

Proverbs 31:16

Sunday 6/7/2020

It seems like everybody kind of decided to get back in the swing of things today, which is great. I am really happy for it that it is today because today's message is not meant to be a hard message, but it is probably going to wind up being that way just simply because of the content. We have been in Proverbs forever. Chapter 31 was the chapter that we were all kind of looking for, especially when we got into the virtuous woman aspect. There are so many incredible different parallels to that.

I knew that as far as I am concerned, everything in Proverbs, everything I have said, along with everything that I have done in my life in the ministry, comes down to the single verse that I am going to preach to you today. I would ask and beg your indulgence that if things get a little personal today, this is probably unlike any other message I have ever preached to you, simply because of where this one originates and starts from and where it obviously winds up.

I. The Importance of Ministry to Our Household First

You remember last week, we looked at verses 14 and 15, and what an incredible two verses they were. The importance of our ministry to our own household first. We saw where it talked about that she gave meat to her household and a portion to her maidens. I have talked about the relationship of really what that meant and how that really plays out in what we should be doing. We talked about her rising while it is yet night. We looked at the nighttime being the church age and this virtuous woman being a picture of you and me and our relationship with Christ, our work during the church age.

It talked about how that she brought her food from a far country. We talked about that being the Word of God, the supernatural gift that God has given to us and brought to us from a far place. Our household is the number one, the ones to whom we give that to first. The great reality check of life we talked about, which is the judgment seat of Christ, is the fact that someday we are all going to stand and we are going to give an account for what we did with what God has done for us.

Winning the world to Christ and going out and doing everything that we do, but in reality, our kids winding up in the lake of fire and many times our grandkids. Billy Sunday was a great preacher. I certainly would not stand here and take anything away from whatever he did and what God did. He was a tremendous impact in our country when it needed it the most. Years after his death, his wife was interviewed and talked about his life and what he did. Her reality to the thing was the fact that he was a great preacher and one probably responsible for millions and millions of people to Christ. But she said that as far as she knew, her boys and her family were lost without Christ.

You look at that and you think of the tragedy of that. How we can be out trying to win the world to Christ, doing everything that we do, but the devil is sneaking in the back door and you are losing your own family. I know that we are all at different levels here and we talked about this last week, and none of these messages are designed to make anybody feel bad or anything, but

they are a reality check. I will tell you something: if you have your kids and they love the Word of God and they are in church with you and they love God and they love you and your family, you ought to hug them this afternoon and thank God for that. But for sure, all of us need a reality check to keep our perspective and to keep us honest.

In our church, one of the burdens that I feel so incredibly pressed upon me is all the young couples in our church, all the young singles. Someday you singles will find the love of your life and you will get married and you will have kids and you will have a family. It is my desire that you train those kids up and bring them up that they are part of God's program of your family ministering together. Not fractured, not separated, not broken, not dysfunctional, but families working together, understanding that that is God's process for reaching out and getting the world.

You Christians that have come in, like we talked about last week, when you got here, your kids were mostly grown and they were all beginning to have some problems, and it does not matter. It is a thing where we work together. Nobody will ever be against you here. You may be against us or you may be against whatever God wants you to do, but on my end, I am always here for you, no matter what it may take. The problem is sometimes when it gets down the road a ways, it takes some serious decisions to turn a situation or to deal with a situation, and many times parents will not do that.

As I said last week to you young couples, God guarantees to us that our children will be by our side in ministry, and those promises are as absolute as our guarantee for our own salvation.

Titus 1:2

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

That is true. But it is just as true as:

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

The counter to that is, "Don't train up a child, and away he will go." It is just simply my burden for you. I know you will probably get sick of hearing it. I know you will probably think, "Why don't you get onto something else?" I will tell you why: because the future of this church is not me. The future of this church is you and your family. I just want to do everything I can to get you to the point where your children become part of that.

We have a mindset in Christianity today that guys will get out there and they will do everything in the world to win people to Christ, and they will take those promises and those principles and they will really preach them. But when it comes to the principles and the promises of their own family, you never hear anything about it. We live in a Christian world today that God's people like to pick and choose what they want to believe and what they want to do. Here, we do not do that. Here, for the good or the bad, we preach the whole counsel of God and we lay it all out.

All my ministry, I have seen parents that have lost their kids. Yet mom and dad wanted to portray to everybody in the church that they were great teachers, great ministers. Many of them were

deacons, or they were on an elder board, or some of them were pastors. They wanted to give the appearance that everything in their life was great, and they focused on everything except their children.

II. The Jephthah Example: Spiritual Neglect

When I first came to Kansas City in November of 1976, that is before most of you were born. I came here in November of 1976 and I got hired to be a youth pastor. I will never forget that our first camp was down at a place called Beth Haven. Remarkably, and I love this, some of the original people that were with me back then are here today. Robbie, you were part of that. Eddie back there, Eddie, you were there. Penny was down as a counselor. Steve Bracken was there. I remember him because we had him in Hawk most of the time that he was there. Troy was there with me. So you know what I am saying is true. I am not just making this up. I will be honest, a lot of things I preach, I do make up, but this is not one of them. You are not a good preacher if you do not. No, I am just kidding.

Was anybody else there then that I missed? I do not want to miss anybody. I think that is probably the deal. You remember those days, remember? Down there, Beth Eden, right outside of Lebanon, Missouri, off Highway 44. We have some stories to tell. Where is Meredith at? Meredith, your mom was one of the first, Anita was one of the first counselors down there that worked with Penny and all of that. Mel Sabaka preached. I know that many of you know Mel, you have heard him preach, some of you do not, but if you ever heard, if you ever, you can still find him online, but he was an incredible preacher. He is the Apostle Paul of my life. He really made the difference in my life when I got right with the Lord.

So I had Mel come out and preach the first camp. That first camp, we must have had about 120 kids. Everybody from the church, I was the new guy on the block. I had put a camp together, all the parents were excited, so they all got their kids to go to camp. We had a great camp down there. By the time Wednesday hit, we came home on Friday, but Wednesday night, the camp broke. By Friday night, when we came back, half the kids in that camp had gotten saved.

Now, you would think that that is a great thing. But the problem was that all those kids were the kids of the deacons, the Sunday school teachers, the pastors, and all of the leadership of the church that were supposedly had their families in order and everything was fine. You would think they were happy that their kids got saved, but they were not. Oh no, they were quite upset about it. They had to now deal with the fact that they are a teacher, they are a deacon, they are a finance committee member, they are on the board of whoever or whatever, and they are up there. Many of them were from Calvary Bible College and teaching there in Sunday school because there was a very large church. Now suddenly they felt like they were exposed and they were embarrassed.

I remember, and by the way, that started the beginning of my battle for the next 40 years. I remember thinking at that point in time, what parent in their right mind would have been okay with their kids just going on and winding up in hell as long as their status remained the same? That was the way it was. To a certain degree, that is the way it always is.

I have told you many, many times, back in the book of Judges, chapter 11 and 12, you have the story of Jephthah. In fact, a little gal from England made a reference to that on the chat the other day about something that I had preached a while back on Jephthah. Jephthah is a judge of the nation of Israel. He is one of the judges. Jephthah is a great picture of most fathers today in Christianity. Jephthah is responsible for killing his own daughter. When you read the story, it is one of the most bizarre stories you are ever going to read in the Bible. Yet all of, in fact, Judges has a bunch of them, but you put all of those into perspective with the last chapter and about the last verse in Judges where it says there was no king in Israel and every man was doing what was right in his own eyes.

If there is ever a book that mirrors where we are at in America today, it is the book of Judges. Do you know what is wrong in this country with the political system, the justice system, the race riots and all of the protesting that is going on, the injustices that are done to everybody? Do you know what the problem is? Do you know what the problem is with the oppression that if you are not feeling yet, you are going to be feeling too long? I will tell you what is wrong with America. America is the book of Judges. There is no king in America. When I talk about a king, I am talking about a King James 1611, Authorized Version, and everybody is just doing what is right in their own eyes. In Judges, that brought upon anarchy, and today we are seeing the seeds of not a full-blown anarchy of everybody just doing their own thing.

