

Proverbs 24:1-5

Sunday 7/1/2018

Well, if you have your Bibles this morning, I want you to turn to a brand new chapter in the book of Proverbs. Last week we finished Proverbs chapter 23, and today we're going to get into chapter 24. Last week we looked at one of the best passages in all the Bible on really understanding the concept behind drinking and drugging.

I showed you that basically in the world there are two cups: there's the devil's cup and there's the Lord's cup. Both cups will get you intoxicated. Both cups will get you to the point where you lose control, and it takes over your life. Either the world will, or God will. I gave you as kind of a joke out of Proverbs 23, the last passage, the ten blessings of being drunk. We went through those and had a little fun with that. Then I got down to matters here, and I walked you through the five similarities between a person who's a drunk and a child of God. One is drunk on the world's spirits and completely falls under its influence. The other is drunk and filled with the Spirit of God, like the book of Ephesians says, and completely under God's influence. So we had a good time last week, and that was one of the probably better practical messages that you can really relate to.

But today we're going to move into Chapter 24. Again, we will glean out of this chapter, and out of the Word of God, some great truth and principles for our Christian life.

I. The Danger of Envy and Association

Now I want to begin reading for you today Proverbs Chapter 24. We're going to look at the first five verses here. Here's what it says:

Proverbs 24:1-5

Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.

For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

Now, historically, putting all this into a context, because I want you to be able to understand, historically we know that this passage is written by Solomon, and he's giving instructions to his own son who to stay away from, and in this case, the other nations, which Solomon didn't do a very good job of, but he's trying to tell him to do that. Theologically, we know it's a tribulation passage. We know it's God giving the nation of Israel instruction to stay away from the evil man, and of course, that's connected with the Antichrist.

Getting those two out of the way, which is pretty simple, we want to talk today about how it impacts me and you. The inspirational application, digging out life's truth out of the Bible to apply to your life to help you be better at whatever you do. God has something that he wants you

to accomplish this morning, and the only way you're going to accomplish it is to go through a process, and I want to talk about that process today. I want to show you how, no matter where you're at, no matter what you're doing in life, there is a process to get to where God wants you to be. And I want to talk about that today.

Now our text starts out in verse 1 and it says this:

Proverbs 24:1

Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.

From the beginning of time, man has always desired and sought out companionship. From the very beginning, it's the way it's always been. People want to hang out with other people. God himself said in Genesis 2:18 that it was not good that man should be alone. He created Eve and gave him as a wife to be a companion and a help meet. The need for companionship, as human beings, is a God-given desire.

Back in the 17th century, there was a poet by the name of John Donne, and he wrote the famous poem, which has been made into a movie, made into a book, and probably on t-shirts someplace, but it says, "No man is an island." He was stating by that that we all need somebody in our world. Togetherness is the one word that people always want to throw out when they want to get something accomplished. Nobody wants to be alone. That's what gets many of you into trouble when you're single because you turn 19 or 20 and you're not married yet, so you think you're going to become an old maid. You take matters into your own hands, and that's how you get into trouble. But it's a God-given desire put in each one of us as human beings to want to have companionship.

Now that has been put in us because, honestly, that is the best way to win somebody to Christ. I get phone calls almost every week, and somebody will say, "Hey, I got this situation at work, or I got this person in my life, or I got this person, and they're not saved. What is the best way to approach them?" Obviously, everybody is different, and some people are going to have different things that they do, and you've got to address that. But fundamentally, there's one way that you always start if you really want to impact somebody's life, and that is by being their friend, by opening up your life to their life.

I don't have much tolerance with pastors who want to keep other people at arm's length. "I'm the pastor. You get to see me as I float in on my cloud and get behind a pulpit, and I'm out of here, and they don't touch me. I don't want to talk to you about your problems. If I didn't give you all the pearls of wisdom you need, there's something wrong with you." I have a tough time with that. The way you reach people is by touching people's lives. The way you touch people's lives is by opening up and associating with them.

I've watched the people in this church through the athletic program and through the things that you do at work and the places you invite them to, and you invite them to the activities that we have and all of the things. People have to find out what we're all about. I would have very little respect for somebody who just came in and bought what they saw here unless they had been watching it online for a while. I like people who investigate and make up their own minds. But

the fundamental bottom line is people need other people in their life. One of the greatest assets of winning somebody to Christ is simply reaching out to them and honestly and openly being their friend, not in a phony, plastic way.

Years ago, and we're going to have him here sometime in September, a guy by the name of Jerry Boffman. Jerry Boffman for years and years and years was a missionary to Canada. Jerry is a good friend of mine. I hadn't talked with him for 25 years, and he called me. He's a friend of Jim Lake's too, and Jim told him about our church. So he called me, and he's coming through here in September, and I said, "I want you to come and preach." I learned a great lesson from him. We went on a missions trip way back in the day. I took a bunch of high school kids with me when I went. I think Steve Bracken was with me at that point. He was about nine or something like that. I know he had just gotten married to Nicole. We were up there, and I had like 20 or 30 high school kids, and he wanted to start a church. So we went out during the day passing out flyers and witnessing to people about the church. I went with him. A lot of people didn't want to hear it. St. Catharines is all Catholic up there in Canada. So it wasn't a lot of response. Some people did. I went with Jerry, and we were going down the road there, and there was a guy that was digging out a flower bed with a shovel. I watched and I thought to myself, "Oh, this is going to be good. This guy doesn't want to be bothered." You know what he did? He walked over and he took the shovel and he said, "Let me do this for you for a while." He started digging out the dirt and telling the guy about the Lord and the church he started.

You see, that's what you've got to do. So many times we want people to believe what we believe, but we don't want to extend ourselves to be a part of their world to make them want to be that way. One of the greatest tools that we have to win other people to Christ is association with them, loving them, taking them where they're at, not expecting them to be some place before you accept them. It's an incredible concept. Nobody wants to be alone.

