

Proverbs 26:17-21

Sunday 4/14/2019

SEC: Introduction and Review of Proverbs 26

Well, good to have you here today. We are going to open up our Bibles now to Proverbs chapter 26. We are looking forward to a good time in the Word of God today. Last week we had what I consider one of the most practical lessons of life that you could ever go through. The Bible is great for doctrine. It is always nice to know how many warts the Antichrist has on the side of his head and all those things. But going through life and the struggles of life, it is going to come down to the practical things of the Word of God. Last week we had a good inside look as to why things in our lives are the way that they are. I thought it was a great insight into people and their issues.

Proverbs is such a practical book that it is filled with one-liners that if you just take and develop. That is what we really try to do. Obviously, I point out the doctrinal because I want to balance it all out. But fundamentally, what I want to do is I want to just take these one-line incredible concepts that as you look at them, do not really seem to mean much. But when you develop them, they open up into things. You will see that as you have, and certainly you will see it today.

We talked about the slothful and the sluggard. That has been the theme here. We are going to move into another type of person here in the next week, but we have been looking at the slothful and the sluggard. Last week we saw in verse 14 how somebody that is like that is like a door on hinges, the Bible says. I told you how a door never has any rest. It just keeps opening and closing, opening and closing. That is so typical of so many of God's people who are slothful with the Word of God or sluggards when it comes to the principles of the Bible. They never have any rest. They never have any peace. We talked about what it meant to have a good conscience toward God. I think all of those things are very important in our Christian lives, and you want to have those things. We see people deal with them all the time. I know I have in the scope of my area of ministry, over and over again, time and time again, the problems of life will plague us and will overwhelm us in some cases.

Then we looked at verse 15 and talked about how it grieves us to take our hand to our mouth. When you look at that, you do not really get the full impact until you work it through a little bit and the rest of the Bible. But it is talking about we reap what we sow, but sooner or later we have to eat what we reap. Most people have a steady diet of grief in their life, God's people. It should not be that way. We talked about what we build with our hands and how it grieves us when we build something that is the wrong thing. We have to deal with it. It is ours. We cannot push it off on somebody else. We cannot shunt our responsibility. We own it. We talked last week, whatever you build with your hands will come back and be the greatest blessing in your life, or it will come back and it will bite you. It will go one way or the other.

Then we looked at verse 16, which I thought was an incredible verse. It covers so many areas, and you are going to see this today, a little more development of it, where we talked about somebody being wise in their own conceits and how seven men could sit down, seven being a number of perfection, seven men could sit down and open up the Bible and try to show

somebody where they are wrong with the Word of God. Yet they are unteachable. They are unteachable in Bible issues, and unfortunately, they are unteachable in life's issues. That is why, going back to a couple of weeks ago, the dog and the sow returning to the mire and the vomit. It is somebody that will just be totally unteachable. Those were great practical lessons for all of us.

Today I want to move through a few more verses that are connected together here, and we will see again more practical truth for our learning, things that we can put into our own world, into our own lives that we can really glean from. These verses that we are going to look at today will yield some great lessons in history. I am a firm believer, I always have been, that you cannot separate the Bible and history, and that they all go together. God teaches you through both because they are both connected, and you cannot really have one without the other. You have guys who claim to really know the Bible, know nothing about history, and you have guys who know a lot of history and know nothing about the Bible. I am going to tell you, you have to have a blend of both if you are ever going to get to that place in your life. One more time, we are going to see how conceit will prevent man from learning anything from not only the lessons of life, but they will never learn anything from the lessons of history.

I want to begin reading here, Proverbs chapter 26. Believe it or not, we are going to get through five verses today.

Proverbs 26:17-21

17 He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

18 As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,

19 So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?

20 Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

21 As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.

SEC: Meddling in Strife: Taking a Dog by the Ears (Proverbs 26:17)

Now, let us look at this, verse 17: "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." For the record, before we get started here, most dogs do not like you messing with their ears. I have a little female Lab left, her name is Daisy. She does not mind, you can do anything you want to do with her ears. But Buster, on the other hand, Buster is a little camp dog that we rescued at a camp when we were going up north someplace. I never saw it, somebody put him out, and he had been out for probably all summer, and he was just infested with ticks. I mean, you look down in his ears and they were filled to the brim with ticks. It was a terrible deal. Obviously, he is still suffering from whatever damage was done, but you grab his ears, he will bite you. It is just that simple.

Little kids sometimes, you have to be careful with little kids with dogs because little kids love those big soft ears, but they think that they screw on and they screw off. So they will grab a hold of the dog, and the dog is normally a gentle dog, but a dog can panic in a moment and many

times they bite the kid or snap at him, or growl at him. You do not want that. In our illustration here of dogs and their ears, the principle lesson here is very clear, and it is a good one in a practical way.

He is saying here that the man that is just passing by, we already know that he is slothful and he is a sluggard. We talked about him throughout our chapter. What he does is he sees a situation or he sees an issue, he sees a problem that the Bible says does not belong to him. It is none of his business, and he thrusts himself into the conflict. Maybe his motive is right, maybe he wants to try to help the situation, thinks that he can, he has got the spiritual tools to do it, or maybe he just likes to be close to a good fight. I do not know, but he throws himself into it, and obviously it blows up in his face.

I love the illustration of taking a dog by the ears because we have all had that experience at some point in our life. Taking a dog by the ears can quickly, like the issues of life, become a bad situation. You cannot hold on to him because he is twisted and growling and biting, but you know if you let go, he is going to bite you. So, you are in a no-win situation, much like you will find yourself in a lot of situations in life where you got yourself into it. You cannot let go, but you are going to get bit. If you do not let go, it is only going to get worse.

The answer is a simple answer, as Proverbs is a simple book. It is a simple answer. I hate to be continually the master of the obvious, but the answer is just be smarter than the problem. Mind your own business. That is an easy concept. Stay out of other people's business unless they ask you to help. Here we have a case of the dog catcher being caught by the dog, and sometimes he can bite you pretty bad.

