

# Proverbs 23:9-12

Sunday 4/22/2018

The instrument you don't hear very often, what's that called? It's a mountain dulcimer. A mountain dulcimer. I think I knew his brother. Did you do that song from Deliverance on there? No, I knew that on my banjo. Oh, your banjo? That'd be a good offertory.

If you have your Bibles today, we're going to be back in Proverbs chapter 23. We're going to be looking at verses nine and 12 today. Let me read it for you here, and then we'll begin to talk about some of the things that we need to look at.

## I. The Hindrance of Possessions

You remember that last week, we looked at one of the greatest passages in the Bible on what many times will hinder our spiritual growth. You're going to find people, when you get into the ministry and you start working with people and dealing with people, you're going to find, obviously, that some people make it and some people don't. Our church has a great track record of so many people that really get all the way and really do something with the Word of God. There are some reasons for that. But in any church, I don't care where it is, you're going to find that there will be times that there will be things that will hinder us in our spiritual growth. Last week, we saw one of the major reasons for that, and it's our desire for money and possessions.

There's a great story that illustrates this proverb found in Matthew chapter 19, over in verses 16 through 23. It's the story that if you have any headings in your Bible over the story, it'll be the story of the rich young ruler.

*Matthew 19:16-23*

*And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life? He said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

That's one of the great stories in the Bible that illustrates what we were talking about in Proverbs last week. I don't know if you figured it out yet why this guy couldn't do what he needed to do, but it's the same reason many times God's people can't get all the way and do what they need to do. That's because one of the things that possessions, or your desire and your love for riches, does is it obscures faith. When you have everything and you give yourself everything and you hold nothing back, then you don't need to trust God for anything.

This is the problem when you get into Revelation 3:20. This is the problem with the Laodicean church today: the churches that have everything, the churches that "they want for nothing," as the Bible says. And yet they don't know that having all the physical possessions, the big buildings, and all of those things, none of those things takes the place of the truth of the Word of God. It's a great lesson that you learn. The reason why people that are like that, when some real issue comes into their life, then they completely fall apart. They'll go along and have everything. But as I said last week, the things that money will not buy, the things that they can't provide for you when you have marital problems, or you have child problems, or you have health problems, then you fall apart because all through your life you've never had any practice trusting God and walking by faith instead of walking by sight. The whole system breaks down.

I remember I gave you two fundamental keys to our Christian life that you need to build it around. That is, and it's very simple: our labor that we will invest in our house, what we build, how we build our spiritual temple. A labor for that which the Bible says "satisfieth not" will never do any good. A labor for those things that are not. Or you have the treasure of our heart that is based on the interest in the labor, what you've invested in, and all that you put into it. These two will be what we go after in life. Many times people, this will become their passion, their focus, their goals. We talked about, "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," what you build, what you labor doing. We spend our whole lives many times going after things that just leave us empty, things that are not, and things that will never satisfy. So we saw that last week.

Today we're going to move right on into Proverbs chapter 23. We want to see how it kind of blends in and moves forward and takes some great truths to us.

It says this in verse nine:

*Proverbs 23:9*

*Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.*

*Proverbs 23:10-12*

*Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee. Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge.*

## II. The Foolish Man and Resistance to Truth

Now verse nine says, "Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words." As you know, we've been in the book of Proverbs for quite a while now. We know that the book of Proverbs fundamentally is built around two types of people: a wise man and a foolish man. We also know, we've talked about this many times, doctrinally, as you see, as it's laid out in the Bible in the book of Proverbs, that it'll be the nation of Israel. Within the nation of Israel, you will find some people who are wise and some are foolish. This is illustrated in Matthew 25:1-10, when you have the 10 virgins. Five were wise and five were foolish. That's all a picture of the nation of Israel.

Inspirationally, as we apply it to our own lives, it will be people in life that you and I will encounter. Generally speaking, unsaved people will be the fools and saved people will be wise. An unsaved man or a woman is someone who has rejected Christ or not wanted to be part of anything that God was doing.

*Proverbs 14:1*

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*

So in a general sense, the fool here, in a practical way, will be an unsaved man or woman who rejects Christ. The wise person, the wise man or woman, will be someone who saw the gospel, saw Christianity, understood what Christ did for them, and then accepted Him as their own personal Savior. It's a general teaching on it, and it's a true statement.

But when you go beyond that, when you look at Christianity itself, forget the world and the lost, just look at Christianity. It'll also be a reference to God's people, those who will follow the Bible to do what God says, and then also the ones of God's people who will take His salvation. They'll reject any instruction to their walk with God. We saw it at the end of the sermon last week in Luke 6:46, where Jesus looked at His people and said,

*Luke 6:46*

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

You see this in dealing with people all the time. This should be one of the first lessons that you'll learn whenever you begin to get into the ministry. We've talked about it many, many times: the ministry is people. The ministry is taking the Word of God that God has imparted to you, growing through a process, and then putting that Word back out, starting with your own family, and then working wherever God would have you to go. You'll start to work with people. Many of you are going through Discipleship One with somebody, or you're working with them along the lines, or maybe in Discipleship Two. You're just dealing with them in a general sense, and all goes well. You're meeting every week, you're having a good time, and all goes well, but then something happens.

Once you get to the place in many people's lives, once you get deep enough into the Bible that the Holy Spirit of God begins to deal with them and begins to show them things in their life that have to change, this is where the real challenge comes in. Now they start to resist the principles. Now they start to, they really don't want the change in their life. They were fine as long as you were having a good time and teaching them this and teaching them that, and the milk of the Bible and all that great stuff. But once the Holy Spirit of God begins to dig a little deeper, once the Holy Spirit of God begins to reveal to them what their issues really are, what the problems really are, then they begin to resist.

In all of my years in ministry, which is almost coming up to a half a century, believe it or not, I have seen many, many people come to church for a while, then six months, then they're out for two, three years. Then maybe back in for a year, then they're back out again for another six months, in and out, up and down, everything that they do. They just cannot get past a point in

their life. They'll come back to church and they'll talk about, "Oh, I want to do this and I'm this and I'm that," and it'll last for a while, and then you won't see them again.