Anyway, Jephthah is one of these big time spiritual guys who are like so many fathers who were back in my day, that he is used of God and he is always shooting his mouth off. He is a big time blowhard who always just wants to let everybody know how spiritual he was. He is the judge of Israel and he was going to lead Israel into a battle. He says up there, he says to God before everybody, "Lord, if you give me the victory today, I promise you the first thing I see when I come back to my house, I will offer up as a sacrifice to you." So he goes and he wins the battle and he comes back home, and you know the first thing he sees? It is his own daughter. So you know what he did? He offered his own daughter as a sacrifice. He killed her. He gave her some time to bewail her virginity and the fact that she was never going to marry, she was never going to have kids.

When you look at the story, I want to tell you something right now. This kid was a good kid. She was much smarter than her father, but she was obedient to her father. He actually killed her. He actually killed his own daughter. The incredible part of it is that he did not have to do that.

In the Bible in Leviticus chapter 5, verse 4 and 5, the Bible is very clear that if you make a stupid vow that you should not have made, if you shoot your mouth off and say something that you should not say, and now you are committed to it, Leviticus chapter 5, verse 4 and 5 tells you how to get out of it. He could have gotten out of that vow if he wanted to, but oh, no, no, no, no, his pride, his arrogance, who he was, he could not go back on the very words of his mouth, even though they were the stupidest words. I was going to say that probably ever came out of his mouth, but that is probably not true. It was one of the long series of words that came out of his mouth that were stupid.

The Jephthahs did not die out in the book of Judges. I have seen parents today who just in the same way spiritually will kill their kids just like he did. All the great scholarship, all the great minds that want to correct the Bible, they just cannot imagine how that God would allow this to happen. So the guys with the PhDs, the Greek and the Hebrew guys, they all come up with the fact, "Well, he did not really kill his daughter, but he killed a chicken." If you went to some major Bible college someplace and they covered this story here in the book of Judges, they would tell you that he really did not kill his daughter, but he sacrificed a chicken. I am okay with that. Colonel Sanders would be too. But the bottom line is this, my problem is when I get into those two chapters, it is just really hard for me seeing a chicken walking up and down in the mountains bewailing her virginity.

III. The Pastor's Burden: Not Losing One More Child

The attack today is going to be on your family. The great tragedy today is in my mind for this church. I am not responsible for the world, I am really not. I am responsible for what God gave me here, which you will see in a little bit. My mindset is not one more child, not losing one more child. I knew that when camp had, I knew camp was going to get squashed, I knew that it was. I told the guys, I said, "We do whatever we have to do. I do not care what we have to do. These guys are innovative enough, there are enough great minds in this church that are way past mine that you will come up with some, it will be a great success." Got a few little glitches to work through, but it will be okay. I am doing it and want to do it the way we are going to do it, simply because our kids need it. We cannot go a year without having an impact into these people's lives, these children's lives that we were entrusted with that are your kids. Because I am telling you right now, the attack today is going to be on your family.

I have spent 17 years in this church now, 17 years training you as singles. Many of you were singles back then, and now you are couples. You older parents who have come in or who were with me from the very beginning. I have tried to help you understand this incredible concept of not losing your household. The fact that God planned to reach the world as families. I have always been ready to help anybody, I have never refused anybody, there is always something you can do. It may not always be the easiest thing or the most convenient thing, but I am telling you, I have always been ready and there is always ready to establish a plan. The issue will never be the problems with your kids. The issues will always be the Jephthahs of life. I am just telling you that. It will always be the deacons and the preachers and the people back in 1976. It probably was 1977 at that point in time.

For the most part, what I have tried to do has worked. We have had child training classes, we have got several books on it back there. I do not know how many times we have been through it. We have done everything we can to do to try to help you. I am here for you. I watch you with your kids. I watch you giving meat to your household. I watch how good your kids respond. It only makes, on the total package of our church, it only makes you more valuable than what I am trying to do here. As you give your portion to your family, in time we spread out and we give a portion to the people that we are working with. Your kids show it, or they do not show it, but your kids show it one way or the other.

I see so many of you getting to the place where they are coming into your 14, 15, 16, 13, whatever, and it is obvious that you are being molded in the right way. That is just why I like to have, when we do the announcements, I like to recognize what the kids do. I think it is important. In most churches, the pastor is so important to himself and doing all the other things and chasing the people who got all the money, and the kids just get lost in a shuffle. That will never happen here. These kids are as important to me as they are to you, and they may be yours biologically, but they are mine spiritually, and I have a responsibility as a pastor, not only to them, but to you, to tell you the truth and to help you wherever it goes from here.

You have to remember, and I say this all the time, our kids are nothing more than a reflection of who we really are spiritually. We get the idea of that, and I tell people all the time, you never look at a man's ministry or what he appears to be in his ministry. You have to look deeper in that, because I have learned from way back in 1977 that that is not always true.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

You never look at what a man's ministry to others appears to be. I always look at his children, because his children will reflect what his true relationship with God is, and that is why the Bible says you give meat to your household first.

Proverbs chapter 31 is a tough chapter, because everybody wanted to get there because you thought we were going to all put lace on our underwear and run around as a virtuous woman. Now you know that is not true. It is a deep inside look of what we should be as God's bride. Unfortunately today, it is only going to get a little worse. Maybe next week will be better, but today is going to be a rough one. I am not planning on it to be that way, but it is where it is.

I know this, I am not such a stupid person, though I am pretty stupid in some things. I know I cannot fix it all, I cannot. That does not mean I would not like to. It does not mean I do not have the answers that we could, but I know that is not a reality. So what I have to do is I take one person, one couple at a time, and I help you put a plan together to get everything the way it needs to be for the way that God wants it to go, your family.

One of the greatest studies in the Bible, one of the greatest things that parents can do who find themselves in a situation, is found in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 16, where he talks about redeeming the time. What are the great aspects of God in our relationship with Him that time lost is never really time lost because He will allow you to redeem the time that was lost? That is a great concept. The problem is sometimes what you have to do to accomplish that.

It is a thing where I have talked many, many times about the five stages that you train your child in as you bring them up. You compositely build on the last one and tie them all together, and you go through those five stages that bring them from the time they are born or very young, right up to the time they are 18 or 19 and they are well established. I have brought you through that so many times. But at the same time, you say, "Well, I have lost mine, mine is not around. Okay,

how do I, what do I do?" At the same time, listen to me. There are five things that you can do to regain them if you have lost them. It is just simple and a fact there is always something you can do. The problem is, like it was back in 1977, it can be embarrassing for people. It can be embarrassing for people who want to put out there that look what I am doing for the Lord, but your own family is in a mess. It takes a humbleness. It takes somebody coming to the end of that and realizing that that may be great and praise the Lord for that, but the real ministry has to be focused on the household.

That is what I try to help people do. I never look bad at people. I never look at people and think that they are terrible people. I try to look at people and understand through their mistakes that the tragedy is, I think, even though you may not think it about yourself, I think you are better than that. There was not a person, a guy, a gal, whatever, who did not do what was right and walked away from God, did not do what is right with whatever, that in my heart, I did not think that is a terrible person. I never thought, "Well, that is a jerk or an idiot." I always thought to myself, "You know what? The tragedy here is they are better than that. They know better than that." You try to help people where they are at.

IV. Proverbs 31:16 - The Life Verse

Today, I want to preach on what I consider to be my life verse for ministry. I do not mean to make this such a personal thing, but I do not know how else to do it. All through the 31 chapters of Proverbs and every aspect, this verse I knew was coming. This verse has always been on my mind. This is my verse for building a church. It is my verse for building people. Many times we think that the church and people are two different things, and that is not true. No, that is not true. The old thing, "Here is the church, there is the steeple, open the door and there are all the people." It is just that simple. The church is people. This building here means nothing without you being in it. It is you being here that makes the church, the body of us meeting together.

For almost 50 years now, this verse has been the single verse that I have never lost sight of. I believe this verse is so vitally important that men not seeing it today and understanding it, I would say that this would be the reason for the failure of churches in Christianity today. I would see it as the failure for families. I would see it as the failure for ministry. I would see it as pastors try to build a church and do not understand this concept. This is why churches fail. This is why pastors fail. Pastors look at themselves as just hirelings, somebody that gets up and social distancing is not a new thing to Baptist preachers. They have distanced themselves from their people for many, many, many years. You cannot build a church that way. It is the reason why missions have failed. As far as I am concerned, we support a number of missions and missionaries and we have them come through. I try to look for good guys, but I am just telling you, missions has failed miserably today. This is the reason why here. It is the reason for everything.