One time I had a male Lab, a brown Lab, his name was Buddy, and he was very defensive of me. If anybody, even the other Lab, I have always had brothers and sisters, even the other Lab would come around, he would just begin to growl. He was a mean dog, a big dog too. One time Steve Bracken's dad, Steve Bracken Sr., came over to see me. We were walking, came in through the garage. I just happened to be out there, and Steve has been around dogs all of his life. I had this white fence that keeps him from getting from one part of the basement to the other, a finished basement. Steve, before I could say anything, Steve Sr. reached over to pet him. That dog lunged up, caught him by the shirt, and pulled him right over that fence. I felt terrible, ripped his shirt. It is a good thing he had been around dogs all his life, so he did not.

One time I was down there with him, and he was at that same gate. I was petting him, and somebody rang the doorbell. A doorbell in my house, by the way, if you come over, it does not work. It has not worked. I unhooked it right after that because I was tired. That dog reached up, and I had to get six stitches in my arm. He just ripped me open. It was one of those things like when he did it, you know how the dog will look at you like, "Okay, I am back now, boy, I am really sorry about that." You could see it in his eyes. Dogs can bite you hard. I am not kidding you. It is a thing where you just have to be careful.

When it comes to counseling scenarios, and you know this is true because we talk about it all the time, I tell you in any counseling scenario, almost without exception, there are a few exceptions, but almost 99% of the time, you never take sides in it. You just never do. Taking sides in a

counseling scenario, unless it falls into the category that you need to, is like grabbing a dog by the ears. You just never do that. You have to stay neutral. When you take sides, you are going to get bit. It is just that simple, and so you have to be careful with that. You just lay out the principles and let the book be the guide to who needs to change and what they need to change, and then you can give them options. But it is one of those things where you just have to be careful.

I learned many years ago, you do not stick your nose in other people's business unless you are asked. But I want to tell you, as a pastor, I love people, and as a pastor, you can see when people are falling into the wrong patterns. I mean, you can, and I am not going to lie to you this morning, there have been many times in my life and my ministry, I have seen people who were good people, and I saw them cross the line, and they were headed for trouble. But I never say anything because I know it is not going to be accepted. I see issues with people's kids where you are going to have some real problem with your kid. I do not say a word unless I am asked. I just do not. You know why? Because it is none of my business, first of all, and it is a situation where in most cases, you do not see it, you do not want to hear it. As parents, we all suffer from the same dilemma that we think our kids can do no wrong, and that is just not true. So I see the patterns develop sometimes.

SEC: Lessons from History: The Titanic and US Foreign Policy

I watched a documentary this week. Please, I am no spiritual giant, I am really not. I know when I say things like this, people get the idea that I look for something spiritual to learn in everything, and that is true to an extent because you cannot separate history from the Bible. I was watching a documentary this last week on the Titanic. The Titanic has always been a great attraction to me. I love things like that. I think the missing appearance of Amelia Earhart is one of the great mysteries, and she lived right over here in Kansas, not too far. Of course, everybody in Kansas disappears at some point in time, so it is okay. But I love things like that. I do. The JFK conspiracy and assassination just enthralled me, things like that.

So the Titanic has always been. I have watched every movie. You always think of the one with Jack Dawson, the one that just came out. You always think of that one. But the best one without a doubt was made back in the 50s called *A Night to Remember*. If you have not watched that one, you have not seen a good movie on the Titanic. The modern one had too much. I like movies that have some real doctrinal truth, but do not have any sideshow love affairs going on. I mean, it just takes away from the movie. What do I care that she jumped off the bow of the Titanic in freezing water? Good for her. You have to build, and I guess you have to do that to sell it. But if you want a good one, the best one is *A Night to Remember*. Then about four or five years later, another one just called *Titanic* way back in the day. I think it was in the 60s. Then there have been a few of them that came out. The big one we all know has Leonardo DiCaprio in it.

I like it. I do like it. I think the special effects of the night, I think it is just terrifying to me. It was a disaster. I watched that thing. Here again, yes, I am always looking for some spiritual insight out of it. I am thinking to myself, that was a terrible disaster. Over 1,600 people died on that night. That ship sank in about two and a half hours. Looking back now that we see it and have it

all in perspective, which they could have had then, there were some clear warning signs that there was a disaster coming with that ship. Now we look back in hindsight some 100 years later, because it sank in 1912. So it is over 100 years. We look back now and we can look at it. But if anybody was paying attention that night, you know that there were some warning signs that you should have dealt with that, that never would have happened.

You know what the first one was? The first one was that everybody was sending out all the ships ice warnings. They were telling everybody that there is ice out there. A lot of the ships had stopped because they were not going to try to maneuver through the ice field. They were sending out telegraphs, and the Titanic got them: "Ice field ahead, ice ahead." The second thing, there was a warning sign that it was a very calm night. On a very calm night with no wind and a black night, it is hard to see icebergs because if you have some waves flapping up against them, then it kind of gives you an outline border that you can see. But it was dead calm.

I will tell you the third thing, they doubled the lookout, but somebody forgot to give them binoculars. So they are up there in the freezing cold trying to look through it as the ship is moving through the water, trying to look for the iceberg. They saw it, but they saw it way too late. If they would have had binoculars, they would have seen it long before they ever got there. I will tell you the next warning thing, with all of those things going, they were going way too fast. The builder of the ship was on that ship that night, and the captain, this was his last voyage, in more ways than one. What they wanted to do with this brand new Titanic ship, they wanted to set a world speed record from England to America. So it was full bore speed ahead. That is why when they saw it, they could not turn it, they could not stop it. They were going way too fast.

But you know what the real issue was that we can learn from that? Those are great practical applications that we can learn. Some of you are not paying attention to the circumstances around you. You are going too fast in life. You are not looking at the warning signs. But the greatest thing that brought this disaster into being was their attitude. They were wise in their own conceits. They thought that it did not matter how fast they went. It did not matter if there was ice out there. It did not matter how dark it was, because everybody said this ship is the ship that God himself could not sink. Wise in your own conceit. We all have this problem. We all think that, yeah, the Bible is there, the principles are there, but we are always an exception to the rule. I do not ever say things to people because they do not see the warning signs. Here is another reason: too many times on Sunday morning like this, I have tried to grab you by both ears in my message, and you do not hear it. You bite me. So I just follow that rule.