As men and women develop their natural interest in the world, they will seek out and find other people that have the same kind of interest. Then they form into little associations, little clubs, or little teams. You have car clubs. Hardly a time on a weekend you don't drive down, you'll see a bunch of hot rod cars over at one of the burger places. Gary Potter restores old cars. John Christians has got the hottest little coupe you ever saw in your life. It's one of those things where they love that. David's dad has got one of the hottest El Caminos I ever seen in my life. It takes the trophy at almost every show, doesn't it? When that sucker starts up, it sounds like the second coming of Christ. That baby rumbles. But people get associated with that. They like doing that.

You have shooting clubs. Steve Bracken and Dave, and some of the other ones, they go shoot skeet on Tuesday night. They enjoy that. It's good. They all get out together and have a great time of shooting those things. They live a testimony before those people, as Gary does and the guys who do their cars do. Then you have sewing classes. I told you I was going to talk about you, Linda. You do quilts, don't you? People get together. They love doing those kinds of things. I was in a quilt class for years. It took me that long to do my quilt. I think those things are great. I think they're neat. But you extend yourself, and people want to get together.

I belong, and so does Justin over here, we belong to the Kansas City Military Collectors Club downtown. It's where they bring in speakers, and you learn a lot about history and things like that. The people associate. You've got gardening clubs where people want to come and garden. They talk about plants and flowers and crabgrass and Brussels sprouts and all that good stuff. Don't take this wrong, but I think the most boring of all clubs would be a chess club. If you're a chess player here, I applaud you. You're probably a lot smarter than I am and a greater strategist that would go with the game. But I'll just tell you, what do you do at a chess club? Do you change pawns, kings, and queens? What do you do? I mean, think about that. You go to eat, and then what do you have? Somebody speaks? "Hi, I'm a chess player. Yes, I play chess. If it wasn't for chess, I wouldn't be a chess player." What do you do with those games? Then you have golf clubs.

Back in the 60s and the 70s and the late 50s, churches felt the need for all Baptist churches to kind of get together. So they started what we call fellowships. When J. Frank Norris broke from the Southern Baptist Convention, he started the World Fellowship. They got miffed at each other. Then he started the Baptist Bible Fellowship down in Springfield. Now you've got fellowships all over the place where little groups of churches that don't want to be left alone all gathered together. They have their little meetings from time to time and all those stuffs. That's what they do. You have the Baptist Bible Fellowship, the West Coast Baptist Fellowship, the Bible Baptist Fellowship East. They're all over the place. Then you've got Midwest by Southwest by Northwest by East. They're all everywhere. Churches coming together because the pastors think that the association of togetherness is we've got that desire. All kinds of associations to put people together.

Then we're not even into the sports teams yet. The camaraderie, the companionship. You've got Little League. You've got Pop Warner Football. You've got AAA, AA, single A. I always thought those were batteries, but they're teams, I guess. You've got track teams. You can't be the track star. You've got track teams. You've got volleyball teams. You've got softball teams. And you've got soccer teams. Even the businessmen, they have businessmen's associations. The Charismatics have a Full Gospel Businessmen's Association. Normal people have a Christian Businessmen's Association. Lawyers have an association. They have a law association. They get together and grill their clients. Doctors have an association. They get together and talk about their malpractice suits. You have the good old boys club. You know what a good old boys club is? A good old boy is somebody who just beer drinks on the back porch and just goes around and never gets in trouble with anybody. At one time he was a strapping guy, and all those things. But through the years of being a good old boy, where he once had a six-pack, now it's turned into a keg. Good old boys club. People who love darkness rather than light, they go to nightclubs.

God built that desire of us wanting to be with other people into us because that's how you can win people to Christ if you know what you're doing. Verse one says people will desire to be with other people. That can be a good thing, but you know that there's a danger with who a child of God associates with. To us, it says don't envy or hang out with evil people, whether they're saved or whether they're lost. That's some really good advice.

We saw this, you probably don't remember this, but we saw this back in Proverbs 1:10-15 where he said back then early on in our study:

Proverbs 1:10-15

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:

Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole as those that go down into the pit:

We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:

Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:

My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:

The people you hang out with will make you or break you when it comes to the things of the world or the things of God. This passage today is very important because all the Bible is very clear that you are, I am, we are who we associate with. Who you hang out with, Psalms one.

Psalms 1:1-2

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

It will either make you like God or it will turn you into the seed of the scornful. Romans 14:7 says no man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself. There's always somebody watching your life, and that person watching you through your association with them, good or bad, are going to make them or break them. The verse says, "Be not envious against them or desire to be with them."

In most cases in this church, not all, I mean every church has a negative element to it, but in most cases here in this church, the people you hang out with and associate with will make you better. That's what a church is designed to be. A pastor in a church has many roles and many goals, but the underlying goal over everything is to make you better than you are. The greatest blessings that I see in our church as the pastor is you older Christians taking care of the younger ones. I watch you girls and you guys coming in who are in your 20s or your early 30s, and you've got it together. You're good at what you do. You're successful, you're sharp, and all these younger kids coming up, they look to you. When they go to school, they're going to see the same element on the opposite side of the sphere. They're going to see the ball players, the cheerleaders, they're going to see all of that world thing, and they're going to be drawn one way or the other.

I marvel at you. I marvel at you taking some of these kids when you go home to wherever you live and you take them with you or you just pick them up and spend time with them. You guys, older guys, taking these young guys and really just making a difference in their life. It's through that association, and you know they're all lonely. You know they want to be part of something.

You know that many times they're afraid, they're shy, or they're introverted, or they just don't know how to get into something, and you're the shoehorn that God needs. You actually take your life and shoehorn them right into what God wants them to do.

I'm telling you, there are people in this church, older ones, younger ones, who really know their Bible. They have done everything with a book that I have asked them to do. Nobody gets treated the same way here. There's no free ride. We'll disciple you, you'll work with you, but there comes a time that I will require you to get into the Bible, that I'm not going to take the little tidbits and feed you anymore. You're now going to do the work, and you've responded to that. There are people in this church, men and women, in their midlife or their older ones and the younger ones, that you really know the Word of God. I'm telling you, you hang out with them and develop the same interest and insight that they have, and you will be everything that God wants you to be.

