he thinks about, what he lusts after, what he covets, what he desires, will in time form himself into the attitude of his heart, and that is what he becomes. Now, when he speaks, you know exactly where he is at or she is at, because it is so clear.

I talked last week about learning the art of observing, and you learn to observe by watching situations, circumstances. A Christian who has it together will never just see things; he will always be observing things in time. This is what I try to teach you in the people ministry. You develop that and fine-tune that to the point where somebody can come to you with a problem, tell you the problem, and because through their speaking to you, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," if you know the principles, you can pretty much understand where it is all coming from and where it is all going to, just by listening to what they said, because you are observing. You are observing.

When you observe something, David in the Bible was a great observer. Have you ever noticed that an observer will always talk to himself? I will find myself talking to myself all the time. I will have to meet with somebody, and I will be thinking about it, and I will be talking to myself about what I am going to say. I talk to myself all the time. Now, in the world, they say if you talk to yourself, you are crazy. But who does not know that a New Testament Bible-living Christian is crazy? We are.

The book of Psalms, do you know what it is? Do you know why we love the book of Psalms? The whole book of Psalms is nothing more than a man talking to himself and writing it down. That is all it is. David was great at it. I will observe things, and then I will talk to myself. I am a great conversationalist, so I talk to myself, and I will say, "What do you think that is?" And the Lord will say, "Well, remember this principle here," or "remember that principle there." I said, "Yeah, yeah, I do." He said, "That is probably what you have got. Now you know this, and you know that already. Now you have seen this, and you watched it for a while. This is nothing new to you. Remember this situation here. Remember, you have been through four other ones just like that. I know the people change, but the circumstances in human nature never do. So do not make that this, but look at this and understand that within this is some of this." You observe them. You observe.

All my life, I observe things. I try to teach you to observe. Most of God's people, they are just one-dimensional. They just see something, and that is what they see. I do not want you to do that. You guys that went down to Columbia yesterday, you did not just see an opportunity to go; you observed an opportunity that was going to have endless results, so you went. It was not just a trip for you; it was a mission trip for you, and you observed that.

I will look at situations, and I will say to myself, I will see this situation, this person, this whatever, and I will ask myself, I will say, I will observe it, and I will say to myself, "Okay, what

is the difference?" And I will speak to the Lord. I will talk to Him. I will say, "What is the difference between an atheist who would not dream of financing a church or supporting it with any money, and a Christian who will not either?"

- Observation 1: What is the difference between an atheist who would not dream of financing a church or supporting it with any money, and a Christian who will not either?
- Observation 2: What is the difference between an agnostic that will not ever pick up a Bible and read it, and a Christian that never reads his either?
- Observation 3: What is the difference between an evolutionist who says there is no absolute truth, and a pastor who gets on a pulpit and says there is no absolute truth?

We need to observe things. When we observe, we absorb and we understand, because God will always give you the principles, and He will establish a course of action and direction through those principles.

- Observation 4: What is the difference between an unsaved man in his self-righteousness who will never take responsibility for his actions, and a child of God who is saved but will not take responsibility for theirs either?

You take a guy who walks into a place. There are 28 video cameras recording him walking in. He pulls out a gun, God forbid, and he kills 10 people. Somebody disarms him, throws him to the floor, gets the gun. Cops show up. They have got the guy on the floor. They look at the video. He walks in, same guy on the floor, pulls out a gun, shoots 10 people. They are all dead. When he goes for his arraignment, the judge says, "How do you plea?" And his lawyer says, "Not guilty." You see, that is the world's way. You are caught on camera. You kill 10 people in front of the whole world, but you are not going to take responsibility for that action because our system tells you not to. God's people do the same thing. They do the exact same thing. They will mess up their life. They will mess up their kids. They will mess up their marriage. They will mess up everything in their world, and yet when it comes down to the court time reality, "I am not guilty, Your Honor." That will play right up to the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I observe things.

- Observation 5: What is the difference between an unsaved man who will never go to church, and a Christian who will not go either?
- Observation 6: What is the difference between an unsaved man who is of the world, and a Christian child of God who lives like the world?