I have had people, and I love them, and I know. I am not saying there are people I believe in my world who I could see something and say something to, and they would respect it. But I have people at times that, "Well, if you ever see anything in my life, you make sure you tell me." That works right up till I do it. Because when you said that, you are in one mindset. When you have now crossed over the line and the warning signs are setting in, now you are in another mindset. So a while back, I preached a message, "The Handwriting on the Wall" from Daniel, about the patterns. I am telling you, you can see it in somebody's life that the handwriting is on the wall. They are headed for trouble. In 99% of the cases, there is not a thing you are going to be able to

do about it. They have developed a terminal case of "I do not want to hear it." That is what you are dealing with. It is an incredible concept.

Not only do I see it in people's lives, boy, do I see it in history. You talk about grabbing a dog by both ears. I look at America, if there is any place, our country, and please do not take this the wrong way. I think it is a great country. I fought for it once. I know many of you did. We would all fight for it again. I love it. I live here. I am here. I understand my opinion. But I want to tell you, when it comes to the leadership of our country today, and maybe the last 40 years, we have the most hypocritical government on this planet. They are absolutely a bunch of power-hungry, power-grabbing politicians who care nothing about the common man. All they care about is staying in office and then finding the lucrative money they can make being a politician.

I have never understood it until I got a little bit into the Bible why a senator or a congressman or even a president would spend \$87 million to become president of the United States when the annual income every year for four years is \$300,000. That is way out of balance. That is like you going and spending, wanting to get the job at McDonald's and paying the manager \$150,000 so you could get the job, and then you make \$7 an hour for the rest of your life. Something there that they are making money doing.

Sometimes I sit back and I watch the news. I try to stay up on it. I am a newsy guy. I try to keep up with things the way they are because everybody wants to. It is like staying awake when your guy that is driving the car in the middle of the night is really, really tired. You want to stay awake because you do not want to miss a good wreck. I stay awake because I do not want to miss what is going on here. In the last two years, let me show you how this thing works. The last couple of years, our senatorial investigating committees, the Congress and everybody, has been investigating how the Russian government tried to interfere with our election, the last election we had. For two and a half years and what, a billion, million, trillion dollars, they have invested trying to find out if the Russians infiltrated into our system of trying to control the election.

I look at something like that and listen to those guys talk, and I say to myself, "Are you kidding me? Do you know how many governments our government, since World War II, has toppled? Let me give you the list:

In 1953, we did not like what was going on in Iran. So the military and the CIA went in secretly, got the good guys against the bad guys, and overthrew the Iran government.

In 1954, we did it in Guatemala.

In 1960, we did not like what was going on in the Congo. So we sent in some CIA guys with a military coup, and they took it over and they overthrew that government in 1960.

They did it in Ghana in 1966.

In Chile in 1973.

Argentina in 1976.

Afghanistan. You know why we have the problem we have in Afghanistan and why they hate us and why they kill us, why do not we kill us with all the Muslims? I will tell you why, because in 1976, we grabbed that dog by both ears and overthrew that government. How did that work for us?

We saw it in Argentina in 1978.

We saw it in Grenada.

We saw it in Nicaragua in 1981.

We saw it in El Salvador in 1980.

We saw it in the Philippines in 1986.

Then in 2000, in Europe with the Serbs and the Croats and all of that, our government went in and overthrew those governments so we could have a better relationship with the government because we did not like the one that was in there.

Wow. Are you kidding me? It was in my day in the 1960s where we had the Bay of Pigs. Now the Bay of Pigs, based on our last couple of sermons, was not a beach where unsaved women went. The Bay of Pigs was a real Bay of Pigs down in Cuba. Fidel Castro had come to power, and he was a threat. He was communist. We did not like the idea that 90 miles from Florida was a communist country that was in line with Russia, that Russia could use. We did not like that. So you know what the CIA did? The CIA got all these anti-Castro Cubans, brought them into a secret military base, trained them in the art of warfare, and then launched a coup to take back Cuba and try to dethrone Castro. They thought about every way to kill him: exploding cigars because he likes cigars, putting poison in something that he would eat. They tried to get rid of him. Our country. We did not just intervene in the elections. We were intervening to take down the leaders of that country so we could get a guy that we liked in there.

Now, you know what happened? It was a disaster. The CIA-backed guys went in, they got trapped on the beach. They needed air cover. They did it behind the scenes. Even Kennedy did not know it. Then they came to Kennedy, who was president then, and said, "We need air support or these guys are going to get taken and lost, and we are going to lose it." He refused to do it. I do not have time to get into it, but that is where his days were being numbered for his assassination down the line. That is another story we do not have time to get into this morning, but we should. It was incredible.

As Americans, we are wise in our own conceit. We think that our form of government, capitalism and democracy, is the greatest and the best in the world. So when Russia does it to us, and I am sure they did intervene, I am sure they did. I guarantee you they probably, I do not know my facts, I just guarantee you. If Russia, I guarantee you they did. I promise you they did. But when they do it, we do not like it. When we do it, we call it nation building. We call it winning hearts and minds because we are so wise in our own conceit that we think that our form of government is the greatest government on the planet, and we want everybody to have what we have. So we believe that so much when they are oppressed. We go in and topple the governments, and we put

up a guy in there that we want to have, and we want to make it a democracy. We want to make it part of the free world. It is okay when we do it, but it is not okay when somebody else tries to do it to us.

Little do we know, getting back to the Bible, little do we know that in the book of Ecclesiastes, when Solomon goes through and lays out all of the governments that man is going to come up with, he talks about socialism. He talks about fascism. He talks about totalitarianism. He talks about paganism. He talks about humanism, and he talks about communism. He also in the list talks about capitalism and democracy. The greatest form of government is not some government that gives you everything you want. The greatest form of government is when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back and sits on that throne in Jerusalem and rules this world with a rod of iron. Yet we look at that, and we are so wise in our own conceit, and we are so far away from God. We think, "Oh, bring them, give them the freedom that they have."