If there ever was one single reason for the failure of modern day Christianity, it is found in this very verse that I want to speak to you about today, because it shows God's people and their attitude toward the work that God started in them.

I want to begin today, we are just going to look at one verse and it is verse 16. I want to take it and I want to simply break it down into two natural divisions that we have here. I just want to look at it for a little bit and it is found in Proverbs 31:16.

Proverbs 31:16

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

Pastor Sean, would you stand up? This family has come into our church with a couple of other families and you have to get to know them, they are wonderful people. He is our kind of guy. He loves the book, he loves the Word of God, and I know he loves me. There is hardly a week that goes by that he does not send me a text thanking me for the message. Not that I need that, but I just want you to know that he and his family, his wife and his great kids. You are sitting in good company because you are sitting with Jim Deriskiewicz right down there and he is another one. Would you ask God's blessing on the sermon this morning? Jim Deriskiewicz, thank you for all your support and your support. You have been a great day for the first party. Thank you for the fellowship that you have had and doing great things together. Really, the presence of your hand is your home and the path to the world. If you would adopt what it probably has, here is the message you can write on. It is where you work out your hand. The difficult times, the endless times, and the other sometimes, too. It is great to say, but for us, what is our life like to do this? Well, that is why our 20s are live, and the whole story is coming up. So we will let you see more about your work out and then we will ask you more. Thank you, brother.

As I said, I ask your permission today to teach you this verse from my own personal experience. Sometimes, to grasp such a verse as this, you have to look deep inside the guy who is preaching it. You have to just see and understand what motivates somebody. It is important, I think, to see and understand the reason behind somebody's intensity. The reason behind somebody's urgency. The reason why he is the way that he is. We already know that we are building everything we are looking at around Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, where it says that:

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

That goes without saying. That verse kind of threads its way through everything that we are doing here.

Now, the first part of verse 16, there are two key words and I want you to see this. The first one word is "a field." The second one is the phrase, "buyeth it."

In Matthew chapter 13, you have the famous parable of the sower. In verse 38 of that parable, it will tell you, and it talks about a sower going out and sowing seed in the field. It tells us in verse 38 that the field there that he is talking about, we are now told, is the world. The idea is that Christ came and sowed the seed of the Word of God to the world.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God bought the world. He bought the field with His own blood.

1 John 4:14

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

1 Corinthians 6:20

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

It is very clear that Christ came down to buy the world and He died for the world. He bought the world, He bought that field with His own blood.

As we have come through chapter 31 so far, we have looked at four great truths and built on them as we have come through it.

1. The first one obviously was in Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, that God began a good work in us.
2. Then we understood the next great principle that we are now God saved us so we would finish that work that He started. Ephesians 2:10
For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Today as a child of God being saved and understanding all this stuff, we should be walking in those good works that He started in us.
3. The third thing was our attitude toward the work, that is vital, as not doing Him good, doing Him good but not evil, being willing and seeking the work of our hands with wool and flax. We have talked about all of that.
4. The fourth thing was our rising while it is yet night, the church age, you and me, the time we are living in right now. Rising while it is yet night. And feeding our household and family first. And then what many of you do so well, taking a portion to the people, the maidens, that God brings to us.

Now, when it comes to us buying the field, the first thing I want your attention to, in verse 13, it talks about the field being the world. But in Proverbs chapter 31, it does not say "the field," it says "a field." God never intended for me to buy the whole world, He did that. But when I got saved, when you got saved, and we begin that process of growth in our life, what God intended for us to do through walking through the works is to consider a field. Here is the key to all we have learned in this chapter so far. God never asked me or my family to buy the whole world. But He did ask us to consider a field and then buy it.

For me and my family, I cannot speak for you, but for me and my family, that field will be Kansas City. Yet, even though God never asked me to buy the whole world, and He asked me to consider a field and then buy it, here is the key. When I do decide and consider and buy it, Kansas City, then I buy it with all the intensity that God had when He bought the field.

Did you ever stop and consider what if God would have bought the world the same way that most of us look at buying what God has for us? What if God took as much time to get you saved as you take to try to figure out if you want Him in your world or not? What if God came down when He died on the cross and He just kept putting it off like you do, getting right with God or getting in the church or getting in the Bible, because it just did not have the right feeling? When He came down and He died on the cross, when you read it and you see it and you understand it, when He came down and bought that field, there is an intense level there that is unparalleled anywhere in the history of the world.

If you want to know today what is wrong with me, I will tell you what is wrong with me, it is what is not wrong with you. As a fact, when I got saved many, many years ago, I just simply never got over it. The intensity burning inside of me of what God had done based on what He did for me was overwhelming. I cannot imagine in my life, I cannot speak for you. I cannot imagine, and I do a lot of stupid things and I do most of my life is wrong and I am just telling you, I am just whacked out as you could ever be. But the bottom line is this, there will never be a day no matter whether I am in fellowship or out of fellowship or out wherever, there will never be a morning that I do not get up or a night that I go to bed that I do not understand the intensity that He had on the cross and that is exactly what He wants me to have. My field, my household is Kansas City.

V. Personal Journey: Buying the Field (Kansas City)

Allow me to tell you a story here. This is the best way I know how to get this across to you. Last week I told you about when I got right with the Lord about 1971, right after my father's death. I told you last week about Tommy Thomas preaching and dying in the pulpit and Mel Sabaka's college and career single class. I had just gotten home from the army. In fact, I was still in my uniform and I was sitting back there. When that man died that day, his last three questions before he went home to be with the Lord was, "Are you ready?" as he died of a heart attack. He was preaching on the second coming of Christ. Told you this last week. As far as I am concerned, nobody will ever convince me different that when he died the last time before he hit the thing and he pointed out and it was obvious that he mustered all the strength that he had for one final yell, "Are you ready?" As far as I am concerned, he was looking at me. I knew I was not ready. That was the catalyst along with my dad dying that really God used to bring me back where I needed to be. At that point that I told you the story about my mom and me going down the next week, my life changed.

If you have not figured this out about me yet, I am a guy who is either all in or all out. I have no middle ground in my life. On Friday, I was working at the Hoover Company and I was just like everybody else there. I was doing all the things that they were. That Sunday night when I went and got right with God, I knew me. I went into the Christian bookstore in that church and I got me a little pocket New Testament and I got me a fist full of tracts. I went to work the next morning and the first thing I did at the time clock is gave my testimony to all those guys and said, "I am not the same, you may not understand it," gave every one of them a tract. Because I knew I had to do that because if I did not bust a hole in that thing right there, I would have

chickened out. So I just made the biggest mess out of it as I could. Because I knew me and I knew that once that I did that, I would never go back. I just would not, I just could not. So I blew a whole wide into the thing.

Like I said, I am a guy that there is no middle ground. I am either in or I am out. But when I am in, look out. Because I have an intensity level that I do not apologize for because it is not my own, it is because I understand what He did for me. I tolerate them, I love them, I will help them, I will be whatever I can be to them, I will never snub them and never not be there. But I have a tough time with middle of the road people, I am just telling you. I love them, I would do anything in the world for them. If it would, whatever I could do, I would do it. I had to bring you alongside, but I am just telling you. I guess all guys that are, or anybody who is intense like that, I just, I love the intensity. I love people around me who feel that intensity that no matter what happens, no matter what virus hits, no matter what, we will never stop and we will never quit because of the intensity that we have.

I will be the first to tell you, my life has been a journey and through a process. I have made my share of mistakes, man. When I got right with God, I did not know anything. I had no idea what God had for me. I mean, I know, you look at me and you think, when I came out of my mother's womb, I had a King James Bible and was preaching the next weekend. Actually, it was about two months after that. But that is not true. I was just like you. I was just like you. In fact, I see myself in so many of you. I was just like you. I did not have a clue. I did not know what God wanted me to do. I just know I wanted to do something. I was 21 years old and my life had been all about me up to that point in time. Suddenly the lights came on and I just wanted to do whatever God wanted me to do. It was either that or I was not going to do anything because I cannot be in the middle.