I look at over the months or years we've been here, parents have come to me and they've said, "Oh, I got a boy or I got a girl, and they're struggling with this." I had one here just a couple of this year, I've had five or six of them where the parents actually sit down with me and say, "We put a plan together," and I'll take that young man or I'll take that, and all I've got to do is say something to one or two of you, and that's all I need to say. You make my job so much easier. You know why? Because you have been trained, you have been taught, and you know what to do because you've been in the people ministry, you've been part of the Bible Institute. You yourself got by example somebody else doing in your life, and now you're smart enough just to do it there, and you make my job so easy. I just call you up and say, "Come get this kid, this kid over here, we need to do this, we need to do that," and off you go. I watch Zach go to your sports games. I watch him spend time with kids that need it and just work there. That's what it takes. You don't build a church by just showing up and saying, "Look at me, how great a preacher I am." Let me get down into the trenches with the troops.

As a child of God, we all have people, sports, things that we like to do that we associate, and it's part of the world, and that's okay. There's nothing wrong with that. We're not a church that thinks you just got to, you know, I remember years ago when they came around and they, somebody put together a Christian phone book. All it had in it was businesses that people claimed to be Christian. They excluded all the unsaved businesses. Supposedly everybody in there was a really good Christian that you could trust. Now you believe that, and I'll tell you that the NIV is a great Bible too. I just said no thanks. Well, he was offended that I wouldn't accept a Bible or accept a phone book that only had Christians in it. He said, "I don't understand, you know, you're a pastor. Why wouldn't you want a phone book that only has Christians and businesses in it that you could support?" I said, "Well, two reasons. One, the biggest hosings I ever got in my life I got from Christians. And two, the moment I take that and start only dealing with Christians, I cut out the greatest opportunity that I have to win people to Christ." Taking the Word of God to people. Letting them see that you're a testimony and let them see you have an opportunity to talk to them and to witness to them. It's okay that you're a part of that.

But the key is you never, you never, never, never, never let the influence of the world's things take you and entice you to be better at what you do in the world than you do in the Word of God. You're being more of an influence to the world than you and I following under the influence of

the world. In time, it should be that your goal, my goal for you, I hope it's your goal too, that you know more about the Bible than anything else you do in life. For a while I worked down in Paola, Kansas, and even the five counties down there, and I marked telephone lines in the ground. I got so familiar with that over three or four years, I knew where every phone line was in town. I knew where every fiber optic was. I knew where every trunk cable was. I knew where every main line went to. They could call me on the phone two o'clock in the morning and say, "We got a water main break here at Peoria and 4th Street. We got anything running through there?" And I could tell them point blank. I knew where everything was in that ground that I didn't have to think about it. Look at my prints. I knew what was there. That's the way we have to get with the Bible. We have to get so in touch with that Bible that no matter what somebody asks you, you know where it's at. That's the key. Many of you, most of you, are on your way to do that.

II. The Heart and Lips of Destruction

I'll tell you why verse one is so absolutely important. Look at verse two:

Proverbs 24:2

For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Wow! What a powerful statement and a true one too. An unsaved man will work and cross people too. They will work all day long, 24/7, and study how to do wrong things in their life. The life of Jacob is one of the greatest studies in the Bible of a picture of a Christian who just worked 24/7 on figuring out how to stay ahead of God and do his own thing. He studied deception. Genesis chapter 3, Eve was deceived, but the Bible says that Eve was deceived in the transgression, but Adam, he counted the cost, he looked at it, and he made a cold, calculated choice. He studied the situation of that forbidden fruit before he took it. That's what we do. The longer we practice and study destruction in our lives, whether it be our own personal lives or the lives of our family or somebody else, the better you get at it.

Over there in 1 John chapter 3, there's a verse that every Bible scholar tells you that it shouldn't be in your Bible. They say it shouldn't be in your Bible because they're so blatantly stupid they don't know anything about the Bible in the first place. At that verse it says, to them it's inconceivable. It says that he that is born of God does not commit sin. They can't just get the fact of how you can be born again and be sinless in God's sight. It escapes them. And yet it's one of the most basic things in the Bible. So you know what they do? They do what scholarship always does when they're faced with something in the Bible that they don't understand. Instead of thinking they were wrong and figuring out what the truth is, they just change it. When they change it, I'm sometimes up in heaven, I'm sure they just laugh themselves silly. Because they take that verse, "he that is born of God does not commit sin," and they change it because they can't conceive that. So they say now, "he that is born of God does not practice sin." You kidding me? I practiced sin all my life. After I got saved, I still practice it. I hate it. But you know what? By doing that, they made one of the stupidest remarks anywhere in all of the Bible because we all practice it.

That's what an unsaved man does. That's what the world closely does. He practices every day how to get around this book, this church, this message, and God. The more you practice it, you get really good at it. You know how the first time you did something wrong, it used to really bother you? And then the second time you did it, it still bothers you. After you thought about it for a while and worked it all out, the third, fourth, fifth time didn't bother nearly as much. And he got you to a place in your life where it didn't bother you at all. You know why? Because practice makes perfect. The more you practice, the better you get at it. The better you get at it, the better you get at talking yourself out of it.

I'll tell you why. Verse 2 says, "for their heart studieth destruction." I'm telling you something. You see this absolutely no better anywhere in all of the world than you do in Christianity and in religion. You take the Jehovah Witnesses, the Mormons, Church of Christ, Seventh Day, Charismatics, the Neo-Evangelical groups that we all know and love, all of them. They're all cults. They all study all day long. They're in the Bible. A Jehovah Witness has studied his Bible more than any five Baptists you ever put together. Mormons do the same thing. They spend their whole life dedicated to studying the Bible. They come in, they answer, they're going to come out, and they're going to destroy you. They're either going to take the Bible from you if they're saved or they're going to put you in a lake of fire.

I see it in Christianity. You know my stand, and I'm proud of my stand. I am totally against Bible colleges. The Bible college concept, as far as I'm concerned, and this is going to tick a lot of people off, that's a pit of hell. I'm going to explain it. Before you criticize me for saying that, let me tell you something. I've been in this business almost 50 years. While you were on Saturday mornings sitting on the couch watching Bugs Bunny chewing on your fudgsicle, I was watching and seeing what was happening in Christianity around me. I've been here for a while. I've seen what happens. I've seen how it all transpired. If that wasn't enough, the book of Acts is the greatest defining book in the Bible for the church. You know where the first Bible college is in the Bible? It's Acts chapter 19. In Acts chapter 19, the first institution set up to teach men the Bible was denying God and the Bible. Law first mentioned.