Let me tell you something. The greatest movement of God in Christianity in the 20th century was not in America. It was in communist Russia. It was in communist China. It was in communist North Korea. There were more people saved and more converts to Christ during those years under the oppression of communism. We need a little of that in America. You know why you do not get into the Bible? Because you never paid a cost to have it in the first place. You know why you do not come to church? These people, when they went to Russia, if they got caught going to church, they spent 10 years in hard labor in prison for going to church. Well, that will cut out the non-hackers, will it not? I can safely say that you got people to show up to church in those countries. They mean business. You have to face going to jail for five years or 10 years in a Soviet prison or a Chinese prison. Are you kidding me? For going to church, you have to have some kind of investment with God to put your life on the line like that.

I am not kidding you. Most of God's people never paid a price for anything. To most of God's people today, the meaning of sacrifice is what God did for you. It will never mean what you will sacrifice for Him in your life because we have it all. We are the only church in church history that never paid a price for anything. We got everything free. The Bible you got, you did not pay a thing for it. You know how you got it? Somebody paid the price in the 16th, 17th, 15th, 14th, 12th century for you to have it. You never paid a price for it. You never paid a price for the church. You never paid a price for your salvation. Everything was given to you, handed to you, and you got spoiled with it because you are in a country where you have two chickens in every pot, two cars in every garage. You get up on Sunday morning, you do not have to sneak to church, get past the security guards. You just get up and yawn and roll over and say, "I am not going today." We need a little of that. Some of God's people all their lives never paid a price for anything with God.

You see it. You see it in history. The greatest book you will ever read if you want a book on history and how God works and how the devil works, the greatest book, and we have it in the bookstore back there, the greatest book you will ever read is a book by Avro Manhattan, who was probably the world's foremost authority on the Roman Catholic Church. He died a natural death a number of years ago. I do not know how he ever survived without being killed. But he wrote a lot of books, and they are out of print. You buy them online, they are \$180 a book. But I will tell

you, as far as I am concerned, I have read them all, I have them all. The greatest book that he ever wrote is a book called Vietnam: Why Did We Go? You talk about America grabbing a dog by both ears and cannot let go. When she does let go, she gets bit. It was incredible. I am telling you again, you cannot separate the God of the Bible from the God of history. When the Bible says a wise, a foolish, and a slothful man grabbed the dog by the ears, I am telling you, you see it in people's lives and you see it in history. The reason why they do is because they thrust themselves into situations they have no business being in because they are wise in their own conceit.

Most people do not understand the Vietnam conflict. It was my war and many of your war, the older guys' war. It was a war that was not a very popular war. I remember going to the airport in my uniform, and people would walk up and spit on you. I remember that. They would protest, and guys were burning their draft cards. You guys do not even know what the draft is. You think it is an open window. People would burn their draft cards and go to Canada rather than to serve in the military. It was a bad time for America. It has always been amazing to me how politicians today who are running our country are the men who were against and the liberals and the hippies during the Vietnam War. We have the guy that was Secretary of State, John Kerry, under Obama. He was a naval lieutenant in Vietnam. When he came back from Vietnam, he shunned the military, got hooked up with a beer-drinking, marijuana-smoking crowd, denounced America, and took his medals that he had won in Vietnam to the White House and threw them over the White House gate into the White House lawn. Now, some 30, 40 years later, it benefits him to be pro-military, and people just buy into that. I never miss a thing. I never miss a thing. It is a thing where those things happen, and I know that mindset of that time and that era.

Most people do not understand. In World War II, Vietnam was run by the Japanese. The French had it before, and then they got kicked out. Then the Japanese moved in when they took all of Asia Minor and most of everything over there. At the end of the war, they got defeated. The French wanted to come back in. Vietnam is a long, elongated country. While they were coming in, the communists were coming in. Ho Chi Minh and those guys up there, they did not want the Japanese anymore, and they did not want the French in anymore. So communism began to move in. In time, it separated North Vietnam from South Vietnam. The French tried to keep them out and tried to get the land back, but they were overwhelmed. France did not do a very good job in World War II, and now she has the worst job there. Of course, you might guess that all this is in the 50s now. World War II had not been over three or four years, and we are back in a conflict in Southeast Asia. Of course, you might guess that America is paying for 80% of that war, even though we are not involved in it yet.

Well, the French get kicked out. Then we, America, go in. The real story is, and I do not have time to get into it, the real story goes way back before that in Fatima, Portugal, when those three little Portugal kids saw the Virgin Mary and got a thing and gave it to the Pope, and the Pope, one of the promises was that communism was going to be ended by the Roman Catholic Church. So from that point on, the Roman Catholic Church began to get into politics to stop communism. That is why we got into Korea. It is why we got into Vietnam. It is one of the most amazing things. You will see it in the book, Vietnam: Why Did We Go? By the time the 1950s and the 60s came around, the Roman Catholic Church had infiltrated our government.

You have James Forrestal, who is a Secretary of Defense, Roman Catholic.

Senator McCarthy, Roman Catholic. He went through all of America calling everybody a communist. He was a rabid dog.

You have Attorney General McGrath, Roman Catholic.

Frank Matthews, Secretary of the Navy, Roman Catholic.

General Mark Clark over all of NATO forces, Roman Catholic.

You have George Craig, head of the American Legion, which was a big deal back then, Roman Catholic.

John Foster Dulles and his brother, Allen Dulles. Allen Dulles was the head of the CIA in the Cuba deal, and his brother, John Foster Dulles, was the Secretary of State.