The answer is, there is no difference. You can tell everything about anything by just observing two things in somebody's life:

13. What they labor in life to build.

14. That labor being the treasure of their heart, good or bad, a good treasure or an evil treasure.

The things that are the inward part of them will always manifest itself to the outward. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

When you study your Bible, you find out that God spends His whole time observing man. You cannot miss it in the Old Testament that He is observing Israel through everything. I think the book of Esther is the greatest book in the Bible that proves that, because God is not mentioned in one place, but yet God is behind the scenes observing everything that is going on and never loses control. In your life, in my life, He does the same thing. He observes us. He observes us to the point that He sees what we are really building in our hearts and what our real treasure is.

I think the Lord looks at us, and I think He probably looks at us and He thinks to Himself, "What is the difference?" In Luke 7:46, I know we grieve the Holy Spirit of God, but I will tell you something, God is tempted on all points like we are, yet without sin. I want you to know, we talk about disappointing God, we talk about breaking Christ's heart. I believe He loves us so much that there are times that what you and I do absolutely frustrate Him. You say, "I know that is true," because look at how He was with the nation of Israel. There were times when He wanted to come down and wipe out Israel. Moses, the Bible says he is a man that speaks to God face to face, like a man speaks to his friends. You ought to go back and look at their two dialogues together. There were times when Moses came into the tent, and he was so mad at the nation of Israel, he said to God, "God, just come down and kill them all. Wipe them all out. Just murder them. They are worthless." And God would say to Moses, "Now, now, now, Moses, come on, they are just like flesh. It is okay, it is okay." Then there are other times that Moses came in the tent, and God was stomping up and down saying, "I am going to wipe every one of them out. I am going to open up the earth and swallow them down. I am going to kill every one of them." And Moses says to God, "Come on now, Lord, settle down. Just cool off here. Let me sing you a song or something. Just cool off a little bit. Now, if you do that, what are all the other nations going to say?" And God says, "Yeah, you are right, Moses." That is a relationship with God that most of God's people can never understand or get to, but there is the intimacy between you and the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking like a man speaks with his friends.

I am sure there are times that we all frustrate Him. I am sure when He looked at His disciples—I know in that story, there were times, the story of Mary and Martha. If you cannot read the frustration that He has with Martha—here is Mary out here doing everything right, here is Martha doing everything wrong, and she is out there taking credit for it. "Look at me, look at me, look at me, Lord." And she is over here working, and she is saying, "Lord, are you not watching what I am doing?" The Lord got so exasperated with her, just like He does you and me.

## X. The Frustration of Misdirected Labor

Luke 7:46, I think, is probably one of the greatest questions anywhere in the Bible for all of us. It fits right into where we are at today, where the Lord said:

*Luke 7:46*

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

Why is that? We claim to be His child. We claim to be washed in the blood. We claim to have the Holy Spirit of God in us. But what is the difference? What is the difference between all of the things of laboring in the wrong thing? How does a child of God truly get off the track to labor in

all of those things and make an absolute mess out of his life, lose their kids, lose their marriage, lose everything about them? How does that happen?

It all starts with you laboring in the wrong thing and going after the things that will never satisfy you. Pretty soon, you get caught into that. You have got to have more. You have got to have this. It has got to be bigger. It has got to be better. You are not satisfied. I have seen pastors and churches that had a building that was absolutely unbelievable. Most young churches, most churches, would die to have that building. It was everything, state of the art. And after about two years, the pastor says, "We have got to build another big building." Why? Because you are not satisfied with what you have. I will tell you, that will always lead you down the wrong road. So you put your people, all of that money, all of that time that could be spent in doing the ministry, goes into a labor for something that will never satisfy. Because after you are in that building for a while, it will not be big enough either. You will need something else. You will need this. You will need that. "Oh, I wish for you to put one of these in." Pretty soon, you will have to buy more property to buy a bigger one. After 20, 30, 40 years in the ministry, you have enough empty buildings that you could start a Safeway program, make them into a grocery store, all because we are not satisfied with what we have. All because we labor to be rich. We labor in the things that will not satisfy, and we focus and pursue the things that are not.

All of our Christian life will simply come down to just two things: what you labor in to build, and where your heart is in building it—a good treasure or an evil treasure.