I've seen it. When I grew up, God gave me a great education. God put two men in my life that I learned just an incredible amount of stuff through. One man taught me how to love the Bible and build a church. The other man taught me how to despise the Bible and not build a church. I learned from both. I was smart enough to see which one was right, but what the one guy taught me was invaluable. When I was back in Canton, Ohio, with the Canton Baptist Temple, it became very clear to me, very early. We had two guys there, Mel Shabaka, who stood on the King James Bible and was turning out young men and young ladies left their life, probably put over four or five thousand men in the ministry in his lifetime. Then he had the other guy who was the music director. He was a big Bob Jones University guy. There was a fight going on. He didn't like Mel. Mel didn't like him. Mel didn't like him because he saw this guy wanted to take all of the young kids, all of these young kids, and encourage them to go to Bob Jones University.

Bob Jones University is a cesspool. Bob Jones University lost their tax-free status because they wouldn't allow black people to come to their school. Rightly so. They should have lost it. They were sending all these people down here. Bob Jones University was the greatest enemy against

the Word of God in the 60s and the 70s and the 80s. It's pretty well defunct today, but it was a total disaster. Those young men and young ladies went down to that school believing the Bible, believing they had the truth, and in the course of two or three years, they were talked out of their belief, and they turned out some of the greatest Christian apostates you ever saw in your life. They went in believing the Bible, they came out not believing the Bible. I'm telling you, it was an absolute nightmare.

Of course, the music guy, he was sending them all down there because he was a rear-end kisser. Here's how it worked back in the day. You say you shouldn't say a rear-end kisser. Well, I was going to say something else, but I just thought I'd dial it down a few notches. Nothing gets me more fired up than this. Here's what you did back in the day. Schools run on kids. Kids pay tuition. Tuition makes money. It makes you money to pay all the things. No bucks, no Buck Rogers. The more kids you have, and we've got a bunch of schools competing for it. What these schools want is somebody like this guy who will funnel all their people down to that school. As you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours after a period of time. You know what they did? They brought this guy down and gave him an honorary doctor's degree. Now he's doctor so-and-so. Back in the day, everybody wanted that. He never went there or school a day in his life. He never did a test, but because he was sending all of the kids down there, they did it for him. They honored him by making him an honorary PhD, a post-hole digger. Once he left years later and he started going to a church that they didn't agree with after he sent all those kids down there, you know what they did? They jerked his PhD. That's how it worked. That's how it worked.

What those kids did, they went in there. I don't care where you go. You can go down to BBC. You can go to Hyles-Anderson. You can go to Cedarville. You can go Bob Jones University right down the road here to Calvary Bible College right downtown to Midwest Seminary. Luther Wright, you pick one. God's system for teaching men and women the Bible is a New Testament local church. It's not the job of this church that sends you off someplace else to learn your Bible and learn how to preach and learn how to build a church. It's the pastor's job training up the older young men to help him and the ladies, and then together letting the Holy Spirit of God through the Word of God build into your life everything that God does what he wants to do with you.

In those classes he says, "and their lips talk of mischief." Boy, do they ever. You'll get into those classes, and they'll talk about how important Greek and Hebrew is for you to learn your Bible. The young kid going in who thought he had the Bible here, well, he goes in there, and he's just naive, and he thinks, "Well, here I am. This must be the right place. My pastor sent me down here. Well, look at all these people here. They got standards. They got this. I mean, this must be where I can really learn the Bible." He goes into those classes, and those apostate professors who hate God, hate the Bible. Many of them have failed miserably in their life in the ministry. Now stand and judgment on the Word of God and tell that kid that's a mistranslation here. "You can't trust your Bible. You can't do this." Then they teach him a whole set of terms. They teach him about apologetics, eschatology, pneumatology, hermeneutics. They give him now a dispensationalism system and terminology that nobody in the Bible ever spoke like. Did you ever hear Jesus talk like that? When he fed the 5,000 on the hill, when he began to talk about, "Blessed is this, blessed is that," did he get up and say, "Now today I'm going to talk to you about

eschatology. Everybody open up your whatever you got here, and we're going to really just talk about the deep, and we're going to talk about apologetics in a little bit. And then I'm going to show you the hermeneutics of how to put..." No, he just... You know what he did? He used the everyday life things that every man and woman could understand. That's what you do. You don't communicate your truth through your intelligence. You communicate truth through your simplicity. That's where it's at.

So that young man, he gets so caught up in all of that, and he thinks, "Man, this is really where it's at." He comes after two or three or four years with associating with that crowd. He comes out believing nothing about God anymore. He's lost his Bible. He doesn't believe that God's Word is anywhere to be found. He went to a class that a man taught him how to build a church who has never built a church. That's like a one-legged man teaching Olympic running. He went in there and he heard about evangelism taught by a guy who has never won a soul to Christ in 40 years. He comes out a Christian apostate. He loses and gives up God's Word for the devil's Bible, the NIV, or whatever it may be. Now he's got in the very place he was told and he believed he would find what God's truth was, it gets taken from him. He now joins the greatest cult in the world, the Alexandrian cult.