That is where in Vietnam we had a guy in there by the name of Bảo Đại, who was the president of Vietnam. Our government did not like him being in there because he was pro-Buddhist and he was anti-Roman Catholic. So you know what happened? Because of the pulling of the strings between Cardinal Spellman and Pope Pius XII over there, and all of our infiltration with the Roman Catholics into our government, here is what they did. The CIA got a guy who later became, his name was Diem. He was a South Vietnamese. He was an avid Roman Catholic. They took him to Georgetown University for 10 years in exile, and he was trained in Georgetown University, which is a Jesuit school, by the Jesuits. He was trained in every aspect. When he was ready, our CIA went in and toppled that government and set Diem up as government, and a Roman Catholic. His brother was the Archbishop of Huế, and his other brother became head of the secret police.

Most of you do not remember this. Some of you older guys probably do. Remember all those Buddhists that were dousing themselves in gasoline in Vietnam and setting themselves on fire? It was on the news every night. I mean, you talk about a terrible thing. These Buddhist monks would sit down in the street, pour gasoline on themselves, and they would light themselves on fire and burn. Nobody understood it. The reason why they were doing that is because when Diem got into it, and he was a Catholic, he immediately started to persecute the Buddhist monks and the Buddhist faith to get rid of them so that country could become totally Roman Catholic. It is an incredible thing.

We went into Vietnam because we wanted to keep communists out because that is what the Roman Catholic Church wanted, and all they needed, they had everything in their government. They lacked one thing. Guess what it was? A Roman Catholic president. They got that with John F. Kennedy in 1960, 1961. Now it looked like it was complete, and it looked like we were going to go. Kennedy met Diem before Kennedy was a senator. He supported putting Diem in over there. Our government, yes, our government grabbed the dog by both ears. We stuck our nose into a country that we never should have stuck it in because of the Roman Catholic pressure and the Roman Catholics in our government to do that, to fulfill some fantasy that three Portugal children had in 1914 to stop world communism. It is an incredible concept. It is laid out in that

book in such an incredible way. That book opened my eyes to history and set me on the path when I did my work on JFK and who assassinated him. It is one of the most incredible things on this planet.

Once Diem got in there, he got out of control. He started killing everybody. His brother was the secret police. The persecution of the Buddhist monks and the Buddhist churches by these Roman Catholic fanatics got to such a level that even our government was embarrassed by it. So you know what we did? The same CIA that went in and defuncted the president that was there and put Diem in now puts another coup d'état together, and we go in and we bring him down, kill him and his brother, the secret service guy. The rest of the story is we lost Vietnam. We had what, 30,000 of our young men go and give their life for a bogus cause.

Let me just say something to you here. I am a patriot. I do not want you to, I am just giving you the facts of life and the facts of history, but I am a patriot. I will tell you this right now. Vietnam was my war as it was some of you guys' war. I am telling you, and I still believe this today, it is not my call. I would never burn my draft card even if I knew what I knew now. I would never refuse to fight in that war because the job of every Christian is not to determine whether a war is moral or immoral. The job of every Christian is to take up arms in defense of his country when he is called upon as a patriot, and then God judges nations just like He judges individuals. That is my Bible take on it. But I am telling you, we grabbed that old dog by both ears, and we could not get out.

I remember as a young boy watching the news every week. On the news, they would have the list of how many American boys were killed this week in Vietnam. A sad deal. When I was in the military up at Fort Devens, they found out I could play the trumpet. I did more funerals. I was the only guy. I did every military funeral in New England, me and another guy. They traveled me all over that place. I will tell you what, there have been many a heartbreaker. Those young boys coming back have been killed. Some of them open caskets, some of them not. Some of them, they are just unbelievable standing there blowing taps, boy, with that flag-draped coffin. I will tell you what, it was a time when we lost 30,000 of our youngest, bravest soldiers and young men and young ladies in our country, all because of the fact that we grabbed the dog by the ears, and we got bit. I am telling you, that verse is a powerful verse, not only for you and me for sticking our nose in other people's business. It is a powerful verse for us as a nation, as a country, to realize we need to stay out of other people's problems unless it comes to us.

We have a word for that today by the liberals, and it is called, "Oh, you are an isolationist." No, I am a person who just minds my own business. Your track record in history as somebody who wanted to make the world a free democracy is nothing but blood, sweat, and tears, and millions and millions of people dying and being killed so you could accomplish some goal.

SEC: Deceiving Neighbors and Joking (Proverbs 26:18-19)

I look at the next couple of verses here, verses 18 and 19: "As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death. So is a man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?" This is all too familiar. This is a good practical one. The cool guy making fun of the nerd guy. I do not

really have a good answer for what I am about to tell you, but I have always stuck up for the little guy. I just cannot stand bullies.

I remember one time I was down, I do not even want, I was down there a number of years ago. I was down and eating at a plaza for some reason. I do not know what I was down there for. I might have been to pick something up. I do not know. But I was eating at Panera down there, on the west end of the thing. I am sitting down there, and I am eating, and there is this little kid who is a teenager, but you can obviously see he is not the cool guy at school. He did not dress right. He had acne all over his face, and he is probably a little slow. Over here was a table with two guys and three girls. These guys were the jocks, and they were trying to be funny and make a joke of the young kid over here. All the little girls were giggling. You know how they do, real tough guys. I sat there, and I was eating, and the kid was minding his own business. I could tell that, and then they were getting pretty. So I just got my food, went up, and sat down with him. I just sat down with him. I said, "Hey, I hope you do not mind that I sat down with you." He said, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no, that is fine." I said, "My name is Bob." He gave me his name. We talked for a little bit. The guy said one more thing. I am out of my mind here. I turned around and I said, "Look, you know what, I am sick and tired of you picking on this kid. Maybe you want to pick on me." That was the stupidest thing I ever said. This kid probably wiped the floor up with me, and I had to kill him. It ceased. But I am just telling you, I have always, I cannot stand bullies picking on little guys.

I know this is all too familiar. Taking a cheap shot at somebody and making fun of them with a butt of some joke to hurt them. Then you mask it by saying, "Oh, I was just kidding." Now, let me clarify this around here. We joke all the time with each other. We really do. We kid each other, and we get into it really good, and I love it. But at the end of the day, the difference is no matter what, we would all die for each other. I love to have fun with people. I love people to have fun with me. I think God's people take themselves way too seriously. They get uptight about way too many things. The best advice I could give you is learn to laugh at yourself. Enjoy a good joke on yourself. You guys give it to me all the time. I love it. Because I can give it back. You need to make fun of yourself. Sometimes I will beat you to the punch because I will make fun of something stupid I did on my own, and I deprive you of the privilege. I tell people all the time, if I do not play with you, I do not like you.