Then God put a man in my life. My favorite verse in the Bible over there, one of them is the one today, because I am preaching on it, but it will be a different one tomorrow. It says, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." God always uses a man. If you will permit me, I have altered that verse a little bit for my own personal life. "There was a man sent from God whose name was Mel Sabaka." God put a man in my life. God never expects you to figure it all out for yourself. God will always put a man in your life. He will always put somebody in your life. It should be originally your mom and your dad, but that does not work. God is going to put a man in your life. The great example of that is Paul with Timothy, Paul with Philemon, Paul with Titus.

God knew what I needed. He knew that I needed a structure, and I knew I needed somebody that was intense to keep my intensity between the white lines, because otherwise, Lord knows, I would be up in the bell tower of Notre Dame, chasing the hunchback. I had to have somebody lead me and guide me and boy, God knew who I needed. I want to tell you right now, he trained me hard. He was old school. That is hard for a lot of people today. You kind of have to, and I do not like this, but I know it is just the way that we are. Some of you older guys, Donald Jimmy understands this, and Pastor Sean does, and so many of you guys, Phil understands it. John understands it, Steve understands it. John Hill, I hate, and I know you have to do it in this lackadaisical Laodicean age we are in, I hate tiptoeing around things. But I know you have to do

that to a certain degree because people are so worthless today. I know the first law of public speaking is never speak down to your audience. Some of you sapheads will never understand that.

He trained me hard. I will never forget, I preached my first sermon. There were four, 500 people there. I am going to town. This was my chance, my first sermon I ever preached. I was pumped. I was going to town, and I quoted over there out of Genesis, and I got over there, and it says, "By the sweat of your face, you shall earn your bread." I was preaching, I quoted it wrong, and I was just going to town. I mean, I was waxing eloquently. I was just going to town, and I said, "By the sweat of your, by the sweat of your brow." There was a little pause right there, just like it was now. I heard this gigantic booming voice. It was about halfway back saying, "Book, chapter, verse." It was Mel. Now there are four, 500 people here, and I am really doing good. Why would you do that to me? So I said, "What?" He said, "Book, chapter, verse, son." So I said, "Okay, I will show you." So I flipped over there to Genesis, and sure enough, it said, "By the sweat of your face." And I said, "It says, 'By the sweat of your face.'" And he said, "That is right." He says, "Young man, if you are going to preach the Word of God, you quote it correctly." You did that in front of 400 people. Now you want to know why I am the way I am? Do you?

You cannot do that to kids today. Why, in Little League or whatever you play, they do not even have any losers. Everybody is a winner. Nobody gets a trophy. It is not going to work that way at the judgment seat of Christ, by the way. You cannot do that. Now, did I say, did I get mad? Did I say, "Well, I am finding another church?" Did I say, "Well, how dare he do that?" You know why? Because I have never forgotten that when I stand on that pulpit, to quote the Word of God correctly. You cannot train young men and young ladies to train them. If I do that, and very honestly, if I did it to William or Zach or Alex or some of you guys out there, you would be fine with it. I mean, you would be okay and you would take it and you would burn my house down after I went to bed. That is just, and sometimes, honestly, this is the devil in me. Sometimes I will throw something out there at somebody just to see how they respond to it. Sometimes I will hit somebody a little harder than maybe I normally would just to see if they, how they respond to it, to see what they are made of. Nine times out of 10, they cannot take it. They get their nose bent out of joint, they get mad, they get upset and they come to the place where they just do not like it.

When I was in the army, we had a guy, his name was Staff Sergeant Webb. He was the meanest guy you ever met in your life. He was all military from top to bottom. He had three tours in Vietnam and he was as tough as nails. He would get, he was the training officer, Sergeant on our platoon and he would get us all together and we, what we would, we would come to call the Web Walk. He would make us grab the shoulder harness in front of the guy in front of you and there are 200 guys now in a line. Then he set the pace for the walk and it was like this. I cannot tell you when you are shackled to the guy in front of you and somebody behind you, 200 strong, how that wears you out to try to keep up. We hated it. Every time he would get in there and he says, "All right, field gear on, out in the street," we knew what was coming. But what we really hated him for, every day. We have these paint buckets, like your little galvanized buckets and we would fill them up with sand and he would have us stand there for an hour holding them buckets out

like that. Obviously you do not do that for an hour. In my case, it was 30 seconds and I am out. But he would walk up and down and say, "Get them up! Get them up!" He would just do every, back then they can still hit you. They do not hit you anymore. I ran down the road one time and they had rifles. We had M14s that were at port over your head and running down there and we were running like four or five miles and my arms were killing me. I saw all the instructors up there in front of me so I kind of lowered my down a little bit. I did not see the instructor was behind me. He had his M14 and he butt-stroked me across the back of the head and knocked me down that dirty road and my rifle went one place and my helmet went another place and I just stayed in a puddle there for about 30 minutes.

He would have us hold them buckets out every day. I am telling you what, it got to the place where it got, and on the day before graduation, he had, we hated him. The day before graduation, he called us out, "Get your buckets." But we all thought it was the last time. He said, "Put them down at your feet." We laid them down on our feet. He is walking back and forth and he says, "I know you hate me." He says, "I know that you hate what we are doing here." He started unbuttoning his shirt. He took his fatigue shirt off and he pulled his green T-shirt off and when he faced us, he had scars down across his chest. He says, "You hate me for me doing that, don't you?" "So let me tell you a story. It was four years ago in the Wai'quan Province when we got overrun one night and they were coming through the wire faster than we could do anything and we knew we were in trouble. They said, 'I was covering the left flank,' and he says, 'I caught something out of my eye and when I looked over, a Viet Cong was coming at me with a sword.' He said, 'The only thing I had the time to do was turn around with my rifle and block that sword.' He said, 'The force coming down on my rifle was much more than I could hold off and he came down and he cut me across the chest here and there before my buddy shot him.' He said, 'You do not like those buckets. You do not like holding them out. Well, you know why I do it? You know why I make you do that? Because you are going to leave here and most of you are going to go into combat and most of you are going to go into Vietnam and you are going to be face-worth situation and I am never going to be responsible if somebody tries to cut you in half that your arms are not strong enough to block it.'" Now we all loved him. You see, sometimes you have to understand the intensity behind something somebody does. Now you may not figure it out, but it is for your own good.

Years later when Mel and I were driving someplace we had been preaching together for years by that time, this was 10, 15 years later after all that, we would always laugh about that and he would always tell people about it, we would always laugh about it. We were in a car that morning we were in a car that one day we were driving someplace and I brought it up or he brought it up and he got real quiet and he says, "He says, you know, I saw something in you." We were both old army guys. He says, "I saw something in you." I said, "What are you talking about?" He says, "Back in that day, when I did what I did," he said, "I did what I did because I saw something in you. There was a toughness in you that I knew you could take it. But it needed to be developed. I just did that because I wanted you to know that whatever I did to you then, there is going to be pale in comparison of what you are going to face when you get into the ministry." You know he was right? You see, sometimes you have to look deeper.

But today in Christianity, it is so effeminate. All these young guys out there, they get their feelings fragile. They are like a little daisy. When the heat comes up a little bit, you just wilt and melt. So he trained me hard. He trained me to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. I failed many, many times. I do not want to pretend that I have not. But I went to work, I went to work, I went to work, I went to work, I went to work, and for the next five years, I worked by his side. I am like young Samuel. I let none of his words fall to the ground. I realized there was a day that he was not going to be in my life. I realized a day that I was going to be totally on my own. I was smart enough or dumb enough, however you want to paint it, that I wanted to learn everything I could for him while I had him. Because I knew there was a day that I would not have him anymore, and I do not have him today. I knew that God had put him in my life for a reason. The number one tragic mistake that most of God's people make is never, never forsake the man of God that he put in your life. Because he put him there for a reason.

Then the crash. Oh, golly. It was about 1976, and I got the word that Mel Sabaka was leaving Canton, Ohio, and was going to go to New York City to build a church. Now, him and I had talked about doing that for three or four years. But what had happened in the meantime is the recession of 1973, 1974 had hit, and everything went sideways. Gas in that recession went to 75 cents a gallon. Remember those days, Bob? It was 35 cents a gallon before that recession. Hard to believe in them. Well, I lost my, I worked at the Hoover Company, I was a fork truck driver, you know those stories. But I lost my job, and I did not have anywhere to go, and Barb's family had a grocery business, Laverne's Market, and her dad had sold it to her brother Tommy, who was a great guy, and Tommy said, "Hey, look, I will give you a job, I will take you to, I will make you, I need a produce manager." He spent a lot of money sending me to, I mean, I know it would be hard to believe that there is a school for produce, but there is. It is much like the minister, you have to be able to discern the fruits from the vegetables. He sent me down a couple places, and I actually worked for free, well, he was paying me, but he sent me down to one of the premier produce places in Kansas City that Frank's Produce, and they taught me everything I needed to know. So he hired me and gave me a job.

Now, they were not really keen on us being Baptist anyhow. I mean, they have come a long way, but back in the day, I do not think they were saved, I do not know where they were, and it was a thing where, and I was pretty stupid back then, I have to tell you. I remember one time, Tommy, if you are listening to this, please do not take offense to him, but I was listening to, he took me to an Easter prayer meeting for a Thanksgiving prayer meeting, Thanksgiving it was, Thanksgiving prayer meeting at this church, this Emmanuel Evangelical Methodist of the High Priest in the Woodson Place Church. The pastor's name was Darling Dum. Now, how would you like to be a pastor? "Pastor Dum is so good to see you this morning." I can have some fun with that, but anyway. So it is one of these things where the main theme was we were ugly ducklings and God turned us into swans, that kind of thing, John, you know what I mean? So they are sitting around there, and this is where I got the idea because they had a plate there, and on the plate was just three little, this is where I got it, three little pieces of corn, kernels of corn. He wanted us to know that at the first Thanksgiving, this is all the pilgrims had. Which was, we got other stuff to eat, but that was his point.

Now I tried that, remember kids? I tried that with us on Thanksgiving one time. Those things never worked with my kids, remember Cal? Remember, three little pieces of corn, remember? I mean, they just, I think they thought it was just something that just brewed off the thing. I remember one time, I remember one time, Kelly wanted a new pair of shoes, and I was trying to teach her a moral lesson, and I said, "Honey, you do not need a pair of shoes, you only have, I only have two feet," and I said, "You have plenty of shoes," and I said, "I want you to know, I saw a man just the other day, he had no feet." She looks at me and she says, "Well then I will take your shoes because he will not need them." I mean, you have done a great job, I failed. I failed, I failed.

So, the guy is there, Pastor Dum, he says, "Let us do this. Everybody write down today what you are thankful for." On a three by five card, fold it over, and we will pass a basket and you put them in, and I will read them. I am thinking to myself, "You have got to be kidding me." So, if I write my end down, put it in there, so he starts to open them up, and the first one says, "I am thankful for the flowers." We could have a little background music here, it would help. "I am thankful for the beautiful blue sky." Guy put in there, "I am thankful for life, and the breath, and for God." It opened, went up and it says, "I am thankful for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son that cleansed me from all sin." That would have been mine. My brother, my brother and all, I could just feel him starting to shake and shiver a little bit. But see, I was trapped, I could not leave. After all he did for me, after all that he gave me, and all that he invested in me and gave me a job, as a testimony, now that Mel is leaving for New York, how do I just go in and do that? It would be a terrible testimony to my family. I am stuck.

Mel goes off to New York, and there I am, stuck in a miserable produce section. I mean, I would get up on Monday morning and go to work, and the lettuce would be wilted, and I would be trying to bring them back to life with cold water singing, "Revive us again." I am, it is just, and I am miserable. My heart is broken. The guy that God put in my life is gone, and I am stuck here. But I stayed faithful. I trusted God that God knew what he was doing because I sure did not know. I felt like that little kid that prayed, and he said, "Lord, bless mommy and bless daddy, and bless the dog, and bless my brothers, and my sisters, and take care of everybody, and Lord, just make sure that my brothers and my sisters are safe, and Lord, I just thank you for all that. Please take care of that. Oh, and by the way, Lord, please take care of yourself because without you, we are shot." That was it. So I stayed faithful.

Then one night in November, phone rings, Mel Sabaka is on the phone. He always started a conversation this way when he was going to, something was happening. He said, "Well, do you feel spiritual tonight?" And I said, "Yeah, I feel spiritual." He says, "You want to go to Kansas City?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He says, "I just got a call from Truman Dollar. They are looking for a youth pastor out there, and he knows that I train guys up, and he says, I gave him your name, he is going to call you tonight." He says, "So if you want to get in this thing," he says, "here is the shot." I hung up the phone, and I am stunned. 15 minutes later, the phone rings, and it is Truman Dollar. He said, "We want to fly you out, we want to interview you, we want to think, Mel will give you a high recommendation." He said, "You have learned very well how to quote scriptures correctly, so we, you know, we," and so I flew out. It was a week before

Thanksgiving because we had Thanksgiving dinner with the pastor and his family because he was going to the Holy Land, I think, the next week, and they hired me. They wanted to hire me.

I will tell you, I was never so confused in all my life. Finally, I did not get to go to New York. Finally, I had now the opportunity that I always wanted. Now, what do I do with my brother-in-law? What do I do? I told him that I was going to take, accept it because I was walking out by faith, but I did not know what that meant. They wanted me to fly out every weekend and begin preaching till I got there, which I could do. So I would sneak out and fly out Saturday afternoon after work, preach and then fly back Sunday night, be back to work and never send anything to anybody, but I was saying, "Lord, I do not know what to do." I was as confused as many of you have been in your life. I really was.

Let me tell you, when God did something, the hand of God always moves through. I do not know how he found out, but about two weeks into it, my brother-in-law called me into his office and he says, "Bobby," he says, "I got something to tell you." And I said, "Okay, what is that?" He says, "You are fired." I said, "What?" He said, "You are fired." He says, "Hey, you have always wanted to be in the ministry. You have always wanted to do everything that God wanted you to do. I am not going to let this job stand in the way of what God wants for you." He says, "You are fired. Go to Kansas City and do what God wants you to do." I could not believe it. You see, I did not manipulate anything. I just simply waited on God.

But I had bigger problems. I had a house I had to sell because I could not afford two house payments. The house that we lived in on 1451, Al Nattanoo was the one that I was born in. It was a travesty. Nobody was going to buy it. We put it up on the market and I had to sell it, only had, what, four weeks to sell it at Christmas time? Are you kidding me? Every time I would get on a plane and I would be sitting there waiting to go down the runway, I would say, "Lord, that house has not sold yet. It just has not sold. I said, I do not know. I will do whatever you want me to do. I said, but it has not sold yet." The week before I was supposed to go move out here, there was a guy who owned a realtor company in the Canton Baptist Temple. His name was John Bovinger. John came up to me and he said, "Bob, I am really happy you are going to Kansas City." He says, "I know you have a soldier house." It was listed with him, by the way. "I know you have a soldier house." He says, "Here is what I am going to do. I do not want you under that burden. I am buying your house from you. I will take care of it for you. And you are done with it. You do not have to worry about it." God came through again.

So we had my ordination that night. They had a little reception for me and we got the van loaded and me and Jim Lake were going to drive out the next morning. I had not told anybody, but I do not have two nickels in my pocket. I got a full tank of gas and I got 800 miles to go and I do not have any money. I am just sitting there and Harold Henniger came over to me and gave me an envelope and he says, "Here, I know moving is tough." She says, "Here, here is a little something to help me." I opened it up and it was exactly what I needed for gas to get to Kansas City.

Then I faced another problem. Back then, when you hauled a U-Haul van from one state to another, if they had too many of them, you had to pay like \$400 to drop it off. It was said on there that Missouri is one where you are going to have to pay. So I am thinking, "Now what am I

going to do?" So I got out here and took it up there the next morning and it was right up on 350 Highway. The guy is still in business there. I drove in there and I said, "Hey, I just moved up here from Kansas City. I am going into the ministry and I am going to be at the Kansas City Baptist Temple. I just wanted to drop this off." He said, "Oh, you are going into the ministry?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You know what?" He says, "You believe this," he says, "I got saved about six months ago." He says, "I said, I am going to so-and-so church." He says, "You just drop it off. We will waive the \$400." And there it was again. I am telling you, when God did something, you hear me say it all the time, but you never really grasp it. God always pays for what He orders. He pays for what He orders.

When I finally got here, I will never remember. You guys that worked at Cerner over there on 87th Street, I know who all works over there. Let me see your hands. You all work over there. Okay, next time you go to work tomorrow. When I flew into Kansas City to be interviewed, they put me up. Benjamin Stables used to be there. There was a hotel there. It is torn down now. It was a something, whatever it was, big place. That is where I stayed when I came in. I will never forget. I got up Sunday morning, it was cold, walked out on the deal. I did not know this at the time, but this is my first time in Kansas City. I still thought there were Indians out here. I came out of that thing out there. Here comes three people riding right past the hotel on horses. They are from Benjamin Stables. They are from Benjamin Stables and they are just riding their horses. I did not know that. I am thinking, "Man, I like this place, man. This is a real cowboy's out here. Woo hoo, yippee-ki-yay."

When I got here, it became crystal clear. All the things that He had done in my life, God putting the events in my life to keep me from going to New York City. Because if I had gone to New York City, we never would have been together. We never would have had what we have. I came to the place where I realized that my field was Kansas City. God had me take this field for every one of you because God put us together to do this work. I do not want to say this wrong. In 1976 and 1977, when I came to Kansas City, there was not one church in this city. There was not one pastor who stood on the King James Bible. There was not one church, one pastor, one anyplace. I mean, they may have used it, but they did not know why they were using it. Now for 48 years, me and my family have just bought this field. You got churches out there that have a King James Bible today. Most of those guys are out of my ministry. You can find this is true. There are a lot of people there who do not like me and there is a list that is a lot bigger than probably the ones that do. But even the ones that do not like me will tell you, "I learned my Bible from Bob Alexander." You know why? Because I considered a field and I bought it. I bought it for you, every one of you. I bought it for your kids.

I had learned through that 48 years what it means to stand alone sometimes. I learned what it means. I wrote the discipleship lessons that we use here about 1978. I did it with 20 people in my class. I started out as a youth pastor, but then I wound up moving into the college and career to singles because I knew that is where the future was and that is where I wanted to be. The guy that had that class was a clown. He was an idiot. He did not do anything with them. Did not know nothing about the Bible. But he built a little social club. I know everybody had feelings about me going in there because of the way I was. It was such a nicey-nicey little place. It was running

about 80 people. I know Pastor Dollar was so gracious and he was so good to me, but I know that he was probably a little worried because within the first four weeks, I had it down to 40. I am not a Christian. Because I went in with an intensity. I was not going to play the game with them. I was not going to pass out underwear with lace on it. You were going to get in or you are going to get out. I knew that to build something, sometimes you have to separate some things out.

But they would give me these little notes. I had this classroom, it was called the varsity class back then. They had a blackboard behind it and then a pulpit up there. I went up to get something and one of the ladies in my class, I think I knew who it was, but she put a little note up there and she says, "Brother Bob, we are so glad that you are here in our class. But if you would, feed the sheep. Feed the sheep. We love you." Put it in my pocket. Went into my office, did a little thing. Places got all the people in it. Walked up on the pulpit, took a note out, took a piece of chalk. "You cannot feed dead sheep. All you can do is skin them. Now if you have your Bibles this morning, let us get going." That thing went down to probably 30 before it got going the other way. By five or six years later, and you guys know it was 15, 1600. Those discipleship lessons are all over the world today in 20 different languages. It is because that you, with me, we decided to buy this field.

VI. Clearing and Cultivating the Field

The Bible says, "With the fruit of her hand she planted the vineyard." In my study at Church History, I found men who understood this great concept of Proverbs chapter 31, verse 16. It had served me very well because there were many times that I was by myself. I was in a town where nobody else believed the Bible. I was in a town where I was being criticized for it. Every time I would teach something, you get the Calvary crowd up here from Calvary Bible College, which was an apostate pit back then. It is even an apostate, bottomless pit today. But all people were coming from there and it was just a real war over the Bible. It was guys like this that really carried me through. It showed me that God's people today should absolutely be ashamed of ourselves. We really should. It showed me that these guys back there are never allowed and let anything stop them from doing what God had called them to do the work.

I give it all the respect in the world and I am not being careless when I say this. Please do not misunderstand me. But in most Christians' lives, the pandemic has shut down anything anybody is going to do. Everybody is afraid to death, they are going to get this, they are going to get that in our country. I am telling you right now, it is not going to change. I know, I know, I know. I hear all the whining all the time. I am somebody who is telling you to be smart about it, please. I mean, you respect it, but you never fear it. Yet I look at where we are at today and I look at Christianity. I know you follow the law, you follow the rules. I am not advocating disobedience in any way, shape or form. You follow the law, Romans 13, I am down the line with it, which we have done and they are allowing us now to have what we have.

But I thought about August Spangenberg who comes in the door. Back in the 1700s, he had a large parcel of land in Prussia and he created a school to train missionaries which became known as the Moravian missionaries. They had a coat of arms that had a motto on it. It had an ox with a plow and an altar with a motto in Latin underneath that said "ready for either." Their mindset was

that I am ready to plow the fields for God or I am ready to lay my life down on the altar for God. Those guys got a one way ticket. They were Moravian missionaries who sold themselves into the black market slave never to be free again so they could be a missionary to the black. You know why? Because they understood the real meaning of black lives matter. Not like it is today. We have lost some things.

I think of David Brainerd. He lived around 1718, died in 1747. He died when he was 29 years old. He was a missionary to the American Indians up in the north, up in the northeast. He died at 29 of tuberculosis that he had contacted from the Indian tribes. He would go under the pine trees up there in New York in woods and he would pray for hours for the American Indians coughing up blood. He would have such a fevered body that a fever would melt holes in the snow and he would pray under those pine trees and he would just pray and pray and he never won a convert one time in his life. People would look at him and say, "See what you get? You got tuberculosis by messing with those dirty Indians. You should have stayed in England. You should have stayed in town. You should have never put your life in jeopardy by doing something so foolish." You know what his problem was that you do not have? He considered a field and he bought it. He wrote a diary which we have in our bookstore back there called The Diary of David Brainerd. He may never win a soul to Christ, but William Carey, the great missionary to India read it and it motivated him to go win all of India to Christ. Robert McCheyne read it and he went to the nation of Israel and the Jews. Henry Martyn read it and he went to India. Even today, people are motivated by that young man who laid it on the line and went for him to the American Indians, fully knowing what the exposure was.

I think of John Paton. He went to the New Hebrides Islands in the 1800s. He spent 50 years on that island and never went home again. His wife and him went to the Hebrides Islands under the warning that all the other missionaries that went there had been killed and been eaten by cannibals. But he went. His wife and infant son died on the mission field. I am sure there were his friends and his family that says, "Are you crazy for going to a place like that? Taking your new wife and raising a family in a land where there is cannibals and there is unchecked disease. Are you nuts?" No, he was not nuts. He considered a field and he bought it.

I think of Robert Moffat. These are the men. They are all I ever saw. These are the men. They are all I had in that time of my life. I think of Robert Moffat, 51 years in Cape Town, South Africa, lost three of his kids on the mission field. Endured terrible hardships. I am sure that there were times in his life and I am sure there were brethren like Job's life that criticized him and castigated him. "You should know better to put your children into that kind of danger. You should never have went to a place where there were no doctors, no hospitals, that if you got sick, you had to travel five days to get to a civilization place where you could get any kind of help. What is wrong with you? How stupid are you to do that?" He considered a field and he bought it.