The reason for that, and I'm talking about good people, I'm not talking about terribly bad people, I'm talking about good, honest people. But what happens is that they'll come, and when the Word of God starts to do its work, Hebrews chapter 4 says that all things, talking about the Bible, all things in your life and my life are naked and open unto Him who has the eyes. He sees those things. The Bible says when you begin to get into the Bible, the Word of God discerns the thoughts and intents of our heart. I've said it many, many times, your Bible's the only book on the planet, when you start to read it, it starts to read you. What it does, it begins to reveal to you what needs to change.

You can get along for a while and have fun and all these things, but sooner or later, the Holy Spirit of God is going to tap you on the shoulder and say, "What about this?" People come to the point where they, I've seen them all their life struggle with things like that. You would think that it was some huge thing in their life, and it's not in many cases. It's just a simple thing that they go so far, the Holy Spirit of God says, "Now it's time to change some things." They don't want to change.

In preaching, any preacher in any church, anywhere, if he preaches the truth, he's going to offend somebody. That's why the churches have shifted today. They're almost like a play. They're almost like some kind of built set where you go in and there's nothing that is offensive. The guy works all week long to find stuff to say to his people that won't offend them. But if a man's preaching the truth, he's going to offend somebody. Truth to those who don't really want to change will always be offensive. It'll make them mad, they'll get upset.

You'll find in ministering to people, two kinds of people. You'll find those who, when they go for a while, the truth begins to impact them. They have to look at some things and change some things, and they don't want to. Then they begin to resist, as the Bible says in Proverbs 23:9, they begin to despise the very things that you give them.

Then you have the other person that the Bible talks about in Proverbs 27:7.

*Proverbs 27:7*

*The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.*

When somebody loves the Bible and loves the Word of God, they don't care what they've got to change. You're going to find that people will complain all day about the issues they have and the problems they face. Oh, they'll sit down and they'll talk to me about this and that and what they're going through and the struggle with this and the struggle with that. But when it comes to you to try to help them, and they are faced with the fact that it's not really everything that they're blaming it on, it isn't all the other people that they're complaining about, their issues are their own. Now they'll have some problems with that, and they will start to complain about you. They'll start to resist what you give them in teaching. They'll start to resist the principles. They'll start to question and argue about something. They'll get defensive about things. Now they'll

despise, as Proverbs 23:9 says, they'll despise the wisdom of thy words. They're a fool and they reject the truth of the Word of God.

### III. The Fail-Safe System for Ministry

Over the years, I've dealt with hundreds of people. For my own self, I put together what I call a fail-safe system for my ministry and dealing with people. A system that was built on observing human nature, watching, learning by trial and error, more error than trial, learning by the things that you see. I wasn't someone who just was oblivious to people's problems. I began to see the patterns. I began to catalog the patterns. I began to build in my life principles to minister by. A system that was built on observing human nature and what people do with truth of the Word of God when you give it to them. It's a system that keeps me from wasting my time if they really don't want to do what they've got to do to change.

Let me just say this, I'm willing. The problem has never been me. I'm willing to go the distance with you. I don't care about 10 years, five years, 20 years, or 100 years. If it takes that long for you to get what you need to get and you're really sincere and want to do it, I'm in, man, I'm there for you. But my system cuts through all the drama in life. Christians are filled many times with drama. You have drama queens and you have drama kings. They go their whole life and they can't seemingly exist without some drama unfolding in their life. My system cuts through that.

Then you have procrastination. People who say, "I'm going to do this," they just can't get around to doing it. I've got to be honest, that drives me nuts. I'd just as soon somebody say, "I ain't doing it." I'd have \$20 in my pocket every time if somebody says, "I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it, this is my time," and they never do. The next time somebody I say, "You need to do this," and they say, "You know what, I don't want to do it." Here, you're an honest man. That \$20 is worth me saving the time of you sending me down the wrong road when you really don't want to do it.

My system builds an accountability system when you work with people. I want to tell you something, brother, the real key to where a person is at or where he's going to go or she's going to go will be how they view their accountability to the principles of the Word of God. That's what got them messed up in the first place: no accountability to something. In the people ministry, we have once a month where we really, we've been doing it now for a number of years, and we really focus on the things that we try to really help people. I build them into my system. I gave them, I think there's like 18 or 20 rules of the road that we use. Because as Proverbs 23:9 says, there are people who are fools, the Bible says, not my words, His, there are fools and when you try to give them the answers to their issues, they will reject it and despise you and the words of wisdom that you try to give them.

Now, listen to what I'm about to say. This is very important. If you've got issues this morning, I'm going to show you how to fix them. I don't even care what they are. When I try to help you, I can only work with what you give me. I was, for a while I did electrical work, and I wasn't ever much of an electrician, but I was good enough that I got shocked and hit with 240 a couple of times, so I know what it's all about. But my greatest fear was going in when they sent me on a call and a woman wanted a fan like this in the middle of the room. You only got one shot to cut

one hole in the right spot. It may look like it's in the center until you put it up there and it's a little off. It looks fine like this, but like this it's off. I was always paranoid by the fact that I would put that fan in the wrong place and Wade walked in and they say, "And it's centered, it's off center." I was paranoid of that.

I remember that a lady wanted me to do this one time and wire this and wire that, and it was impossible. I remember telling her, I said, "Ma'am, I am an electrician. What you need is a magician. What you want is impossible for me to do." I think sometimes when you're trying to help people, they think that you come into the pastor's office, Bob's office, come and talk to him, come over to the house or whatever and sit out and he'll just, he's got that magic potion that he makes up over here and you drink it and then wow, all your problems are gone. No, no, let me tell you something. Whatever issue you have, and I don't care what it is, whatever issue you have, I'm telling you, I can only fix it and work with it by what you give me.

Any problem, any problem, I have to have three basic things from you. If you're working with somebody in my counseling ministry or the people ministry or disciple of somebody, you'll see at a glance, it's the same things that you need. We just never maybe articulated it the way I am today. I have to have three basic things from you if it's going to work for you and it's going to work for me.