But I know you need to be careful. There is a balance in it. If I see some new visitor here, I am not going to go up and make a fool out of them. It is not, but we have fun. We are a family, and none of us take it too seriously. We all have people we like. You guys give it to me all the time. I have known Meredith over here since she was born. I call her Meth. Everybody calls her Meth. I tell her she is my Meth addiction. She married Will over here, and Meredith and I go at it all the time. I have no problem going up here and saying, "Meredith, I really like your hair. Who did it? The North wind." And she will come back to me. She will give it back to me. We understand each other. It is okay. Things like that. Come on, Baba, are you kidding me? Baba takes the brunt of more jokes around here. You ever hear those guys in the band getting on each other? Sometimes they cannot even get the song out because they are cracking on each other so much. I love it. It is okay. You do not see them storming out of here mad. We are fun. We have fun.

I pick on Nikki Brown all the time. Nikki gives it back to me. I say, "Nikki, that is a nice dress you have on today." "Well, thank you, Bob." "Yeah, too bad they did not have it in your size." We get it. Alex, are you kidding me? Alex is giving it to everybody. We are always giving it to Alex. Alex tells me white men cannot jump. I tell Alex, "Black all of matter." Will and I go at it all the time. I remember the time you wore those god-awful orthopedic shoes. You never wore them since. I asked you, I said, "How far did you chase that crippled guy to get those shoes?" The next week I had shoes on, he came back and nailed me. We do not get mad about it. God's people get so uptight. They get so, "Oh, you made fun of me." Well, make fun of yourself. Realize that we are all goofy. I understand it. Whatever you say, it will not make me mad. I know I am goofy, and I am the original Clark Griswold. You are looking at him. I gave it to Gail Walker. Gave it right back. Absolutely. Gail is one of my, remember a couple of weeks ago when Gail came up with your birthday, and how old were you then? I am sure this last time. Sixty. Nobody believes he was 60. No. That is not the real miracle. She not only has a secret to eternal youth, she has a secret to weight loss. You did not know her back in the day. I was talking to Foothills this week, and we were talking. I said, "You know, your wife is amazing." He says, "She is the most amazing woman I ever met." And I said, "She is." I said, "You know what? She does not look 60." And he said, "Yeah." I will tell you what, you should have seen her before she had that weight loss program. She is amazing. I said, "Really?" And he says, "Yeah." So I just want to tell you, he brought in a pair of her jeans. You are my hero.

We need to learn to laugh at ourselves. We need to quit being so uptight. We need to realize that we have fun with each other. We do it because we love each other. We have that balance as a family here that you do not find in most churches. We just get along. It does not matter. Nobody takes it seriously. I will tell you, I laugh at myself most of the time when I am not crying.

But in the wrong way, and I wanted to put a contrast. We have all seen it in an experience. One time, Peter Cartwright, Peter Cartwright was an old frontier preacher. He was as tough as could be. He would go out to these places where these mountain men or these cattle guys or whatever, and he would preach to them. He would get a big fire going, and he would get them around there, and he would start preaching to them. You know how they are. You are going to get some guys who act up and try to break up the service. You guys at the mission see it all the time. You will get up there to try to preach, and some guy back there will say, "I already heard that, preacher." Or somebody will say to somebody else, "That is mine. You are not," and they will get a fight breakout. Well, times have not changed that much. Old Peter Cartwright, he just had that happen. He just stopped the preaching, went out and kicked the fire out of those guys, beat them senseless, then came back up and finished the message.

One time he went east. They invited him to a preacher's conference. Everybody there is wearing high stiff collars, and he shows up in his frontier leathers. He just shows up there, and all the Bible scholars are there, and they are going to belittle him in front of everybody. One of them nudged the other scholars and said, "Watch this." He says, "Brother Cartwright." And he said, "Yes, sir." He started to speak to him in Greek, knowing that Cartwright did not speak Greek, and he was going to use him as the butt of his joke and try to befuddle him. Well, you never got ahead of Cartwright. You know what he did? He answered him back in Chickasaw, Sioux,

Indian. The guy just looked at his other friend and said, "He has got it. He has got it. He has got it."

I am telling you, people will try to make a point at our expense sometimes. You will have people who get jealous of you because God maybe is doing something in your life that He is not doing for them. They will try to put you down, or you will find people who do not want you to get past them in your spiritual growth. So they will do things to belittle you or keep you down. There will be people that have such an inferiority complex among themselves all their life that all they can do is to try to be looking good by making somebody else look bad. So they make fun of you in a cloaked motive. Then at the end, "I was just kidding." "Well, I really did not mean anything by it." Sure you did. You wanted to make your point. So you cloaked your remark in humor, and so you could run back to that little hallway of "I was just kidding" when you got called on it. Solomon had you figured out in 1000 BC, brother, Proverbs chapter 26, verses 18 and 19.

SEC: Ending Strife: Removing the Tail-bearer (Proverbs 26:20-21)

Now look at verse 20: "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." Oh man, what a good easy one. This is an easy one to grasp. It is hard to do. What he is saying here, this for you and for me, we ought to be problem solvers, not problem causes. He says here a fire, strife, issues, problems will go out if you do not keep putting wood on it. A problem and issue will go out unless you just keep pouring gasoline on it to keep it burning.

Then he says in verse 21: "As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife." He does that because he is contentious. He is slothful. He is wise in his own conceit. Without a doubt, this will be the number one single thing that will destroy churches or people. That is why in Proverbs chapter 6, verse 16, when he laid out the six things that God hates, he capped off the six with a seventh one, and he separated the seventh from the other six, telling us that the seventh one was an abomination to God.