"And their lips talk of mischief." Boy, do they ever. You'll get up there, and they'll talk about the original Greek. I've heard him get up there in the pulpit, a pastor out of that crowd, and he'll get up there in front of people just like you. He doesn't believe anything about the Word of God. He doesn't believe anything about the King James Bible. He'll wave that King James Bible back and forth, and he'll say, "We believe the Bible is the absolute perfect Word of God, inerrant Word of God." Everybody goes, "Amen, glory to God." I would ask him afterwards, "I really appreciated that statement about you waving your Bible. You've got a King James Bible saying that the Word of God is the perfect inspired Word of God. You're talking about a King James Bible?" "Oh, of course not." I said, "Well, what are you talking about?" "The original manuscripts." I said, "Well, what were you waving this for? Don't you think that confuses the people?" "No, no, nobody understands." "No, I don't understand. Why would you say that this, holding it up as an object lesson, is the absolute perfect Word of God when you don't believe it is? And then you tell me that it's only the perfect absolute Word of God in the original manuscripts. Let me ask you, do you have the original manuscripts? Has anybody ever had? What is this called?" He says, "The Bible." You know what the Bible means? It means books. Was there ever a time in the history of the world when all the original manuscripts were in one book, which would be called the Bible? "Well, no, absolutely not." So what you're telling me is that your Bible is a book that nobody ever had, nobody ever has read, and absolutely does not exist. That's what you're telling me. That these originals that you're telling everybody about, you don't have them. You've never had them. They've never been available to anybody. When Paul wrote his books, he didn't have the first books that Moses wrote in the original. There were no originals in one book. In fact, when you go back to Jeremiah, you'll find there's the first original, it gets destroyed, a second set of originals, it gets destroyed, a third set, and the Bible tells you that none of those originals matched. So when they talk to you about this kid about the originals, it's a figment of their imagination.

Now I have a little illustration that I want to use. I've used this for years. I want you to meet one of my dogs. This is Spot the Original. Spot the Original. I used my dog Spot to illustrate the same concept of the original. This is Spot, the big, little, red, brown dog. He's little, but he's big. He's brown, but he's red. In fact, with a dog like Spot who doesn't exist, he can be whatever you want him to be. Spot is the original Spot. He's an original. He's big. He's small. He's red. He's brown. In other words, when they don't exist, he's whatever you want him to be. Like the original manuscript. Now, he's a smart dog. What's on a tree? He barked. Bark's on a tree. You live in a very nice house. What's on top of that house? He said, "Woof." Smartest dog on the planet.

I'm going to show you how smart he is. Caleb, would you help me, please? Up there on that mantle is an NIV. On my pulpit is the absolute perfect Word of God, King James Bible. I want you to put the ASV right there. Now, I want you to put the King James Bible right here. Now, here we're going to go. This is Spot, the original. He's big. He's little. He's red, he's brown. Because when it's a figment of your imagination, it isn't real. Just like the original manuscript. You can make whatever you want. Now, I'm going to ask you. Spot. There's two Bibles on the floor over here. I want you to let me know which one is the Word of God. Okay, on three. Here we go. Now, you're going to tell me which one. You got it? Okay, here we go. Which one is the Word of God? Okay, there's an ASV over here, and there's a King James Bible over here. Go. Look at that. Is that the Bible? Oh, he's excited about it. Now, let me ask you a question. What do you think of the NIV? What a dog. You've guessed it by now, have you not? Spot does not exist. If you haven't guessed this by now, the original manuscripts don't exist either.

But that's what they do. They take this kid in, and this kid knows nothing, and they tell them about this mystical, magical manuscript that nobody has ever seen, nobody's ever wrote, nobody's ever read, and this kid comes out believing that the Bible now is the absolute perfect Word of God in those original manuscripts, and then this is just a translation that's got all kinds of mistakes in it. That's what they do. In every one of those places. Don't tell me, I've been in this business for a while. I know what they do. I don't know how many kids over the years I've lost to a crowd like that.

They'll get that kid in there, and they'll say, "Well, the King James Bible, you know, is full of errors. It's just a translation, and it's not very reliable, the translation. A better reading should be. You know, your NIV is more closer to the original. Well, you know, Erasmus, Erasmus, you know, they put so much on his manuscript that the King James Bible comes from. But did you know that when Erasmus did Revelation chapter 22 that he didn't even have the Greek text, and he just kind of made it up? And that's why in Revelation 22:14, that verse should not be in your Bible, because Erasmus didn't know what to do when he made it up." The kid is so naive, and the teacher is so crooked that he never tells the kid, "Yes, that's true. Erasmus, who was the greatest scholar of his day, there were 11 countries that promised him a living and a place to live the rest of his life if the great Erasmus would just come and reside in their country. When he did the Greek text that comes from the Textus Receptus that your King James Bible comes from, absolutely right. He did not have the Greek manuscript for Revelation chapter 22. You know what he did? He went back to the old Latin of the Waldensians. He went back to those old languages out of the Waldensians and the old Syriac, and he translated it from those languages

into Greek and then from Greek into his translation. You know what? Five, six, seven years later when they actually had the manuscript and somebody went back and checked his work, he was right on the money. Revelation chapter 22 should be in your Bible." Guy said, "Well, that's a mistranslation." You're a mistranslation. But that's what they tell the kid. That's what they do.

"King James was a homosexual." Well, I don't believe he was. There's no proof that he was. "But you read the first five books of the Bible, Books of Moses, yeah." Well, Moses was a murderer. "You like Psalms?" Absolutely. "Well, David was an adulterer and a murderer." What's your point? "Well, he had the Bible named after him." Really? "Well, you know, you think that the English is a universal language. What about all the people that can't read English?" Oh, really? What about all the people who can't read Greek? I guarantee you there's a lot more people who can read English than there are who can read Greek. You realize I did a study one time, and understanding Greek and Hebrew, what you have to do according to them to really know the Bible, you realize there's less than one thousandth of a percent of the population of this world that can do that. So you're telling me then, if that's what it takes, less than one thousandth of a percent are ever going to find the real truth of God. Of course, they would say that's not true. You know why? Because we'll tell you what it means. See? "Let me be the Holy Spirit of God for you."