- A baseline of truth.
- Honesty.
- Accountability.

Now that's someone that is committed to change. When you play games with these three things, which so many Christians do, you'll waste everybody's time. There will be people that work with you and your little groups that I know that they'll come and they'll teach you the Bible, they'll disciple you, they'll work through whatever they're working through. Many times you take that for granted, and we're here for that, and we'll always do that. That's what we do. We'll always do that. That's what the ministry is. But you know, they've got families too. They have to give up their time with their kids to help you with your problem. They do it without ever saying a word. I'm saying at the bottom line is, don't waste somebody's time. If you really don't want to fix your problem, I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that.

You will find that just like in the world, an unsaved person is acquitted as a fool. I'm afraid it doesn't stop there. You'll find in Christianity itself, God's people who really don't want to change and fix what's wrong with them. They're not committed to anything but themselves.

## IV. God's Simple Four-Point Formula for Change

Now in the Bible, the process of fixing this, it is so simple. I wish it was complicated. I know that modern Christianity today is akin to modern psychology. The idea of the pastor is to make your problem as complicated as it can be, so one, he can drag it out, and two, that it looks like

he's some great wizard to solving problems. The truth of the matter is, fixing whatever issue you have is a simple, basic, fundamental four-point process.

It's found in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

We've talked about this verse many, many times, a powerful verse. Now see how simple that verse is? There's nothing complicated about it. It's very basic and simple. A little four-point plan. God's simple formula for fixing whatever issue you have.

First of all, before we get to the four points, let's look at something. First of all, the Bible says, the Bible's given by inspiration. There's your baseline of truth. There's your anchor point. The Bible's a supernatural book. Somebody just says, "I don't believe the King James Bible's inspired." The Bible says, "All scripture is given by inspiration." The original manuscripts were not scripture. Scripture is the Bible you hold in your hand, and the Bible tells you it was given by inspiration. So now we have a baseline of truth that we can work with. There's our first thing that we need.

Then it says, "it's profitable for you." In other words, the Bible's not just a history book. The Bible's not just a book to have your devotions out of. It's not just a book to preach sermons out of. For you as an individual, the Bible that God gave by inspiration is profitable for you.

Now, you know what God's people's problem is? They go through their whole life. God bless them, I love them. They go through their whole life and never find out what the profit is for the Bible that God gave them. They struggle through things in their marriage. They struggle with things with their kids. They struggle things in their own personal life. They struggle with their jobs. They struggle with every issue in life. For every reason, they have never come to the conclusion that the Bible was given by inspiration and it's profitable to you. I think the most shame for a child of God is to say, "That Bible has no profit to me," or "If it does, I don't know what it is."

Now it's profitable in four ways, and there's a little simple formula.

1. First of all, it says it's profitable for doctrine. Now doctrine in the Bible, the word doctrine means to teach. The word doctrine will be the foundational truth of the Word of God. In other words, when the first thing that it says is doctrine, the Bible says that doctrine teaches you what is right. You know, when Jesus showed up, the scribes and the Pharisees, you know what the biggest problem they had with His doctrine that He taught? He was teaching a doctrine that they didn't believe, and their doctrine didn't line up as His because theirs was false and His was true. The number one thing that's missing in all the big churches today, or any church really, is doctrine. Nobody wants to offend anybody. I guarantee you, you start to preach doctrine, you're going to upset somebody. But you know, upset about things is not

always bad. You know how most of you got saved? Probably not all of you, but a lot of you, especially you men. You know how you got saved? Somebody made you mad with the gospel. You went to hear the preacher and he kicked you off, and you said, "I'm never going back there again," and here you are this morning, which brings great credibility to the saying, "Never say never." You wouldn't have got saved if somebody wouldn't have ticked you off. If somebody would have just told you how nice you are and how sweet you are and how beautiful you are and how you're just a lovely person, you would have believed it. You wanted to believe it, but somebody had the guts to stand up there in a pulpit and tell you how rotten you really were. You didn't like it. I preached one time years ago, and I was preaching on the two families. John 8:44 says, John 8:44

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. The Bible says that once you get saved, you get brought into God's family. I was preaching on the fact that if you're unsaved today sitting in this room, your family name is the devil. I was obviously making a point. When you start talking like that, you can see people start to get nervous. I said, "Now if you're saved this morning, your family name is Christ, you're in Christ. But if you're sitting here this morning and you're unsaved, you're of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you shall do." When I was done preaching, some people got saved. This lady came up to me, and she was very respectful, very kind, but I could tell that she didn't like what I said. There wasn't anything wrong with what I said. What I said was the truth. But sometimes truth offends people. She came up and she said, "You know, I really enjoyed your being here this week, but," she says, "I must take issue with the sermon you preached this morning." She says, "It offended me. I got a little upset when you said that my spiritual family is of the devil." She says, "I'm not saved." She said, "I've been coming to this church." She said, "I just took offense to that. I just wanted to be honest and tell you that I took offense to that, that you told me that my spiritual family, my spiritual name this morning is the devil." I said, "Ma'am," I said, "I totally understand that. I said, you know what? About 27, eight years ago, I sat and heard a guy preach and he told me the same thing. I got so offended just like you did when I said it today. I'll tell you what, you need to do what I did." She said, "What was that?" I said, "I changed families." I said, "If you don't like being in the devil's family, because that's what the book says. That wasn't the gospel according to Bob. That was the gospel according to John chapter 8, verse 44." I said, "I didn't like it either. Change families." She, before the sermon was out the rest of the week, she got saved. She changed families, but she didn't like it. Now, if I were to get up there and said, "Oh, we're all God's children. Oh, oh yeah, oh, you're all wonderful today. Let's just talk about," she had a one-way believing that maybe never got the same. In other words, sometimes truth, as hard as it may be, and you don't like it. Sometimes you've got to, you know, sometimes some of you hard-headed guys and gals out there. Let me tell you something, women can be as hard-headed as guys. They don't just make two by fours for guys' heads. Sometimes you need that little crack alongside the head. You get mad and then you think about it. Then you say, "You know what? He's right." So it's profitable for doctrine. Doctrine will always tell you what is right.