Proverbs 6:16-19

16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:

17 A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,

18 An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,

19 A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

You know what it was? Sowing discord among the brethren. That seems to be in a day and age that we live in, maybe it has been true all down through Christianity. I do not know. I have only got a short 68 years to judge it by, but it seems to be that many of God's people's spiritual gift today is sowing discord. In verse 23, this is called burning lips.

The devil knew the number one component of the New Testament church and Christianity had to be a unity, a oneness, a singleness. That is why he said in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 1 through 6, when he is laying out everything to the church and he is setting up what the church should be,

this is why he says that we should be in one body, why we should be of one spirit. We should have one hope. We should have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one gospel, one church, one book. He says in verse 3, the reason they do this is to keep the unity of the Spirit of God. That is the number one thing. That is why a church needs to be a family. A family has its squabbles, certainly.

I have had family. You know how most police officers get killed in a domestic violence? They go there because a woman called the cops because her husband is beating her, and he goes there to solve it, and she is beat up pretty bad. He starts to take the husband, and she fights against the husband going to jail and winds up getting hurt in the thing. In other words, blood is thicker than water. It is a thing where, you know, that is a terrible thing because truthfully the water is a water birth and the blood is the blood of Christ. In our case, the blood of Christ should be thicker than our earthly birth and the water we were born into this planet because we should be different, and we should have a oneness. That was a single thing that we needed to have. When that got disrupted, it all falls apart.

Back again, talking about our country's history, the phrase "In God We Trust" was not just a quote that we put on money. It was a single thing that this country was built on. We believed that at a time that the only thing this country had was God. We recognized what was happening in Europe, how it got started. That is why when they did the Declaration of Independence, when Thomas Jefferson was doing it, they looked at it and said, "There are not enough references to God." They sent it back. They had to put three more in it. But when you look at it today, it is completely broken on all levels. There was a time when we used to call the United States a union. It was a union of states. Every year or so, the President of the United States will get up and give us a State of the Union address. In that, he tries to tell everybody how good the union is doing. Well, I know what the state of the union is. It is a mess. Today, the unity is completely gone and torn apart by all the different factions. Just like that happened, the lessons from history we never learned, so goes Christianity.

What the devil could not do in Russia, China, and Korea, through the pain and through the torture and through the murder and through the intimidation and through the terror of literally hundreds of millions of God's people. You find that there is nothing written about them. Nobody was writing great books. They are all doing that over here. They are languishing in prison. They are being tortured for their faith. Their families are being arrested. They are being arrested. Yet, Christianity is spreading like wildfire through those countries. What the devil could not do in Russia, China, and Korea through all of his persecution, he accomplished in supposedly the greatest nation on earth in just 50, 60 short years, right before our eyes, and nobody could see it. He killed this country. He killed Christianity. He killed churches by giving them everything that they wanted: affluence.

You had a kid that killed somebody here a couple of years ago, a rich kid, and his lawyer pleaded not guilty. His lawyer's defense to the judge and to the jury was he did this because all of his life he got everything he wanted, and it was the affluence of what he had that made him kill these people. How stupid that is. But that is what the devil did here. He gave us everything we wanted. Now, I am not saying you cannot live without it in a balance. I am certainly not saying

everybody sell everything and move to Nairobi someplace. But what I am saying is this, that is the way he did it. You see it in Revelation chapter 3, because he says there that the church, the Laodicean church, the church that has power, says, "You are rich, you are increased with goods, you have need of nothing."

I will tell you something else that these guys cannot get, never will get it. I told you those countries were the greatest revivals. They are the greatest Christians and the strongest Christians who paid a price for what they believe. But I will tell you, there were no mega churches in Russia. There were no mega churches in China. There are no mega churches in North Korea or North Vietnam. That is only in America. While they were meeting under trees and alleys and in garages, wherever they could, you have God's people in America who would not walk across the street to go to a church that was not in a Cosmo Hall someplace.

In 1980, the wall came down. We had been ready at that point in time to be in touch with missionaries in the East block countries. We had taken the same discipleship material that you have, and we had translated it into Russian, into Romanian, into Yugoslavian, and all of those East block nations. When the wall came down, the door came open. I was in one of the first teams, and some of you were actually on those teams later on. But we were on the, I was one of the first teams that went into Romania. We worked there with churches, with pastors that were open and free now to teach them the Bible. We went in to teach them discipleship. When I would take a team of 18, 19, 20 singles, like you, some married too, and we would go and we would go in there and spend 10 days or so, and we would teach the church how to disciple, and we would try to do that. We saw immediately the need.

I remember them having great crusades. We had an evangelist with us, a good friend of mine, and he was preaching. I was sitting there with a pastor in the bleachers, and it was a soccer stadium. This is the country that a year before, if you even mentioned the Bible, you went to prison. Now it is all gone, and the gospel is wide open. Here we are, there are about to be 30,000 people in this stadium, and this guy is preaching. The pastor who I was staying with said, "Bob," he says, "look back here." It was this big, high building with people in the windows. He says, "A year ago, that was the building of the secret police. They tortured more Christians and put them in prison. We never dreamed we would have what we have right here in our country."

That morning, I went with him and his wife down to the local store. It was just a store, probably no bigger than this room, not the grocery stores that we have here. I walked into the store, and all that was on the barren shelves, everything was barren, except maybe eight or nine jars of made-up preserves that had probably been sitting there for two or three years. The line for bread was probably a quarter of a mile. Not everybody got bread. It is a stark cry from what we have here in this country. You see, we do not need to trust God for anything today in most cases. If you are a person who trusts God for something, you are a rare individual. What do you need to trust God for? You have everything you want. It is all brand new. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as you never forget the One who gave it to you in the first place.

I stood there in line, and I thought to myself, "Wow." Then, America never sees it. American Christians never see the opportunity to make a buck off of somebody else's pain. Right after that,

Jerry Falwell went on television, made a plea out to all of his radio audience, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people. He talked about the poor plight in the East block countries and how if you would just give \$500, "We want to bring all of these pastors over. For two and a half, three years, we want to put them in our seminaries, and then we want to send them back to be pastors to their people." Well, you know how many people who are good-hearted people that could not see past the sham? They brought in what, two, three, four, five hundred pastors. After they were here for three years and had a taste of America, not one of them wanted to go back.

You see, instead of taking what we have over there in place, which we did, no, they wanted to bring them out of their environment, bring them to America, treat them like kings, give them everything they want, and then you are going to send them back to a grocery store where there is nothing in it. You have to wait in line for two hours for a piece of bread. Wise in your own conceits. I am telling you. Listen to me. We talk about freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of oppression, freedom of liberty, life, and the pursuit of happiness. That freedom could never come from a government or a country who has taken God and the Bible from its core value and replaced it with the possessions of secularism, humanism, and idealism. But rather real freedom, the real pursuit of happiness and liberty in Christ, will always have to come from the Word of God inside the heart of God's people, who in the middle of any repressive government will understand what the book of Philemon is teaching, that your freedom does not depend on the shackles on your hands or your feet. Your freedom depends on the freedom of your soul that God has saved you and set you free, and He will put you in any situation He wants you in, and He will open doors for you.

The real peace of God and the real rest that comes from that peace will only be found in the Word of God as God's people become a oneness together with the Word of God. That unity, that oneness, puts an end to strife. But yet you always have people who want to downplay what God is doing by putting wood on a fire to keep the problems going. They never will follow in the biblical process to deal with issues. Instead, they just keep throwing wood on a fire instead of putting the fire out. You take away the wood, and the fire goes out. You take away the talebearer, and the strife will cease, and a contentious man will always kindle strife. There is no satisfaction in their own lives, so they feel that they must intervene in other people's lives because they cannot fulfill their own. So they are going to get in this spiritual mindset, "Oh, I have all the answers. They do not work for me, but I will help them work for you."

Listen, when you find out who you really are in Christ, you do not bother worrying about who is dating who or who is saying what or doing what. You do not worry about who got engaged or is planning on getting married. You do not sit around and talk about who bought what and where and when. You realize and understand that you have plenty of your own issues to work on. If everybody in churches across America would just start to fix themselves and stop trying to fix everybody else, we would end all the problems in Christianity.

I tell husbands and wives all the time when they come in in marital scenarios, she will not like what the husband does, and a lot of times the husband will retaliate by not liking what she does. The reason why they have strife is because she did not like it, so she tried to fix him. He did not

like her, so he tried to fix her. I will tell you right now, you do not have the ability to fix anybody. I tell them all the time, "This is your source problem. This is your core problem right here. This is your misunderstanding. You do not like him, so you are trying to fix him, and your way of fixing him is yelling at him, screaming, and doing all the things that you do. He does not like the way you are, so his way is retaliating because of what you are saying to him." I said, "I have a novel idea for you. You want the strife to cease in your marriage? I will tell you what you do. Just quit each other throwing wood on the other fire."

I will tell you what you do, sir. There is a role of the husband. You start working on you and fixing you, no matter what she does, to fix your role. And ma'am, there is a role of the wife. If you start working on your role to fix you and stop trying to fix him, when you work at fixing you as a husband and you work at fixing you as the wife, you will not have any problems. I guarantee it. You only have problems when one or the other will not stay with it or will not do it or tries to circumvent the church to do it their own way and add their own little spices into it, and that is when you get into problems. I am telling you, there is a role of the husband in the Bible, and there is a role of the wife in the Bible. When the husband works at fixing himself, instead of worrying about fixing her, and she worries about fixing herself and trying to worry to fix him, the problems will go. It works in the church.

Now, there are times that you work with people. I get that. We understand that. You disciple them, you deal with them, they have some legitimate problems. I get that. I understand it. But this thing, just because they do not, like America, if a foreign country does not have the things that we have, we think it is inferior. This has been the failure of missions for years. American missionaries have a superiority complex. They go into these countries and want to make these countries little Americas. All the missionaries will get a little compound down in Mexico, and they will have a little American flag. They will have little American pens on their thing, and they want to teach them American hymns. They want to do all of this because they think that American Christianity culture is superior to their own culture, and that is a tragic mistake. It is not. So they try to do the same thing.

A general in Vietnam one time, preaching to us, he was talking to us, and he says, "We are going to go over there, boys, and we are going to get this thing done, and we are going to win it, because I want you to know inside every Vietnamese, there is an American trying to break out." Missionaries think inside every Christian down in another culture, there is an American Christian wanting to break out. So we do not allow them to have their own culture because we think, wise in our own conceit, our culture is superior. It is not. The Bible tells you in the book of Acts why He separated the nations and separated the sons of Adam. He told you that. You just missed that. Of course, that is just where we are at today, and it is a tragedy.

SEC: Conclusion: Principles for Unity

Three great practical principles for us today that you will want to take home.

1. The first one is paramount: mind your own business. I could say that there is another 1a to that, which would say mind your own business.

2. The second thing is be careful of your motive in having a good time. Make sure it is family. Make sure it has no material motive to it. You are just having fun with each other, and take it as well as you get it.
3. The third thing is keep the wood pile of your strife-kindling material to a minimum. Be a problem solver. Fix things. Do not break them. Solve problems. Do not cause them.

Ephesians 4:11-13

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

I am telling you, I know that verse is talking about when the Lord comes back and we all get our glorified body and the oneness there. I understand that, but there is no reason why the church cannot have that oneness today. We have everything that we need. My favorite verse, and I will leave you with this on to something like this, is Psalms 133, verses 1 through 3. I think it is one of the greatest verses for churches anywhere, anyplace in all of the Bible.

Psalms 133:1-3

1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

The unity of the brethren is like the Holy Spirit of God, completely filling from Aaron's head through his beard down to his feet. A filling of the Holy Spirit of God, typified by the oil, that ends strife, that ends issues, that brings forth peace, that brings forth forgiveness, that brings forth understanding, that brings forth letting things go and forgetting the things of the past, and building that unity which is only going to take us forward. All the things that God's people involve in do not take the church forward, it puts it in reverse. There is only one thing that will move a church forward, and that is the unity of the brethren. Let us pray. Father, we thank