"Oh, what about this progressive revelation stuff? Oh, you know, God continues revealing things on all this stuff. You know, the King James, the King James translators were a bunch of baby sprinkling Episcopalians. And you think that God brought his truth through that?" Well, I'll tell you this. God brought his perfect son through the most violent, dirtiest, rotten nation on the planet, the nation of Israel, and he got here. Stupid. "Well, yeah, I know. You listen to Ruckman. You know, Ruckman. Yeah, Ruckman. That uncouth, mean man. Not a gentleman at all. Calls people names. Not a Christian gentleman." Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I get it. I get it. Kind of like John the Baptist. Kind of like John Knox. You know John Knox was? John Knox. They said about him, "He never feared to face a man all of his life." He's the only man that preached to Bloody Mary on the throne of England and lived to tell about it. Fearless. J. Frank Norris, really? J. Frank Norris down in Texas one time, they were going to hang him. A crowd, he'd been preaching and tearing up the town, and a crowd of 200 men gathered with a rope to lynch him. Somebody said, "J. Frank, you better get out of town. They're going to come and hang." You know what he did? He went down to the crowd, got on the back of a pickup truck, and preached the gospel, and preached the hell out of them, and half the crowd got saved. You mean like that? You mean like Billy Sunday? Who used to go into town and call the mayors hog jawed pigs? That kind of guy? You mean like Howard Sears and his brothers Victor Sears? Do you ever hear John Rawlings preach? Jack Hyles and ten thousand other them? You mean like Elijah?

Ruckman was a man who knew what he believed, and he took a stand on it, unlike most of you out there that are listening to this. I'm supposed to be like you? You'd be happy with me if I put lace on my underwear and walked around like you? You'd be happy if my spine was a jellyfish like yours, when it came to standing up to the face of people who didn't like that book? Now, I don't want to say this wrong, and I don't, and don't take it wrong, but I'm going to say it. Let me tell you something. If it wasn't for the steel in Ruckman's backbone and the steel in Sabaka's

backbone, who put the steel in my backbone, you wouldn't even be here today. I'm going to be like you? Why don't you get a job at Babies "R" Us? You who always want to, "Well, let's just, let's just agree to disagree." You kidding me? You mean like Elijah agreed to disagree with the prophets of Baal? There's one guy, God's man, took on 450. That's a pretty wild odds, isn't it? They were Ahab and Jezebel's crew. He was God's man, one man. As far as I'm concerned by that principle, the odds don't even get injured until it goes to 451 against one. They were down there, you know, and worshiping Baal. He didn't say, "You know, let's just agree to disagree." You know what he said? "Let's find out who's God is really God. Let's put an end to this." He looked at the nation of Israel and he says, "You're going to know who the real God is today." I ain't going to agree to disagree with nobody. It's either God or it's the devil. It's right and it's wrong. Let's just find out today who is right. Boy, he did. At the end of that day, God came through. We found out who was right, who wasn't. The Bible says, "and their lips shall talk of mischief." Hey, as far as I'm concerned, let God be true and every man a liar. The book's the book.

III. Building and Establishing Your House

Now look at verse 3:

Proverbs 24:3

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

Fundamentally, this church here, Old Path Baptist Church, fundamentally, we exist for two reasons. This is why some people don't stay, which is fine. They don't want these two things. It's fine. I get it. I understand. I have people all the time that will criticize you, the church, me, because when it comes right down to it, they don't want to do what's right. They don't want to say, "I don't want to do what's right." So it's easy to say that you didn't do what was right. But at the end of the day, if you put it all on the table, you'd find out who was doing what was right.

This church exists for just two fundamental reasons:

1. To help you build your house, your body, God's temple (1 Corinthians 6:19).
2. To establish you in the book and the Word of God and in God's work.

I want to tell you something. This will be invaluable to you, so listen to me very carefully. It says up here, "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established." Let me say something to you. You build your house, you build your house through the wisdom of God. But you get established through getting God's understanding. You see, the wisdom of God teaches you how God thinks. Understanding is how God works. That alone was worth getting up and coming here for this morning because you realize that when you get God's wisdom, it shows you how God thinks. But if you want to get established, you have to understand how God works and where you fit into that.

You say, "Where do I start?" I understand. I would say do what I did 38, 40 some years ago. I recognized very early on. I read a book by Tom Malone. Tom Malone was the pastor of the Baptist Church up in Pontiac, Michigan. He's dead now. But in my early years, I read a book that he wrote on the book of Psalms. Very good book. I think I still have it someplace. It was from

that that I began to understand that there are five wisdom books in the Bible. Tom did a great job. Dr. Malone did a great job of laying it out. I never forgot it. I got it in my Bible. I've given it to you many, many times. But I learned it from him. He says:

You take the book of Psalms. Psalms represents the heart of God.

You take the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs represents the mind of God.

He says, these are the five wisdom books.

You take the book of Job. The book of Job will tell you about the sufferings of God.

You take the book of Ecclesiastes. It'll show you the mind of the Spirit.

Then you take the book of Song of Solomon. It'll show you the mind of Christ.

Once I saw that, I knew that that's where I needed to start. I had found the entryway, the passageway, the door to getting God's wisdom and then getting established. I looked at Psalms as the heart of God. For me, where God's heart was is where I wanted to be. I looked at the book of Proverbs, the mind of God. For me, I wanted to know what God thought about everything I'm faced with in life. I looked at the book of Job, the suffering of God. For me, I wanted to know and understand the price that God bought me with. Because the Bible said I was bought with a price in 1 Corinthians 6:20. I looked at the book of Ecclesiastes, the mind of the Spirit, and I wanted to know and understand how God looked at all the worldly things that man put together to get around God, under the sun. Then I looked at the book of Solomon and I looked at the mind of Christ, and for me, I wanted to know how Christ looked at me and then how I'm to look back at him. So I started with those right there.

Nobody, nobody, nobody helped me. Nobody gave me, you know what, nobody gave me a little baby spoon, putting the pabulum in my mouth so I could get it going. I went it, and sometime in your life, you have to start digging yourself. We can only spoon-feed you for so long, and you've got to get up and do the work yourself, and then we'll help you, guide you through that. Now you build your house with those five books to start with, and brother, you're on your way.

Now here's the problem. It sounds great. Another great example in the Bible. Solomon. The Bible says in 1 Kings 6:37-38, Solomon in the first five chapters, he goes through this great oratory, one of the greatest prayers in the Bible, dedicating and building God's temple. The Bible says that it takes seven years for him to build God's house. Same amount of time it took the translators to put out the King James Bible, but we won't get into that this morning. But then you see Solomon start to fall off the wagon. He starts to go south. He starts to have all kinds of problems. Then you found out why. Because in the very next book, 1 Kings 7:1, it says, "Solomon took seven years to build God's house, but he spent 13 years building his own." The principle is clear. You spend more time building your own house the way you want to do it, than you do God's house the way he wants you to do it, you're going to have some problems. Incredible principle. Just incredible.