2. Then the second thing that's profitable for is for reproof. Not only will the Bible tell you and show you what's right, but then He's not done. Then the Bible's profitable to show you what's

wrong with it. Some good examples of that would be two books that just come to mind. Proverbs is one of them. Proverbs talks about a wise man and a foolish man. It'll show you nine things that a wise man is, and then show you eight things that a fool is. That's profitable. That shows me not only what is right, but it now will show me what's wrong. The Book of Ecclesiastes is another. The Bible's filled with it, but the Book of Ecclesiastes, I gave it to you last week, 10 vanities laid out right there for you, showing you what's wrong with things. You'll find the reproof in principles, you'll find them in stories, you'll find them in character studies. The Bible just won't be profitable because it will tell you what's right, it'll tell you what's wrong.

3. The third one, here comes the game breaker. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof," here it comes, "for correction." Not only will it tell you what's right and then tell you what's wrong, now the Bible will show you how to fix what's wrong. Right there's where the problem starts. "I don't want to fix it." "I'm enjoying," "I'll go so far," "I'll do this," "I'll go so far, but I am not going to take the correction." The Bible will show you how to fix what's wrong with you. Maybe you're having struggles in your marriage, the Bible will show you how to fix that. You'll say, "Well, my husband or my wife don't want to do what's right." The Bible will show you how to deal with that. Somebody says, "Well, I have issues in my family with my mom or my dad or my uncle or my aunt or whatever, we have issues." Well, it'll show you how to fix that. "Well, I have problems with my addiction or my struggle in life." It'll show you how to fix that. It'll show you how to correct every issue in your life. But first, you've got to see what is right, and then you've got to see what's wrong, and then you've got to decide, "I'm going to fix that."
4. Now the fourth thing that is profitable, how simple is this? You know why most churches, if you go in for counseling, they'll charge you a fee for counseling? I never understood that. Most churches you go to, if they have a counselor on staff, you know it's \$100 an hour, and you'll have to go in there, or they'll give you a break, \$25 an hour if you're a member of the church, and you'll go in there. I have never understood that. I have never understood how I could charge you for something God gave me free. Now if I would have wrote the Bible, if I would have put all this stuff together, you'd have paid through the nose. But I didn't. I've looked at that all of my ministry, all my life, and I've seen pastors and churches and counselors that I'm going to commit and I'm going to take the Bible that I got free, I'm going to take the profitable messages that God gave me free, I'm going to take everything that I got free, I'm going to give it to you and fix your problem and charge you for it. I don't get it sometimes, I just don't. I mean, I'm telling you, it's a thing where it is so simple. I couldn't charge anybody, even if I didn't have any issues with that personally, I couldn't look at you in a straight face and charge somebody for that because it's so simple. Who's going to pay anything for that? In the Bible there's a story about a guy by the name of Naaman, back there, and he wanted to get clean because he was a leper. He goes down to the prophet, and the prophet says, "Oh yeah, I'll get you clean, you come back this afternoon and we will go through the process of getting you clean." So Naaman, he's a lieutenant colonel or maybe a general of the Lord's show, he's a big time guy. He went back, I'm sure, I'm saying this, but I know this mindset, he went back and he got himself ready, "Wow, this happened at three o'clock, I'm going to meet the prophet of God. There's going to be some spectacular event.

I'm going to have all my lieutenants, all my captains, I'm going to have three divisions around there. I want everybody to see this great act that God's man is going to do to fix my problem." So he winds up there, and he's ready to go. I'm sure he had an entourage, tanks and personnel carriers and the troops lined up and everybody's there, and the old man comes up and he comes up to the prophet and he says, "Here I am, let's get it on, everybody's here." And the old man looked at him, he said, "No problem, go baptize yourself in Jordan seven times. Just dip down seven times." "What?" He said, "I thought you'd do some great thing. I thought you'd strike the heavens and lightning would come down, the earth would shake. I would be standing there, lifted up before the world and come back down clean." "Why the dirtiest river on the planet is Jordan. I brought all these people, they've come to see my cleansing, and you want me to go dip seven times? What is wrong with you?" He thought God would come down and show them great thing. That's what people want with their problems today. Expect God to come down and give lightning and crack this church open, and it just doesn't work that way. It's just simple. You do four things. First of all, you get, it's profitable. You get doctrine, you find out what's right. You get reproof, you find out what's wrong. You get correction, you find out how to fix it. And then the fourth thing is instruction in righteousness. Once you learn what's right and once you learn what's wrong and then once you decide you want to fix it, the instruction in righteousness will show you how to keep it fixed. You don't go back into it again. It just doesn't get any easier than that. I wish that there was something spectacular. I wish it was something that just, it is not. It's just simply believing what the Word of God says and in your heart being committed, being sick of the way your life is, sick of the way you're going, and want the change. It can only come from the Word of God, but you have to, you have to have the truth. You have to have honesty. You have to have accountability. Then he says in verse 17, "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." That's not perfect as far as sinless perfection. That's perfect for the work of God. When a man or a woman gets saved and begins to hear the great doctrines of the Bible, it will lead them, it will lead them to see what's wrong with them. It will lead them because doctrine, what's right, will always show you what's wrong. It'll lead them to see what's wrong with them, and then now they're at a crossroads. Many of you have been at that crossroads. Some of you may be at the crossroads right now today in your life. You're at a crossroads, the fool or a wise man who takes the Word of God's instructions. One will do something with it. He'll go down this road. The other one will despise it. They'll go down that road. People who really don't want to change, they'll stop right there. They'll get the doctrine. You'll give them the correction. They'll stop right there. They're not going to go any farther. As Proverbs 23:9 says, they begin to blame you or they'll blame me, they'll blame the church. Their problems they'll begin to put on everybody else except themselves. The desire that they despise the words and the instructions of the wise because they're a fool. Now they have issues with the Bible, the preacher, the people, the church. I had a guy one time years ago, and we did Romans. We did Romans, I don't know how many years ago, it's on the website. But I think we were in Romans for three or four years. This kid came for a while and then he did, same reason, he just didn't want. Now he's going out telling everybody that the reason why he quit coming is the fact that the church, Bob, he says, "Bob has spent four years on the Book of Romans." He says, "Pete Rockman