I think of Hudson Taylor, went to China. Lost his wife and two kids. They died of cholera. You see, these guys went to places where they did not get tested for the disease. There were no respirators. There was no federal government bailing them out. There were no hospitals they could go to. There were no doctors that could treat them. But they had a burning desire and shot of their heart that God who laid it on the line for them, they were willing to lay it on the line for

Him, and they considered a field and they bought it. He died in 1905, but when he died, after losing a wife and two children, he had built 205 mission stations, 849 missionaries, and over 125,000 professing Chinese. He considered a field and he bought it. He considered a field and he bought it. Considering the field without the intensity of buying it will be a failure every time because it is going to cost you something to do it.

I think of David Livingstone, 30 years in Africa. He traveled 1,400 miles into the interior of Africa where no white man had ever set foot. He was gone for so long that the New York Times sent a reporter out to find him by the name of Henry Stanley. Henry Stanley is searching all over Africa for him and he tells the story of his book that he came around this little jungle trail into a clearing and there was David Livingstone, which comes up with a little coin phrase that nobody really uses anymore but used to be big back in the day, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume," because he was the only white man there. He died in 1873 after 30 years in Africa. Henry Stanley was so impressed by him that he gave up the job at the New York Times, became a missionary to finish his work. Today, if you would go to England in Westminster Abbey, you will find a grave of David Livingstone. He is buried. The natives boxed him up and shipped him and they shipped him back to England where he was from and they buried him in Westminster Abbey where he is at today. But before they did that, the natives took a knife and they cut out his heart and they buried it in Africa because he had bought the field.

Let me ask you something this morning. If you died today and they cut your heart out, where would they bury it? Hooters? Some bar and grill? Where would they bury it? The list is endless. They considered a field and they bought it. I am telling you, they faced the opposition of not only where they went, but they faced the opposition of God's people just like that around today that thought it was so wrong to put their family in harm's way.

Yet God's people today, you will consider a new car. You will consider a new job. You will consider a new house, new boat, new motorcycle, a new dress, new pair of shoes, but not one time will you ever consider a field and buy it. That is because when you buy a field, there is work involved. When you buy a field, you have to put it all on the line. You know why? Because He put it all on the line for you and anything less than that will be a failure.

The Bible says he considered a field. When I came to Kansas City, I considered a field and I bought it, but I learned some things. I learned that an empty field, even though you just bought it, it did not end up ready to plant to grow anything on it. There are five things you have to do to get that thing ready to be planted.

5. The first thing I had to do was clear the field. I had to get rid of the rocks, I had to get rid of the trees, I had to pick up all the trash, all the beer cans and cigarette butts, I had to get rid of the snakes, the weeds, and a lot of sweat and tears to get ready to plant something. You get the idea, you just come in and it all happens. No, when you buy the field, it is a raw field. It is not ready for anything. You have to go through a process of work when you buy it. You have to clear the field. You have to get all the obstacles out of it so that when you do the next step, which is plow the field, you can get something done.

I thought of old Jeremiah when he got the commission of God in Jeremiah chapter 1, verses 7 through 10, how that related to what I had experienced.

Jeremiah 1:7-10

But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

You want to clear the field? Here it is. Root out, pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down. Then you can build and plant. You have to clear the field.

6. Now once you clear the field, then you are able to sow the field, plow the field. You have to plow those rows straight. You have to plow them deep.
7. The third thing you do after you get that field plowed is you have to sow the seed in that field. You start teaching them the Bible, discipleship one, discipleship two. You have a Bible study where they can ask whatever questions they want. It is in cans, or you can control it. You give them the freedom to be who they are. You look at every person who has a glimmer of leadership and you help develop it. You realize who has the determination and who does not. You realize what it takes to get the job done. Sunday morning, institute, church history, people ministry, everything you do, the website, everything you do, you do to sow the seed in the field that you just plowed that you spent half your life clearing because you bought it. You buy it with the same intensity that Christ bought the world.
8. Then the fourth thing is you have to protect the field. Matthew 13:7

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: The thorns sprung up and choked the word of God. There will be thorns that will come into your life that want to take the very word of God from you. Song of Solomon 2:15

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes. It talked about the foxes that spoil the vine. There will be men that come into this church or any other church that want to teach you bad doctrine or teach you heresy. They will want to come in, we do not have a lot of that here but you can see it from time to time. They will come in and they want some great new teaching that nobody ever had in their life and they want to propagate it in here and they look at this as a sounding board. Now it is not a sounding board but it will certainly get your head cut off very quickly. So you protect your people. You do not let the Charismatics get in here. You do not let the predestination crowd get in here. You do not let the goofballs get in here. You do not let the people who got some kind of weird thing get in here. You protect what God has given you. You run the foxes out. You keep the weeds to a minimum. Men will creep in with damnable heresy and you have to protect what God has given you. That is probably the favorite part of all this is protecting you. I have

given you before, we have talked about the six marks of a heretic. I learned that through coming through and watching these things by buying the field.

9. Then the fifth thing. You have to look after it. Habakkuk 2:1

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. We have to stand on our watch. We looked a couple of weeks ago in Proverbs 31 about opening our mouths and we talked about speaking up for those who cannot speak up for themselves and standing up for them. Then the righteous judgment that you take care of them and all this is done by the work of your hands. It is a work of a labor of love for anybody who considers a field and buys it and buys it with the same intensity that Christ bought the world.

All along the way, almost 50 years now, I look for just one kind of person. Hundreds of them have been through those doors back there. Only a handful ever stay. I think the equation there is one of the thousands in Song of Solomon chapter 1. It does not matter to me if they are male or they are female. I look for God's people who can endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ that knows what it takes to buy a field who will make the self-sacrifice, who their life will not all be about them, who will not get their nose bent out of joint when something does not go their way, who are going to stand strong, be trained hard because they want to be hard. I am not interested in building a megachurch. I am interested in building a regimental combat team and you better go find out what that definition means. Men and women who have the courage, willing to always be seeking any opportunity. My fellow laborers who are not the middle of the ground, who are not here for a while and then gone, they consider the field with me and they say, "You know what, Bob, I am going to buy it with you." What you do is you expand the field. Who always with me will be willing to buy and pay the price for this field that we have to pay. I taught you for years, as I said, to take care of your own household first and then we move out from there.

VII. Planting the Vineyard: One Person at a Time

Now the second part of that verse 16 says, "with the fruit of her hand, she planteth a vineyard." We buy the fruit of our hands, we work the field, we clear the field, we sow the field, the plant a fruitful vineyard. You do this and this is where the work comes in. This is where the labor comes in. This is where it all comes down where the rubber meets the road. You do it one person at a time. You never get in a hurry. You never require them to be something they are not. You put up with their imperfections. You put up with their stupidity. You put it up with their mistakes. You say, "How do you learn to do that?" Oh, you just look and see how God did it with you. Not hard. One family at a time. One couple at a time. God just does it in incredible ways.

I kid Karen and Leland back there. Karen, you remember what two years ago before camp, you called me on the phone out of nowhere and we had the greatest conversation. You asked me to have somebody getting back in touch with you and I think it was 30 seconds and I had somebody call you. I knew at that point in the time what God was doing. God puts it together just like, and then look what he did. He used it to bring Jim and Kathy back where he needed to be. They do not come any finer. But that is how it works. One couple at a time. They just come in. It does not

matter where they are at. You do not worry about that. I never worry about where you are at. I am only concerned about where you want to go. I got the wherewithal to get you where you want to go. The question is, do you want to go there? Consider a field. Buy it.

My job is to create areas for you to grow. Help you through all of the issues that you have to struggle with. I build in your life a stairway to heaven. I think that is a love song but it is reality. It is a good Bible doctrine. You start here, I teach you the Bible. You go up a couple levels and then you are here. Then you teach you some more Bible and you come up in here. Pretty soon you grow up into Him. I learned that God will bring to me, and I know you have to wade through a hundred to find two. That is okay. The two is worth the hundred. God will bring to you those men and women who have need of God's truth. Many, I get it, many have been abused and used by churches and pastors. I understand that. Some have looked for the truth of God's word for a long time and could not find it. In God, when He was ready for you, gave you what you needed, and He brought you here. Some of you young guys got saved and never looked back. Some will come and the word of God, will you allow to change your life completely? Some will come and will change absolutely nothing at all. But in spite of all that, you consider a field and you buy it. And with the fruit of your hands, you plant a vineyard.

I have learned to never look on the outside of things.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

It makes it clear that you always look on the inside. You can learn that through years and years, you learn where the quality investments are very quickly. But no matter what people's issues are, you create a place of safety. A place that they can safely bring their families. A place that they can safely watch their families grow. A place of comfort, a place of truth, a place of warmth, a place of love, a place of understanding. You hurt no one, but you cannot ever stop people from hurting themselves because they do not want to do what is right. But everybody gets the same chance based on the truth of the word of God and what you do with the work and how you consider to buy the field.

Back in Genesis chapter 1 and 2, the trees back there in the garden of God, if you study it, they were all fruit bearing trees that had yielding seed. In other words, you had an apple tree, 20 years later, you would have 20 apple trees, because the apples fall down, the seeds regenerate themselves. Of course, it is a thing where it becomes the picture of the yielding seed.

Luke 8:11

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

The word of God and the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 1:23

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

We are told that we were born again with incorruptible seed. It is inside you. So what happens, you are like the tree. This church is the new version of the garden of God, the vineyard, you are all trees. If you are saved, you have the spirit of God in you, the seed of the word of God, and you have that seed within yourself that we keep expanding the field, expanding the vineyard, growing new trees, one family at a time, one person at a time.

The work of every pastor, as far as I am concerned, and the work of every church, is to consider a field and then buy it. But when you buy it, you buy it. For me, there is no retiring. There is no quitting. There is no, "I am too tired, I do not want to do this anymore," though you do get tired. There is no getting out.

Ecclesiastes 8:8

There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

It made it very clear to me that there is no discharge from this war, and when God saved you and put you into the ministry, He puts you in for the duration, and the duration is the rapture of the church. My philosophy is simple, God puts you in, let God take you out. You consider a field and you buy it with the work of his hands, with his family. You take a worthless field and you clear it. You plow it, you sow it, you protect it, you take care of it. God gives the increase. As God provides the seed yielding trees, that field grows and expands and reaches out and touches the world. God's plan for your life, His work, that He started Philippians 1:6, and today we should be walking Ephesians 2:10 in those works. "We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus under good works that we walk therein."

Now this woman in Proverbs chapter 31, with all the virtue of God, just like many of you, does the work of God with her hands. With a willing attitude of heart to seek and to serve. God will bring her to a place in her life and lay that field before her and the greatest decision you will ever make in your life as a child of God after your save will be, looking at that field and consider it and say, "I will buy it," or "I will not buy it." The reason why most God's people will never consider it and buy it is that simply the cost is too great.

VIII. The Cost of the Field and the State of Christianity

This country, it is done, folks. Mark it on your calendar, 2020 was the year that it all changed, and it is not ever going back the way it was. We are seeing this country unravel at the seams at every turn. Fear is running rampant through its streets, it is running rampant through every aspect, and if it is not diseased, then it is the social injustice. If it is not dabbed, if the politicians in Washington, it is nobody cares about anything that means anything anymore, and it is all a smokescreen. It is all putting this world into such a disarray that down the line someplace, very quickly, I hopefully, we are taken out, and then one man stands up and says, "I have got all the

answers to solve your problems." Have at it, pal. But I am telling you right now, the work remains. He said, "Occupy till I come." We have a job to do. I started it in 1976, and I know, I tell you, I get it, I understand. I am the least perfect pastor you have ever met in your life, but I understand the principles involved, and I know this. You only get out of something what you are willing to put into it, whether it is me in this church or you in this church.

Years and years and years ago, almost 48 years now, when I stood on that balcony, up there where you guys go to work at Cerner, I looked out there and said, "I am going to buy it." I did. God brought us together. If you think nothing else to thank God for, of where you are at with the word of God and what you have, you just thank the Lord, and I was smart enough not to go to New York, but to come to Kansas City. Because that is why we are all here today. My intensity, my drive, the way I do things, maybe you understand a little better now. It is simply because we have a job to do, and I am, I am like the Marine Corps. I am looking for a few good men. There are not many out there. They all get their nose bent out of joint. They all get their feelings hurt. They are always looking for something else. They are all middle of the roaders. Sorry, I love you. I will help you. I appreciate you. I will pray for you. Stay out of my foxhole. You will get me killed.

IX. Conclusion: The Call to Action

The work remains. We need to stay focused. We need to stay awake. We need to stay alert. We need to stay on that wall and keep your watch. Here is the problem with America, and I will leave you with this. We never get to the lowest common denominator in anything that we look at in most cases. We see a person that has a problem in their life, and we think that is the problem. No, that is the symptom. If they do not get down deeper, you will find a real problem. That is true of everything. We look at America, and we want to blame everybody. The blacks want to blame the whites. The whites want to blame the blacks. The Republicans want to blame the Democrats. The Democrats want to blame the Republicans. Everybody wants to blame everybody, and the bottom line is simply this. It is simply this. What you are seeing in America right now did not happen in the last 50 years, because it is a true statement of history, and I told the kids in Institute this yesterday, in the history of the world, no country ever survived, 200 years after they walked away from the word of God as a country. They may have went on as a country, but they went on in total respite and anarchy into an absolute cesspool.

America dumped the word of God 140 some years ago. What you are seeing today is not the Republicans' fault, it is not the Democrats' fault, it is not the black people, it is not the white people. I will tell you what it is. It is God's people refusing to consider the field that God gave them and then you buying it. This is the end result. The field is the world. He died for the world and then He asked us to take a piece of it. We simply said, "No, thank you." So now we got a world that was paid for by the blood of Christ, that we as His people should be cultivating a field and we just do nothing with it. This is why we have the problems that we have.

The word of God is salt, it is a preservative. It will preserve your family, it will preserve your life, it will preserve any country. The moment you, your family, your kids, or a country walks away from it, you are in trouble. We are in trouble today because of that very thing. It is not

anybody's fault but ours. It is pastors who get in that pulpit and will not preach the truth. It is Christians who get in churches and will not do a thing. It is God's people who are fat and sassy and lazy and just want to do their own thing. It is God's people today that will not lay anything in their life on the line. Mel Sabaka preached a message years and years and years ago, one of the best I ever heard. It was a message on "Take Off That Mask." It was a message that behind Christians were wearing a mask and you could not see who they really were. That is so true. God's people need to take off the mask. We got a job to do, we got a work to do. This is not a time to be hiding under your bed. This is a time to look at the men like John Paton, Livingstone and all of these men that went out there and put their life on the line because they considered a field and bought it. It does not mean you do something stupid but the worst stupid thing you could ever do is not to consider a field and buy it.

So that is my verse. That is what got me here, kept me here and keeps me going every day of my life. That verse is honestly, by the grace of God through the power of God, no credit to myself. That verse in my life is why you are here today. The only question you have to answer are you going to help me buy it? Or are you going to buy something else? This was a good day for most everybody to come back because you needed to hear this. As far as I am concerned, everything after Proverbs and this is just a byword. It is just an end to a means, it is a climax, anti-climactic because the greatest verse in all the Proverbs and the greatest verse in my life is Proverbs 31:16. "She considers the field and buyeth it and with the work of her hand she planteth a vineyard." That is what it takes for every one of us to get the work of God done.

Every head bowed and every eye closed. Father, we do thank you and praise you today for the Lord Jesus and I thank you Lord for the word of God. Thank you for allowing me to take a personal side to this. Maybe they will better understand now Lord, maybe we are not. I do not know. But maybe they will see why I do the things I do, the way I do. Lord, we have to be hard, we have to be tough and there is no room in my ministry for people who cannot hold the line that are going to get their nose bent out of joint and get offended. Who you cannot train the way they need to be trained. I know, I am in the wrong century, I get that. But it is where I am at and I still believe there are men and women in this city who want to be soldiers for Jesus Christ and want to be a have a hardness, to endure a hardness of Jesus Christ. We will thank you and praise you in Jesus name for all that you have given us, for all the great people here, for all the wonderful things that Lord you provided for us that we do not deserve. I am the last one who deserves any part of this. But I thank you for allowing me to be part of it. Lord, we love you. Thank you. I know truth and Lord, no matter what man does what, it all goes back to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God. That is where we leave it today. Thank you. We lay all this at your feet because without you, there would be nothing. In Jesus name we pray, amen.