For me, the blessing and joy of my life is watching you in this church get your house built, but then you getting established. Watching God actually establish you. Some people don't want any

part of that. I get it. There's things in their life they don't want to give up, they don't want to do. Hey, I'm fine. I understand. Show me it's all about you and your life and what you want. I get it. You have no room for God or anybody else. It's, you know, you're your own drama queen of your own drama life. You own all this stuff that comes on television. They're all about you. I get it.

But I look at my young Christians in this church. I watch how that you gravitate to that Bible. They're not here. They're in Ohio, but our family from Harrisonville, Leland and his wife, Karen, and their family. I have never had a family come into this church that just gravitated to the Word of God as fast as they have. If I would tell them, "If you want to be all God wants you to be, stand on your head in the corner for 30 minutes a day," they would be doing it. They have the attitude that so many of you have. You don't care what you've got to do. You just want it. You'll do whatever you've got to do to get it. You'll never get your nose bent out of joint. You don't complain about what you don't get because there's so much there that you can get. It's a difference between somebody who really wants it and somebody who doesn't really want it. The one who doesn't really want it will always complain about what they don't have. The ones that want it and get it won't complain about anything. You know why? You're too busy digging it out of the ground and getting it for yourself.

My young Christians in this church, then my NCOs. Any military, any army, and I know Bill knows this, all you military guys know this. The real backbone of the military are the NCOs, the sergeants. The officers do their little deal. They want to get it done. They bring it down to the NCOs. In this church, I have a number of NCOs. I have men that have been with me for many, many years, that were gone. Now they're back in my world. God brought us back together. They think that they're glad to be here because of wherever they were. I don't look at it that way. I look at it as they are absolutely vital to what I'm trying to do. You know why? Because they're my NCOs. Some of you were with me when we started this church 15, 16 years ago. You've now moved up that ladder that I can't do what I do without you. You just cover so many bases for me. Everything is done. Everything is, you know, you know what to do. I don't have to say one thing to you. Your investment of people, you just make my job so much easier. There's always somebody in your life. You're always seeing somebody out there that needs something. You're taken as any good NCO does with the troops, you take them in under your wing and you teach them the art of combat. Doesn't get any better than that. Doesn't get any better than that.

You are the rock. You are the glue that holds it all together. With your commitment to the book and how you love it. You understanding that the success of any church, the pastor, first of all, has to have a vision. He has to have some kind of relationship with God that God is going to speak through him. Then when he lays out the vision, you're smart enough to make that vision your vision, and together through association, we get the job done. Just as any family will only be what the father is spiritually, any church will only be what the pastor is spiritually. Everything rises and falls on leadership. In this church, God has raised up men and women who not only have the wisdom, but you have been established. You're not only built as your house, you're now established. You're my go-to people. I fall back on you in any situation. Never even think twice about how it's going to go. There are a lot of pastors that give somebody something to do, and then they stay up all night worrying about if it's going to get done right. I don't worry about that

with you. If I give you something to do, it's because I have the up-to-common. If I give you something to do and you're out there doing it, you do it. Don't be looking over your shoulder to think if you make a decision that if I'm going to be okay with it or not. If I put you in charge, when you're in command, you command.

Years ago, we had an incredible Little League program, not here in another church. There was a guy that I love very dearly. His name was Mike Pitts. Most of us older guys know Mike Pitts. Mike was in charge of the umpires for Little League Baseball. I wanted to umpire. I don't know a lot about baseball. They were so kind to me. They helped me out. Mike always did the game with me. I loved doing behind the plate. I loved the parents yelling at me. In fact, the more they yelled at me when their team was up, the worse their calls got. But I always liked to test leadership. We had a uniform we had to wear. I was the pastor. So we went for, and Mike was really good. He helped me with the calls. But I got pretty good on the plate. I could see that ball coming over. My strike zone was pretty good. I didn't know or understand all the things about it. I guess there's something that when you split the ball, if you step inside the thing, you're out. I didn't know about that. I learned that pretty quick. So I said, "I want to test Mike's leadership." Because Mike's a good kid. But he's got me up here. I want to see if he treats me, crushes me any different. Because he's going to have to someday, if God keeps using him, he's going to find himself where he's going to have to take total command. So we had blue shorts and light blue shirts. So the first week, I wore blue shorts with a black shirt. Mike came over at the end and he says, "You need to have a little bit of a break." And I said, "Yeah, it was in the wash. I'm sorry." Next week, I didn't wear any shirt. Great distraction to the crowd. I went to the hospital. I didn't wear any shirt. I love that part. I don't know why they always point that way. But there's a lot of things. I go to the ballgame. I don't know why all the umpires have to be named "Out." They all got an "L" in their hat. "Ow." These guys that do it work with us, they're all named. What is it? "Who?" They got their own little names on their hat. I could never be a real umpire because my name would fit in that. Anyway, so I was calling him up there, and at the end of the game, Mike came over. I'm going to see what he's made of. He says, "Last week, you didn't have the right shirt on. This week, you have no shirt." He says, "Bob, if you don't wear the right shirt next week, don't come out to umpire. I'm not going to use you." I said, "Yes, sir, Mike." Next week, right shirt. I was ready to go. I'd like to see if me being an umpire is a good person. I put in charge. He didn't hesitate. He didn't hesitate at all. I guarantee you, if I'd have showed up next week with a Hawaiian shirt on, which I have several that I really like, I'd have been out.

I'm telling you, it's one of those things where you build your house by getting God's wisdom, and God will establish you. He'll do that.

IV. Filling Chambers with Riches

Look at verse 4:

Proverbs 24:4

And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

The chambers here will be defined for you in Ezekiel 8:1-14. We're told there that that's your imagination. It's called the chambers of your imagery. That's your imagination, what you think about, your mind, your imagination. Then he says, your thinking process will be filled with precious and pleasant riches.