himself would not spend four years on the Book of Romans," which is not true. He said, "It's, it's, it's, it's," and let me tell you something. I did spend three or four years on the Book of Romans. That is my confession to you. I will tell you this, three or four years in the Book of Romans is probably a very poor job of teaching the Book of Romans. We're in Proverbs. I had a woman one time a couple years ago, whatever, they left the church. One of the reasons was that "Bob's too long in Proverbs." Been going too long in Proverbs. Well, Proverbs is the mind of God. How quickly do you want to go through the mind of God? In this particular case, very quickly. I mean, you hear it all the time. You don't get upset with it. After a while it becomes comical. I mean, somebody will come to church, they love it. They're doing great. Everything's fine. Then suddenly when they get to that point where they get the, they get the doctrine, they get the correction. Now they're faced with changing. The Holy Spirit of God is working with them. Now, all the things that they once loved is, "All you people drank out of the wrong water fountain." Now look at you. "You all are caught up in," oh, they see the truth now. They saw the truth for a long time. But when the truth began to knock on their door. I'm telling you, that's just the way it goes. People will say they want to change. They'll say, "I want to do this. I want to do that." Honestly, I believe that when they say that, they probably really want to. But it just isn't as easy as saying it is. There's some work involved. It's one thing, it's one thing. I remember one time, years ago, they had a place down south of Canton called Bear Creek. They had the world's largest steak. This thing was like four pounds. If anybody could eat that steak at one sitting, they got it free. A bunch of us went down there. All that week, I knew I wanted to eat that whole steak. When you drove in the parking lot, I hadn't eaten all day, which was rare, anyhow. But anyway, I hadn't eaten all day. The smell of that aroma, that steak, I thought, "I'm going to do this. I can't wait." When they brought that steak up, it looked like something that Fred Flintstone ate on the comics, that brontosaurus steak that they caught. It was huge. About that thick. It was unbelievable. I'm saying to myself, "I'm going to eat this steak." But when I started, it was good when I started. Oh, it was wonderful. You suck your lip and pull that off. I'm saying, but about 20 minutes into it, I realized that I was in over my head. That was one big steak. About 40 minutes into it, all of us, there's five of us doing it. All of us are looking at each other and saying, "You know what, we ain't going to make this." I persevered a little longer and looked down and it still was not much gone. I thought to myself, "You know what, that's exactly what we do." We want it. We want to be what God wants us to be. We want to have the whole Christian life like I wanted the steak. I was determined I was going to do it. But when I sat down to do it, I realized I was in over my head and I couldn't finish it. Many times God's people do the same thing. They want to do it. I believe they want to do it. But they get in over their head and they come to a point where they just won't go past a point. They're not willing to change what they've got to change to fix what they've got to fix. I understand it. I get it. I'm not mad at anybody. I get it. I understand. I do.

## V. The Importance of Remembering God's Landmarks

Now look at verse 10, moving back to Proverbs here. "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless." We spent three weeks on this, and it was a good three weeks.

I showed you how that, doctrinally, all this is a picture of how to figure things out with your Bible and history. How the landmark, the Old Testament landmark Israel, New Testament landmark the church. But inspirationally, there's more to it than that. Going back to Acts chapter 10 and 11 and 12 where you find the church in Antioch, which was the first church. You're going to find that in your Christian life and the things that you and I do after we get saved and the thing God does for us, there's some landmarks we should never forget. I know it fits in history. I know that the nation of Israel will put the Old Testament in perspective, and the church will put the New Testament in perspective. But I want to tell you something, if anything will put your Christian life in perspective, it'll be remembering the things that God has done in your life and ought to be your landmarks.

You know what it says over there in Psalms 77:10-12?

*Psalms 77:10-12*

*And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.*

Let me tell you something. The reason why we don't want to go farther in the Lord is because we forget and don't have those landmarks. We forget the years. We forget the way it was before God saved us. We forget the way it was before we have salvation. Everything was against us. How miserable and rotten our lives were. We're not like the children of Israel. They cried about the bondage in Egypt, didn't they? They cried about all of the things that they were under in the oppression. God sent them a great deliverer and He led them out of Egypt. Then they get out there in the wilderness and there's no water, there's no food. Now, like just good old Baptist people, they began to complain. "Oh, we never should have left Egypt. Oh, what about the melons we had and the garlic and the leeks and the fish? Oh, the stuff that we ate freely." Freely? You were a slave. You're under bondage of the wickedest system in the history of the world. They killed your grandfather. They killed your great-grandfather. They killed your dad. They worked your mother to death. Freely?

When you forget the day God brought you out of Egypt. Sometimes you think in a weak moment, the world was better. Was it? Not for me it wasn't. "Oh, I remember the garlic, the leeks. I remember the melons, I remember the fish, the garlic, the melons, the leeks." Yeah, and all the gas that it gave you. We forget the years. The years we cried out unhappy. The years we struggled with an addiction. The years we were aimless and hopeless in our life. The years of all the dumb mistakes that we made and the problems that we went through. Then one day God sent you a deliverer. He came down and He saved you. You know what that is in your life? Besides the day of your salvation? That's a landmark. That's a landmark you never want to forget.

Then he says, "I will remember the years." Then he says, "I will remember the works." Look at what God has done with your family. Look at what God has done with you. When you came in here you knew nothing about the Bible. You cared nothing about the things of God. Now God has transformed you and brought you, and some of you have come so far. Others of you are so exciting to watch you enter into that. You know you're going to make it all the way to the end.

You know what that is? The works that God does in your life, the little things that He puts in your life, the little people that He gives you, this, that, that, the person that disciples you, the person that walks over and gives you a wide margin Bible because they know you can't afford one, or the person that put their arm around you, it says just the right thing in the right time that you needed it. That's a landmark.

I had a guy one time went into the ministry. He was a good kid. He was moving away and going to another state way out west. About two weeks before he left, he came in to see me and he said, "Bob," he said, "I just need to talk to you." I said, "What's up, man?" He said, "I'm scared." He said, "I'm leaving everything I know here. I'm walking out of a nest. I'm going out here into something I don't know." He said, "I'm excited about it. But," he said, "I want you to know, I'm scared. I'm afraid. I'm afraid I'm going to get out there and I'm not going to know what I need to do, or I'm not going to do what God called me to do. I'm just afraid." I get that. I understand. I really do.

I told him, I said, "Here's how you handle that. You look back at your life and my life, and I'm a witness to it, because I won you to Christ about 10 years ago. You go back in your life and you look at every turn of your life, what God has done in your life to get you through to the next level. You look at that, focus on that, and you realize that your job now to move out and do that is just the next level of what God, God hadn't failed you in 10 years of everything you had to deal with. He will not fail you in this." You know what that is? That's landmarks. Landmarks in your own life. Landmarks are the things that God has done for you that are unexplainable. Things that He's done for you that reason won't answer. Things that He's done for you that you try to tell. Did you ever have God do something for you? And you try to tell somebody and they just look at you like you're nuts. You know why that is? That's your landmark, not theirs. You'll say, "Oh yeah, I guess you had to be there." Yeah, you had to be there and it was for you. When you get down the road and tough times come and you struggle with things and you have fears in your life, it'll be those landmarks that'll hold you together when nothing else will.

Then he goes and says, "I will remember the works of the Lord: surely thy wonders of old." All the wonderful things God's done in your life. Some of you kids, you found the love of your life in this church. Some of you got married with people you found here. Some of you are going to get married with people you find here, and you just, you know what, God has given you, and you could have looked all through the world. Let me tell you something. Getting to the church that teaches the Bible and getting in ministry and letting God bring the one to you instead of going to mydate.com place over there is a lot better. Let God bring it together. All the wonders. The wonders, the wonder of your family, God's saving your kids. The wonder of God bringing up your kids with you and giving you everything that you could ever want. The wonder of all of that. Those are landmarks.

Those are things when the Bible says, "Remove not the old landmarks; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless." That's where most of God's people are today. They have no landmarks, so they're in the fields of the fatherless. They're just trying to struggle through life. God never really done anything. They've never brought the three things that they need to bring. They approach it half-heartedly, half-committedly. They have one foot in the world and one foot in the

Bible. They don't have an anchor. The landmarks are the anchor by which will hold you that you cannot deny that God is going to do something with you tomorrow because look what He has done for you yesterday. The fact of the time you lost your job and you were scared and you were nervous and then God came through for you. The time when you went through some health issue and God came through for you. Even if He didn't come through for you, you have the comfort of His arms around you knowing that no matter what happens, you belong to Him. The world can't give you that. That's one problem that only God and His arms around you can do for you.

## VI. Commitment, Action, and Accountability for Change

Now look at verse 11. "For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee." Doctrinally, that's all Israel is the second coming. I get that. I want to focus on for you and for me. What He's saying to you and me is this: God is always ready to plead your cause to fix whatever issue you have. The Bible says that He's my intercessor. He's seated at the right hand of God the Father. He makes intercession for me, Romans 8. When He's always ready to plead my cause, whatever problem I have, whatever issue you have, He is ready, willing, and able to fix whatever's broken. But you have to want change and you have to be committed to that change.

Real change in your life and in my life will require three things.

5. It'll require, first of all, a commitment to change. You have to want a change. Everybody wants to change, but nobody is hardly committed to change because committed to change is different than just wanting to change. So it's going to take a commitment to change.
6. The next thing it's going to take, it's going to take action to that commitment. You're going to have to do something. I can give you the principles, I can walk you through it. I can do everything that you need to do. It's like learning how to drive and park a car. You've got to go for your driver's test. I can drive you up and down the street. I can set up some cement blocks out there in an empty parking lot and let you practice and practice and practice parking that parallel car. We can do all that over and over and over again, but at some point, when you really want to become a seasoned driver and get your license, you've got to get in that car by yourself, drive this guy around, and then park it with him watching you. In other words, you can be committed to get your license, but it takes action for you to do what you've got to do to get it.
7. And the third thing, it takes accountability. You've got to be accountable to something. You do.

I'll tell you something else. He's willing to do it and He's willing to plead our cause, but I will tell you something. The longer we wait to do it, the more we put it off, the more we procrastinate and make excuses, the harder it's going to be. The more complex it's going to become, the more compound it's going to come. You're going to get your kids involved, it's going to get this involved, it's going to get that involved, and pretty soon, it won't be the fact that God won't change you. It'll be the fact that you have hardened your heart so much that you won't let that change happen. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about. I've seen it all in my ministry.

## VII. Applying Heart and Ears to Knowledge

Now, here's the answer, verse 12. Going right back to what we've said so far, "Apply thy heart unto instruction." That's the instruction in righteousness in 2 Timothy 3:16 we talked about already. "And thine ears to the words of knowledge." Listen, when God puts somebody, when you want to change, and you find a place that is going to help you change that's committed to the principles of the Word of God and only the Word of God for that change, and God puts somebody in your life to teach you, to instruct you, to help you, do whatever you're going through, you need to begin to look at it as the right way.

I already used the example of Moses, how the nation of Israel was in bondage in Egypt and they cried out to God, and God sent them a Moses, a deliverer. You will go through your bondage, and He got them out of the bondage of Egypt. Listen, I'm telling you, you're going through a bondage of life, God will put a Moses in your life. He'll give you somebody that'll walk you through the Bible to help you, and you need to listen to them. You need to follow their instructions. You need to quit fighting them when they get to a point where you don't want to change. Change is the only thing that's going to change you. God said to me one time, "I'm so sick of my life, nothing ever changes." I said, "You know why? That's because you're not willing to change." That's to start with you, action. A commitment to change, action, and then accountability. I mean, you said you wanted help. Now here it is.

The reality of it all. Didn't work very well for Moses, did it? He went down there and did everything for them, and they hated him, they cussed him, they murmured against him, they despised what he had to say. Even times they wanted to kill him. The man of God, Moses, sent to the people of God, Israel, to deliver them out of the bondage of the world, Egypt, and they despised him for it when it didn't work out for him.

So I close this thing here and wrap this up. I want to bring it all down to two things. I want to talk first of all for just a few moments for those out there that may be listening that really need help, and don't want to take it. Then I want to say something to you folks that are actively involved as helping people working through their problems. You're making an investment in their lives.

The Bible says in Proverbs 23:9-12, we've looked at it, but it says in verse 12, "Apply thine heart unto instruction, and thine ears to the words of knowledge." It says in verse nine, "And not to despise the words of wisdom." So to those of you who will go no farther, to those of you who have come to that point in your life, like we've looked at where you've got the doctrine, you've got the reproof, but now the correction is where you're hung up on. I want to tell you something, you're in for a hard road in life. Life doesn't get any easier. I don't know what your favorite ice cream is, but whatever it is, I'd change it, and I'd start just eating one kind, it'd be called Rocky Road, because that's where you're going in life. You can't change the situations in life without changing yourself.

Then there's those of you who labor every week in helping people, and I drive and see you meeting here at the church and in your homes, and every night there's probably a number of

people out there that are working with people. Many of you are doing it over the phone, with people up in Lincoln or around the country or Las Vegas or wherever you do it. Let me just tell you something I've learned. There will always be people who will not love truth, and they'll start for a while, and then they'll bail out. They're always going to be there. I love them, God bless them, most of the time they're very good people.

## VIII. The Microscope of God's Word and Discipleship

But you will also find, and this church is a living testimony to this truth that I'm about to say, that there'll always be that remnant of people who when they get saved and find a Bible-teaching church, they'll do whatever they've got to do to get what God has for them. They'll put no holds on it. They will blow through those four things like a hot knife through butter. They will see what's right, they will see what's wrong, they'll see what they've got to fix, and they will fix it. They can't get enough Bible from you. They actually begin to apply what you give them. You can actually see them grow right before your very eyes. Nothing gets in their way, and I mean nothing. They're in the Bible for six months, they look like somebody's been in it for two years. They've been in it for two years, they look like somebody's been in it for five years. I mean, they changed everything, they had to change because they wanted everything that God had for them.

Back in 1 Samuel chapter 3, the great life of Samuel, and what a great picture that is. Samuel reminds me of so many of God's people that I've had in my ministry over the years. The Bible says that you know the story that he didn't know the Lord yet, and the Lord was revealing himself to him. Down toward the end of the chapter, we see the end result of him just doing what God called him to do, and learning and growing by the Moses that God had put in his life, in this case, Eli.

*1 Samuel 3:19-20*

*And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.*

The key I see in so many of you, you will not let one word of that book fall to the ground. You will take everything you can get. You've got to know this too, change will be the only way that God will establish you in the Lord. It's through a process of growth, and growth is nothing more than looking at yourself.

You know, you get a telescope and you go out and look at the moon. I remember years ago, when my mom and dad bought me my first telescope, it was a cheap Sears telescope, but for the time when I was, I thought I had a 200-inch Mount Palomar. It was incredible for me. I remember I went out one night, it was just getting dark, and the moon, and I had never looked through a telescope before. I really didn't know how to work it. This one was a really cheap one. It had four powers on it, but you didn't change the eyepieces like you do with the high dollar ones. You pulled the focus out to here, and that was 25 power. You pulled it out the next one, that was maybe 75 power. You pull out to the next one, that was 100, and maybe 150 is all you could get out of it. Then you had to focus each one. But I didn't know that. It was into the 25 power. I

looked through it, and I found the moon, and 25 power, focused it. I thought, "Wow," but I've got to tell you, in my mind I was just a little disappointed. I don't know what I was expecting. Maybe like a power 13 or something. It was there, but it wasn't. I remember looking at it and thinking to myself, "Wow, that's convincing myself. That's really pretty good."

Then I don't know what happened, but I accidentally got fooling around with it, and I pulled it all the way out, and I looked back through it, and the whole thing was white. You've got to focus. So I'm thinking, "What did I do?" So I started screwing up, and all of a sudden it came into crystal clarity. I was looking right down into the crater. I'm thinking to myself, "Whoa." Then I figured it out. "Oh, this thing has," I'm not the most technical guy on the planet, so it takes me a while to figure it out. I figured it had four power stages. So I would back it down to 25, and then clicked it out to the first stop. "Oh, it's getting bigger. Oh, and now it is bigger. Now it's really getting bigger. Wow, there it is." I figured it out. It had four different stages, and every one you saw more clearly what was on the moon.

I thought years later, you know, that's exactly what the Word of God does to you. You start coming to church here, and you all look at ourselves through 25 power. We look pretty good at 25 power. But the more you crank up the magnification as you grow, when you look at yourself through higher magnification, I know when the moon was true. At 25 power, even 50 power, I didn't see anything. It looked like a very nice place. But once I started getting up on high power, it was a very desolate place. It showed all the cracks, the ridges, and all the crevices, and all of the things, and it was up there. Our Christian life is like that. The more you get into the Bible, or the Bible gets into you, and it magnifies to you yourself, the more you see the imperfections. For many of God's people, they just keep fixing those imperfections as God shows them. Some of God's people, they'll go through 25 and 50 power, but boy, when that scope starts to show the cracks, they're out. Because you don't want to change.

You have to continually putting yourself under the microscope of the Word of God, and cranking down the power to show you the imperfections that need to be fixed. Some of God's people, they just flow right through. They'll go for it, man. They will just take everything you give them. While others are after four or five years still asking the same questions, dealing with the same issues, the ups and downs in life, coming for a while. I'll tell you that you're absorbing everything that is given to you.

The goal number four in discipleship, when you disciple somebody, there's four basic goals, but the last goal is to put you back into ministry. That's why you'll see so many times that they'll disciple somebody, and then they'll bring you back through again with somebody else and allow you to teach the lessons. Once you get through that, then you're pretty much on your own. But now you're ready to go to work. You get to the place where you don't need somebody pointing out the Bible to you all the time. You're now enjoying getting in and digging about yourself.

## IX. Investing in Those Who Desire Growth

Here's my advice to you. When you get somebody like that, pour everything you've got into them. Give them everything. Hold nothing back. They are worthy of whatever investment you're

going to put in your life. There are so many people that only want to go halfway, and you help them, you do everything you can for them. Maybe down the line someplace, they'll change their mind. Praise the Lord for that. But when you find one who wants it all and wants to do it and get it all, you give them everything they need. My church, my life is filled with people like that.

One of my favorite places in the Bible, and I've never really said this, but I think it all the time. I've thought about a lot of you. It's over there in Acts 8:29. The story is, you know the story, the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip the Evangelist. Philip was down in Samaria, having a great revival. This Ethiopian eunuch is over here, and somebody gave him a copy, Isaiah 53, and he's reading it and trying to figure out what it's all about. The Bible says that God's spirit pulls up Philip, brings him over to the desert, and he's standing there at about probably 100, 150 yards away. He sees this guy sitting on the backside of that thing, stopped his chariot in the middle of the blazing sun of the day. He can't take his eyes off Isaiah 53. He wants to know. Philip is standing there waiting for instructions, and the Lord says to him, "Philip," the Bible says there,

*Acts 8:29*

*Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*

The Bible says that Philip ran.

I don't know how many times I've seen so many of you come into this church. Came to a Thursday night Bible study. You came to a Sunday morning. We got to know each other a little bit, and I got to watch, I got to observe you. The Lord put His arm around me, and He said, "You see that guy, see that gal? Go join yourself to that man's chariot. You give them everything they need, because they're worth any investment." Those are the best people in life. You're always going to have the ones who don't want to go the distance. It's okay. It's part of the ministry. But if you go around your life focusing on that, you'll be out of the ministry so fast, you won't know what hits you. I never focus on what I don't have. I always focus on what I do have. When God gives you somebody like that, my advice to you, pour yourself into them. Give them everything. I look around for my people that are young and struggling and trying to get it going, what you need, what I can do for you. I may not be discipling you. I may not be the one that's working with you, but you're in my church, and I'm here for you, and I want to make sure you get everything you need. Everything you need, I want to make sure you get what you need, because you're worth the investment. You're worth the investment.

You're always going to have the drama kings and the drama queens, the procrastinators who talk about change. They say, "You know, this next year is going to be my year, I'm going to change." Well, you should have made next year the Lord's year instead of your own year, because nothing changed. But boy, those who want to change, those who come into this church and never miss a beat. I've got to tell you, I've said this to some of you before, some of you young gals and some of you guys have come into this church, and you've been here for maybe four or five weeks, and I'll say to somebody, "You know what, see that guy, I see that gal. It seems like they've been here for 10 years." You just slipped right in the groove, man. Nothing's going to stop you. You're going to get in that book, you're going to learn everything you can, you get disciplined, you get disciplined one, then you say, "I want disciple two, is there a disciple three? No, we'll make one up,

I want more." You know, and you're just, nothing stops you. When you have somebody like that, you give them everything that they need. They're the ones who make the ministry worth it all. People who love the book and love God, and people who will take the instructions.

When God put Mel Shabbat in my life, who was my father in the Lord, I recognized who he was in my life. I recognized that God put somebody in my life who knew more about it than I did. I never got to the place in my life where I ever thought I knew more about it than he did. I never got to the place in my life where I thought, "Well, the old man, he was out of touch in so many ways," and now here we are today. I never thought that. I never came to the place where, no matter what he said to me, and he was rough on me. But that's the way it was back then. He was rough on me. But I never resented him being rough with me, because deep down in the shot, I knew he loved me and he had my best interest in heart, and he knew much more than I did. He knew someday I was going to have to face the onslaught, and he knew if he treated me with kid gloves, I'd probably fall apart if I ever got there. He was rough on me. He was the one that taught me to be exact when I preached.

I told you the story before. I was preaching at a place one time where there was like four or 500 guys down there. It was a mission, and I was up there and I was going to town, man, and I was up there preaching, and there was a bunch of bums, and I was giving it to him. I said, "You know what? You guys need to get a job." Then another Bible says, "By the sweat of your brow, you know, you get your bread." Right in the middle of that whole thing, I heard this big booming voice, "Book, Chapter, Verse." I looked down at him, and I said, "What?" He said, "Book, Chapter, Verse." Okay, I went back there and it said, "by the sweat of your face." I said, "sweat of your brow." "Now, what's the big deal?" To him, it was a big deal. Right in front of 400 guys, he stood up and he said, "Look, young man, if you're going to preach the Word of God, preach it correctly."

Now, what would you do if I did that to you? I know, you call the NAACP and all the law people you can get in and you can sue me. I know, I know, I know. Bottom line is this, you know what I did? I took it because I knew that that was for my profit. You say, "Well, that was kind of hard." Don't, it didn't it, maybe, but you know what? I never made that mistake again in 40-some years of the ministry. You pay attention. I knew who he was in my life. I knew that God put him there because I needed him. I needed a certain kind of guy to get me where God was going to take me. You know what? God knows who to put in your life, and when they put somebody in your life, to disciple you, will work with you, will give you what you need. You need to see him for what they are. Someone that God wanted to get to you to get you where you needed to go. Then someday down the line, God will take you and you'll do the same thing.

Nothing in all of Christianity will be as satisfying as God working in you and then in time working through you to build others. The biblical process of reproducing yourself in somebody else. You're going to find people, they'll come to a certain point like Proverbs 23:9 says, and they'll begin to despise the words of instruction and wisdom. That's okay. They're always going to be there. Love them, pray for them, encourage them, always be their friend. But at the same time, God will give you those ones who just cannot get enough. Focus on what you have. Look at the blessings and the treasures of the people that God has given you. Look at your life as one

that Christianity, as I said, there'll be nothing more satisfying as God working in you to build others through you. That'll be the key. We'll hold up there. I'm going to have a word of prayer. Zach's going to come up and give you some instructions.