Now, there are two things here I want you to see:

The riches first. Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The first thing you need to know is that all the riches that are pleasant is the fact that it's the things that God supplies in your life that he gives you, that he always takes care of your need. The true riches will last forever, and they'll never be there when you need them. It's your spiritual bank account.

He could have took the money in a lump sum, or he could have, get this, \$10,000 a week for the rest of his life. Could you imagine coming to Sunday night and knowing tomorrow you're going to get another \$10,000 check in the mail? We look at that and we think, what would we do with that? Well, you know what, the Bible's the same way. You get a \$10,000 check every day of your life. He keeps that spiritual bank account full for you.

Then what's precious is found in 2 Peter 1:4: "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." You get to be like Christ through the precious promises that he gives you.

You see, you build your house by getting God's wisdom. Then you let God establish you through the riches and the precious promises that he gives you.

V. Stages of Spiritual Growth

Now look at the last verse here, verse five:

Proverbs 24:5

A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

In its simplest form, he's saying, we should never stop growing. In the Bible, there are seven stages of spiritual growth. Everybody in here that's saved is in one of those formats.

3. 1 Peter 2:2 talked about baby Christians, they just have gotten saved.
4. 1 John 2:12 talked about little children. They're moving through the process.
5. Galatians 3:26 talks about children.
6. 1 John 2:13 talks about young men. Now they're coming up a little bit.
7. 1 John 2:13 again talks about fathers. That's where it's your spiritual growth level. That's where you really become valued because now a father is someone who begins to take responsibility for his children. This is where you start working with people with me.
8. Then it says the sixth one is elders in 1 Peter 5:1. An elder is not a position in the church. It's not like an office. It's not like a pastor, which is an office, or a deacon, which is an office. An elder is someone who has established himself within the church. They have grown up, and

there are men and women elders. They grow up to the point where now the Bible says that they actually take the load off the pastor, and they look over the watch care, and they feed the flock of God, and they take everything, and they take oversight with the pastor over the church.

9. Then the seventh one is the aged. Philemon 1:9. Now you get to that point in your life. You may not be physically able to do everything that you used to do. Maybe you can't play ball like you used to do, or you can't run out there and do all the things you used to do. But now what's invaluable about you is not what you can do, but what you've learned. Now the experiences of life that you have learned through you going through it, you can give to others.

Along with that growth process, there'll be some things the Bible says along the way that you want to add to your faith. In 2 Peter 1:4-9, it says:

2 Peter 1:4-9

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice not barren and unfruitful when winning people to Christ or doing whatever God wants you to do, but barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of who he is. Because I'm telling you, you build your house through wisdom, but you get established through understanding, knowing who he is, knowing what he's doing. The Christian life is about building a relationship with God after salvation that never ends. It keeps moving up the levels of understanding. On each level, there will be issues that you and I have to face, and many people stop right here. They won't go any farther. They'll go up two or three levels, and then they have to deal with something in life they don't want to, that's where they stay. Most of you, many of you, just blow everything out of the way, and you keep going up those levels.

We see it in our people ministry. I've broken down the people ministry into three basic levels. We know what they are, and you have moved right up through them, and some of you now work with me on the most serious cases, what I would call third level cases, and you work with it just fine. The job of this church, as I said, is just very simple.

10. You get truly saved and separate yourself from the association of relationships that will hinder you and your growth.
11. Now you let this church begin to build your house. You go through discipleship one, you go through discipleship two, you get into Bible Institute, you want to learn principles. So I put you into a program where you start going through all of the principles that we've got online,

and you start going through them and learning them and going through them. We get into the people ministry. You get Sunday morning, you get Thursday night, and then you have the ability to have one on one with me or whoever you're with.

As verse four said, you begin to see and understand the true riches of what's really precious, your relationship with him and the precious promises, and now you start to fill the chambers of your mind with those things. Then through these seven stages, you move up spiritually, you grow up spiritually, and you add these things to your faith that we talked about. Then this Bible-based, biblically sound process, God in this church, which is God's program, a New Testament local church. Through this ministry, you know what he does? He establishes you, and everybody in this church knows your value. Everybody in this church knows who you are and what you're capable of, and they can call on you when they need you. I've had people before that, you know, they wanted to say, "Hey, I would like to get taught this or taught that," and I said, "That would be fine, and I'll get somebody for it." "Could I have so and so?" You know why they do that? Because they know who you are. They know who you are. There are certain people in this church and any church that people know what you've got and what you offer and your track record of what you do with people that they seek you out, they want you. They know what you're capable of. You have been established, and there are so many of you here that are like that. I mean, I have tens and tens and tens and tens and tens of you that I could just, in any given situation, I could put you here and never think twice about it. You know why? Because you're established. You went through the process. You wasn't a whiner or a complainer. You didn't look to blame everybody else for your problems. You took what was given to you in this church, which everybody's the same. You came the same way through the Bible, through the principles, and here you are established. You got other people out there today that will never be established because it's always somebody else's fault. They'll never take personal responsibility for their own learning process of what they've got to do in their life.

You see the exact same thing in the Old Testament. 1 Samuel chapter 3 is one of the greatest chapters anywhere in the Bible of showing how God establishes somebody within the church. Of course, you got Samuel back there, and he comes up through the program in the Old Testament. It was God's process for him becoming the great prophet that he was. His mama raised him up to a certain point, and then she turned him over to Eli in the priesthood, and he went through that process, saw some good things, saw some bad things, but it was in there that God revealed himself to him, just like he will with you. There was a process even in that we don't have time to go through this morning. But at the end of the story, in the end of the chapter, in 1 Samuel 3:19-20, it says this:

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.

God will take this church, the Word of God, your commitment to change, your commitment to doing whatever you've got to do, however you've got to do it without whining and complaining

about it, and then let God change you, and through the changing process of building your house, getting God's wisdom and God's understanding, he will establish you. Remember, you'll build your house through wisdom, but God will establish you as you get understanding. Understanding is what God is doing around you so you can better understand what God wants to do with you. Say it again. Understanding is what God is doing around you so you can better understand what God wants to do with you.

We'll hold up there today. Let's have a word of prayer. Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus.