

I. The Virtuous Woman and Christ's Reputation

If you haven't guessed it already, Proverbs chapter 31. In chapter 31, we have really been focused on the character study of the virtuous woman. It's been a great study for us. It really is a picture of what our life should be, and it gave us an inside look at what the ministry really should be and what it's all about.

Last week we saw the husband show up. It had talked about him being respected in the gates because of his wife. I told you how that was a great picture of you and me as Christ's bride, and how when we in this life exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and lift Him up for all the world to see, it gives Him a great reputation. People actually see through our lives, your lives, and that's how they're drawn to Christ, because you will uplift Him in everything that you do.

So much of Christianity today is about lifting up ourselves and not the Lord. That's a shame and a tragedy, but that's just where it has gone. I told you last week, Christianity and preachers have a really bad reputation for the most part because of all that goes on. You see the giant mega churches, and all they ever talk about is money. They care really nothing about the people, and they just get a crowd. It's just a terrible thing.

But also, when we do lift up Christ, God will draw, the Bible says, all men unto Him. That's really the way He wants to accomplish what He does. I want you to know that we never lift Him up just by what we say alone. It's more than that. We lift Him up not by what we say to people, but backing that up will be our lifestyle. It's how we live our lives and exalt Him every day in what we do.

People can deny what you say, and they will. That happens all the time. You're going to find that when you try to witness to people, but they can never deny what you live. That's really the key. That's why the Bible talks about in Romans 12:1-2, us being that living sacrifice.

Somebody said one time, "Every Christian should witness, and sometimes they should even use words." That is so true.

II. The People Ministry: A Model for Discipleship

Six or seven years ago, we began a ministry here called the People Ministry. It was a volunteer thing. I just went before the people and simply said, "Hey, if you would like to work with me and help me, we all need to get on the same page of where we're going to go and what we're going to do."

So we started a couple of times a month working together and really just going through all of the principles that it takes to understand how to work with people. For me, way back in the day, I knew what I wanted to accomplish. I really knew that I wanted this to be the hub. I gave everybody a chance to get in on it. All through this time, people have come in, and we've got a great core of people.

I knew it needed to be more than just a class of teaching biblical solutions to people's problems. It had to be more than that. Through the years, we have bonded together in understanding not just the truth of what we've got to put out, but working together as a team. We really understand what we're doing and what we're trying to do.

Through our years together, we have made a really close fit in the ministry here that has been invaluable to me. We really built a bond, which is what it really needs. I can find people all over the place that really know their Bible; they're out there. What I'm looking for is the ability for somebody to bond in that team concept of realizing what we have here, the opportunities, and more than that, what it really takes to help somebody change their life and get where they need to be.

➤ Using you to fit into particular scenarios.

I've always taught and thought that Christianity had to be so flexible that God's people could be dropped into any scenario, any place, any time. In the military, the 82nd Airborne is the classic example. It's probably the oldest airborne unit, from World War I as an infantry group, and then in World War II, it became the 82nd Airborne, which fought all through the early part of World War II and still today.

The 82nd Airborne, when all the other airborne units have kind of passed off, the 82nd has become the standard in this country. Within that organization, they have what they call a rapid deployment group that the president can order into any scenario, any place. In Washington, D.C., when they were having all the problems with the riots, they just got staged; they never got into it, but they called up that rapid deployment 82nd Airborne because they are so trained that in less than 24 hours, they can be dropped in any place in the world to help deal with any situation that arises.

I've always thought to myself, that's the way God's people ought to be trained. That's the way they ought to be able to respond and be able to be dropped into any situation and be able to operate within that, fitting into any particular scenario that somebody really needs help in.

III. Practical Application of Ministry

I watch around here. I'm constantly observing and looking. I want to say, you young singles, guys and gals, you do a phenomenal job. I watch you with these younger kids. Most kids in their 19 or 20s don't want anything to do with a 14 or a 13-year-old. They're in their own little world. But I watch you mentor these younger kids. Camp next week will be a prime example.

It doesn't stop there. I watch you at kickball, taking those little guys. I was talking to Kathy Dareskiewicz last week, and they may—I hope they're okay. They took a tumble last night, and Jim is kind of old; he's ready for retirement, so I hope he's okay.

I was talking to Kathy last week, and their little guy, Jonathan, is the sweetest kid on the planet. She was telling me that one of you guys was probably encouraging him on Sunday morning, saying, "Hope I see you at kickball tonight." This kid is just a little guy. He's not going to be able

to kick the ball. In fact, if you watch him, he just runs around out there. He can't catch the ball; he can't kick the ball. But you guys take him in.

She said, "I've never seen where the older guys would encourage him." She said, "I had to bring him tonight because some guys said, 'I'll see you at kickball.'" He had to come to kickball tonight. I watch you out there with him and so many of the other kids that are just little guys and gals that can't really do it, but you don't care. It isn't about the game and winning. It's about you caring for those little guys and helping them. It's just an incredible thing to watch.

I don't care if it's kickball or softball or just around here. It's what you do to help and to just take care of the younger ones. Some of you younger ones take care of the younger, younger ones. That's great training. That little guy, Jonathan, will grow up, as many of our younger kids do, and you'll be a role model for them. They'll want to be like you. You can transpose what you're doing now into their lives; it's an incredible thing.

I watch you older guys disciple some of these younger kids, and some of you gals taking these younger gals and mentoring them, being a role model for them. I watch as you guys get your little groups of girls together and do things at your house with them. It's more than just how much we know about the Bible. It's about actually investing in these kids' lives, and obviously, next week at camp will be a great opportunity for that.

Many times, I'll have married couples come in, and they'll have a variety of different issues. Sometimes a couple just has a new baby, and they're struggling with putting all of that together. I told a couple last week that when you're single, you can pretty much do whatever you want to do. Once you get married, that cuts your time in half. When you have a child, forget it, you're done. Life is over for you. There's only one thing that's worse than having a new baby, and it's probably on the same issue: having a new puppy, because they're all the same.

Life changes. A lot of times, these couples can't cope because they have no real biblical principles. They're good people, but they need somebody. I can just drop a young couple that's got their own baby, and the woman can bond with the woman with the baby, and a husband with a husband, and help them get to that point.

I have them come in sometimes with family issues. They're having problems with some of their kids, and maybe the kids are younger, maybe the kids are middle-aged, or whatever. Yet, there are so many of you who can drop right into those scenarios. It's just invaluable the way that it works.

Sometimes it's your own moms and dads. Your mom's starting to get discipled. Do you know why that is, Drake? It's because of the change that they saw in your life. You're all around here like that.

There will be couples that just get saved, and they want to really grow. There will be couples where one is saved and the other is not, and the one that's saved wants to grow. When I work with marital couples, you never know what you're going to get. You never know what's going to happen. So I try to cover all the bases, give them my standard operational procedure of marriage and everything.

I always tell them at the end, "Look, you guys need to get a plan, and I can help you get a plan. Obviously, I could have 10,000 people to put with you to help you, but if you don't want to do it, then it's not going to work for anybody."

But I do tell them this: "Look, you think about this, you go talk about this. You decide what you really want to do. I'm not putting the pressure on you tonight in our counseling session to say yes or no. I want you to count the cost, and I want you to think about what is going to be involved in this. Then you call me and you let me know what I can do for you. If you want to do what's right, I'll put another couple with you and help you get to that point wherever you need to."

Then I say to the gal, "Ma'am, if he doesn't want to do what's right, and you do, you call me." I'll say to the guy, "If she doesn't want to do what's right, and you want to do what's right, then you call me." Because you always want to take care of the person who wants to do what's right. It just works that way.

People sometimes want to get plugged into the Bible. It's not about matching them up with somebody who really knows the Bible. That's valuable, but it's much more than that. It's about matching them up with somebody who will get into their world, who will become part of their life, who will make that quality investment in them, who no matter what it takes, no matter what time element it gets involved, it doesn't matter. You're there, recognizing that your investment in their life is going to make all the difference in this world. It's about putting yourself out to them, not on your terms, but on their terms, adjusting your world to fit theirs because that's what they need.

IV. The Cost of Ministry: Following Christ's Example

Where is that greatest example found? It's found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He left the splendor of heaven. He left the aristocracy of being God's Son and came down, and He completely altered His lifestyle for you and for me. That's the model. He left it all. He came down here. He faced hunger. He faced being tired. He faced abuse. He didn't have to face any of that up there in heaven. He was lauded and praised as God's Son and sat at the throne of God. He had everything, but He changed all of that so He could reach you and me.

Sometimes we have to have the ability and be willing to change whatever we have to change to reach that person, to make that investment. It's just that simple. To get into somebody's life and really help them, just like it did with Christ, it's going to cost you something. Nobody is just going to work with somebody on your terms, and it's going to be everything great and fine. It doesn't work that way. It's going to cost us something.

When you pastor a church or you begin to build a church, let me tell you something: the reason why most pastors fail is they're not willing to pay the cost. They don't want to do what they have to do. They don't want to change. They don't want to orchestrate their time to take away from... It's like, "I want to work with people, but don't disrupt my comfort level." Of course, it will never work that way because you're going to have to come to the place where if you're going to really get into somebody's life and help them, then you're going to have to be there where they need you. You're going to have to do more than just give them what the Bible is.

You take our own discipleship lessons. I know we have 10 lessons there, or whatever it is, and you bring them through. Rational thinking, you would think, "Well, if I do one lesson a week, we'll be done with this in 10, 11, 12 weeks." That's never the case. Some of you disciple people for six months. Some of you take almost a year to do it. Why is that? Because there's much more to it than just going through the lessons.

You know as well as I do that when you start to disciple somebody, you're going to open up a can of worms that they're going to want to talk about other things in their life. I've known you guys that you started to disciple somebody, and you came back to me and said, "Well, we've been at it four weeks now and haven't even got to lesson one yet." That's what you're supposed to do, because it's just an opener for people to get into their world. It's just a set of lessons.

Pastors used to tell me, "Well, these discipleship lessons are the greatest thing I ever saw in my life." I used to think to myself, "You've got to be kidding me." These things are the most basic things on the planet. There isn't anything magical about these lessons. All I did back in the 70s was just sit down and think, "What do my new people need? Where do I start to give them the basics?" Those 10 lessons just came out of it. There's nothing magical about them. You're not going to come out of there with a... But the key is, it's just a shoehorn. It's just a door opener to get into somebody's world, because the lessons don't do the job. It's you getting into their world that does the job. It's you making that quality investment.

That's why I told you years and years ago, when you disciple somebody, forget the lessons. It's about the four goals that are behind those lessons.

1. We want to establish them into the Bible. So we've got 10 or 12 basic things that they need to know. They're not going to be earth-shattering things. We're not going to decide the day of the rapture or who the Antichrist is. They're just basic fundamental platforms that somebody needs to know when they really want to begin at an entry level of getting into the Bible.
2. The second goal is to establish them into this church. How do you do that? You do that by introducing them to what's going on around here. You invite them to kickball. You invite them to the things we do. I'm not saying, even suggesting, that you have to be at everything this church does.

On the other hand, most of you do, and most of you can't get enough of this place. I understand. I get it. When you have fun and you get into things and you enjoy people, there's a camaraderie here that you don't find in most churches. I'll be honest, I had nothing to do with it. It's just the fact that you fell in love with the Book. You fell in love with the Lord. Through the process, you fell in love with each other. You fell in love with people. You realized that people need other people. You decided in your life that that's what you're going to do.

As we work together through our People Ministry, and I did teach you those things, it became apparent as I watched you develop and grow that you really had a desire to work with people. More important than that, it wasn't a desire to work with them on your terms. It was, "Whatever I have to do, whatever I have to give up, whatever I have to..." because that person that God has given me is the most important thing in my world right now as far as my ministry.

3. The third one, to establish them with other people. You introduce them around. You get them on your volleyball team. You get them on your softball team. When we did our prayer groups, you got them into your prayer group. You're always looking, you're inviting them to things. You're there with them, and you're helping them. You're bringing them through all of these things. You're doing for them what somebody did for you. You're infecting them with the things of the Lord.
4. The end result is to bring them around and to establish them in ministry. That's the real goal: reproducing ourselves in somebody else's life. It's so much more than just the lessons. It's an investment. It's an investment, and you have to be in the middle of that investment.

V. America's Spiritual Void

People today have a great void in their lives, and they really don't know how to fix it. Most young pastors never understand this, and they never get it. Wherever you go in this world, if you're going to have an effective ministry, you have to look at the culture. Every culture will have a major issue that the whole culture deals with.

Obviously, if you go down into a third-world country someplace, like South Salvador or Honduras or Guatemala or some of those places, the need is... they're needy. They need food; they need clothes. So many of the missionaries, if they have any kind of brains at all, they don't just start by opening a church. They open up a clinic. They open up a place where people can come and get what they need. Through that, they penetrate that culture.

America has its own brand of problems. America, actually, building a church in America—and I'm not saying that building a church is ever an easy thing to do—but in America, if you're going to start a church, if you have half a brain, once you identify the cultural issues in America and you work through that, you're going to reach people.

America doesn't need any food. My goodness, go to Hy-Vee, go to Price Chopper. You see people along the road selling you tamales. It doesn't need food. It doesn't need clothes. Are you kidding me? Go home and count the shoes you have in your closet today, or the shirts you have hanging in your closet. We don't need any more clothes.

America's problems are unique to America. If you want to reach America and penetrate America's culture, you have to identify what the problem really is. It's simple: America is an insane asylum run by the inmates. America is emotionally busted. Broken lives, broken families, broken marriages, people who are absolutely empty inside and have no answer to their emptiness. They're depressed. Everybody is on meds. Everybody is doing this. Everybody's taking that. Everybody's being diagnosed as bipolar or schizo or has some... I'm not saying something that isn't legitimate, but I am telling you, America is a nation in a culture that's got this gigantic void in the middle of it.

People try to fix it with things that won't fix it. They try to fix it with alcohol. They try to fix it with a social life. They try to fix it with music or with friends or relationships. They'll turn to drugs. They'll turn to religion. They'll turn to possessions, thinking that those are the things that are going to fill that emptiness and that void in my life.

I studied a couple of weeks ago, and until you apply biblical principles to your problem, your problems are only going to get worse. So you get into alcohol and the social life, and you think that solves it; it doesn't. It just leads to another level of problems. We think of all the things in the world out there that will fill that hole. Yet, in reality, the only thing that will fill that hole is a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. But you can use their issues to help them see that and get the message of Christ to them.

That's the value of a church like this, any church that believes the Bible, any church that's filled with people. Because only Christ can fill that hole. I like the word "hole" because that's exactly what it is.

Haggai 1:6

Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

You talk about a verse that paints America and our culture the way that it really is. We have more food and great fine dining and all the things on this planet. You can go out and have a great dinner down on the plaza, if you can get down there. You can go out there and have a great meal at your favorite restaurant and spend an evening out there. When you come back, your problems haven't gone away.

He says, "You drink, and you're not filled." You can just drink your life away trying to drown out your issues, and the next morning, they're still going to be there. Then it says, "You earn wages, and you're put into a bag with holes." Everything in this life that you and I think is going to fix our problem is like having this humongous bag that we keep storing stuff in it, putting stuff in it. "Oh, look what I got now, look what I got now. Oh yeah, I need this, I need that. Oh, this here, oh, give me two of these. Oh, put this in there." Then when you get down in life, you hold the bag up, and everything you put in it fell out. Do you know why? Because that bag had a hole in it. The reason why you can't fill your life with those things is because your life has a hole in it, has a tremendous void. There's only one person that will fill that void, and that is the relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We saw it last week with the rich young ruler in Mark 10. He had great possessions, but he wasn't satisfied. When he was faced with really going for the Lord and doing what God wanted to do, he couldn't do it. Do you know why? Because he had all these things in his life.

We see it in John 4 with the famous woman at the well. In John 4, she had been going to this well, and her forefathers had, all the way back to Jacob's time. Over a thousand years, people had been going to that well. All her life, she'd been going to that well and filling her pitchers and bringing water. Jesus used that. Did you see that? He penetrated her culture right there by what she was doing, coming to draw water.

He says to her, "The water I give you will quench your thirst, and you'll never thirst again." He was making the parallels between the water and the things of this life to the everlasting water that God gives us through salvation. She got it. Do you know how she got it? Because the Bible

says when she left and went on her way, she left her pitcher. She was never going to have to come back to the well to try to fulfill her thirst, because your thirst will be quenched in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's just that simple.

Many of you are living proof that Christianity, real Christianity, is the answer to their problem. That's why people, I have people come in and get saved. They'll ask for you to be discipled. They'll ask for you to work with them. Do you know why? Because they have seen your life. The answer to them is because they have seen the change. They see now what Christ means to you when there was a time in your life where He didn't mean anything. They see what this church means to you when there was a time in your life when going to church was nothing to you. They see now what the Bible means to you, where there was a time in your life where you didn't read it. They see now what God's ministry means to you. They see also what they mean to you.

Letting them see the change the Word of God made in your life, and how that's exactly the change that they need. I cannot tell you, I cannot emphasize this enough or make this point more strongly: that is a thousand times better than all the verses you know, because the result of a changed life will change other people's lives by you giving them of yourself, whatever it takes to help them. The investment of you, your life, into their life. That's where the real sacrifices are made. That's where the real cost will come in ministry. It isn't you getting beat up and run out of town because you preach Christ. It comes from the fact that you have to make the sacrifices in your own world to help somebody else. Just like Christ made the supreme sacrifice for us, we have to become a living sacrifice for Him.

Somebody said, "God first, others second, and us last."

VI. The Law of Kindness: Truth with Grace

I showed you also last week how, through the preaching of Christ, lifting Him up, that He needs to be center stage. I took you back to Nehemiah 8 and showed you there at the Watergate how they made a pulpit of wood. I showed you the five areas that when you put these things in your life that happened in Nehemiah 8: the Word of God being distinct and exact in your life, giving your undivided attention to the things of the Word of God, the unity that comes of pulling everybody together, the respect that they had for the Word of God, and of course, the love relationship that they had with it. When you see those things, that's where real revival is. That's so important.

Then I showed you in Proverbs 31:25 that this virtuous woman is rejoicing in a time to come. We talked about how that is a picture of her raising up her children, making sure that they have all the clothes that they need, taking care of them, and giving meat to her household. Now, later on, as they get older, they're by her side. They're by your side in ministry, working with you, helping that team concept. She's rejoicing in that.

I also talked about the rejoicing at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We talked about Revelation 4:10 about not going in empty-handed and taking the Lord the things and the honor and glory and laying our crowns at His feet.

I wanted to give you a little takeoff of last week because, as I said, I like to kind of bridge the two because all of these messages really go together. Today, we're going to look at a couple of more verses. We can add to our collection of principles as we get down to our final verses, and we're almost finished with the book of Proverbs.

By the way, the number today is 300, really 301. But the number for all practical purposes today is 300. Chris Piscano got me after the service last week. Chris heads up our street ministry and does a phenomenal job. They're kind of out of place right now because of the virus. He came to me last week and said he has a podcast or a radio program, something that he broadcasts, and he puts all of our stuff on it so people can listen. It's another aspect. He said, "I just want you to know, last Sunday was the 300th message you preached in Proverbs." Three hundred messages out of Proverbs.

I got thinking about that: 300 messages, about an hour, about an hour and a half or something like that. Don't get nervous, it won't be that long today. So you figure it out, that's over around 500 hours of study on a book that is God's mind. So here we have, on a book, Proverbs, that deals with God's mind, we've had so far over 301 today, but 300 messages and over 500 hours.

Before we break out the cake and champagne, let me ask you a question: After 300 sermons and over 500 hours, how has that changed you? You would think 300 messages on the mind of God, principles, and over 500 hours... The question is, how has that changed you? Has anything changed? Are you still the same as you were when we started it?

I don't know a lot about football, and I don't know a lot about any of the sports, but I do listen from time to time. In the NFL, every once in a while, a guy will retire after 14 or 15 seasons, which is a long time in the NFL. They'll talk about the fact that in all those games—15 years is a lot of games, I don't know how many they play a year, but it's probably up to a thousand or more games—they'll talk about in all of those games, some 1,800 games, this guy only missed two games. That's quite a feat. That's a serious ballplayer.

Do you know what that means? That means that he played through when he had the flu. He played through when he didn't feel well. He played through and got to the game when he was hurting. It means that he never gave up when he was tired and fatigued. He had a cold, or he didn't feel up to it, or he hurt something in the last game, and he should have stayed out, but he didn't. That's a serious ballplayer.

I wonder, we've been in Proverbs now, I think somebody told me seven years, I forget, something like that. In seven years, 300 sermons, over 500 hours. How many have you missed? Some people just keep getting better and better. Some people just stay the same. Some people, if you go any slower, you're going to go back in time.

I get it. I'm the kind of guy that deer season comes around, we have guys that go deer hunting. I'm all for that. I think you need to get a break, and you need to get away. You'll never see me say, "Well, I don't think you have to go deer hunting. You have to be in church." No, I think you ought to get away every once in a while and kill something. Don't take that the wrong way. Get out in the woods. I know, and I'm not these guys. I have a guy tell me, "Well, I can worship God

out in the woods just like I can in church." No, you can't, but go anyhow. Get out, blow the cobwebs out, shoot something. If you can't see a deer, shoot the guy that took your deer stand and you had to find another one. I don't care.

Guys like to go on vacation. All for that. Don't talk to John Christiansen about it right now, but going to Florida and getting sick... but vacations are good. You need a break. I'm not talking about that. But I am telling you right now, there are some of God's people who can't get to church one Sunday out of the month. They always have a good reason. I know, I know, I know. Little Johnny had a cough and cold and pneumonia, you suppose. So the whole family stayed home to blow Little Johnny's nose. I get that.

What's your score? Some people only get to church once every two or three years. You have your transient Christians. They'll come in, and you'll see them for a month, and then they'll be out for two years, and then they'll pop back in again for a couple of months, and they'll be out again. What is wrong with you? What's your score? 280, 250, 200, 150, 50, 20, or maybe zero.

Imagine, just imagine. I'm just kidding now. Just imagine the chance. Forget me preaching it. The Bible itself, the chance to get into a book that is God's mind, where you're going to spend what? 300 sermons, over 500 hours, and come away hopefully? Yet somebody else or something else becomes more important. This is the state of Christianity today. It's a tragedy that everything out there is more important than the most important thing in your world.

Then we wonder when we have our kids who have problems that won't come to church, that we have to scratch our heads while we lose everything in life, and we're so miserable, and we're going to the psychologist, we're going to the therapist, we're going there, and somebody is paying them \$100 an hour who could care less. You know when you'll be cured? When your insurance runs out. Instead of coming to the one Book that can change your life, instead of coming to the one Person that can really make a difference in your life, instead of coming and opening up and getting the Book that has God's mind in it so you understand what you're up against in life, so you quit making bad choices and bad decisions in your life.

VII. The Virtuous Woman's Wisdom and Kindness

Here's our text today, Proverbs 31:26-27.

Proverbs 31:26

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

Proverbs 31:27

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Alex, would you stand up and ask a blessing on the preaching this morning?

Verse 26 says, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." This is a really good verse. When I read the verse, the thing that jumps out at me and really

forms a contrast for me, anyhow, when looking at the Bible, is a study of the phrase, "she opened her mouth."

We all open our mouths. I'm going to stop right here and put an end to, when it says, "she opened her mouth," because all the guys want to get out there and talk about their wives or talk about women with big mouths. If I've learned anything in life, men have a mouth as big as, if not bigger than, most women. So let's just forget that one and just go right to the text here.

"She opened her mouth." We all open our mouths and say things. But it's what comes out that's the issue, because what's going to come out is either something that is wise, based on God's wisdom, or something that's foolish, based on not God's wisdom.

As I was putting this together this week, I remembered another place in the Bible—I'm sure there's many, but this one stuck out in my mind—where another man opened his mouth. When you lay this out with the other guy and study them, you learn some great truth. It forms a great contrast for us.

I don't know if you've even picked up on where it is. We've studied them a couple of times in the last couple of months, but it's our old friend, Jephthah, from Judges 11. Remember the story about him? He's one of the judges of Israel, and he opens his mouth and makes a foolish vow. He says, "Lord, if You give me this victory, I'm going to offer to You the first thing as a sacrifice that I see when I come back home." Utterly stupid, utterly ridiculous. Because when he came back home, the first thing he saw was his daughter running down to meet him. He killed his daughter. He sacrificed his daughter. The most stupid thing he could have done that he didn't have to do, when we studied it, I showed you.

You don't have to turn to it, just let me read it for you.

Judges 11:35

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

The Bible makes it very clear that she is the only child he has. That ups the ante here a little.

Judges 11:35 (cont.)

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.

That is so typical. This daughter didn't do anything. What troubled him? It was his own big mouth. What troubled him? It was the fact when he opened his mouth, foolishness came out. But notice how people who speak foolishly never see that they're really the problem. Here it is, he comes home, he made a stupid vow. This sweetheart daughter, who's a great kid when you look at her life as much as we can see, comes running out to him, and he wants to blame the problem on her. Boy, that is so typical. We always want to blame our problems on somebody else when

we're speaking foolishly, because the foolishness that we're speaking doesn't come from the wisdom that we should have, but because we don't have the wisdom, we speak foolishly.

"For I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." We all open our mouths and say stupid things. I do, you do. But the problem is when you open your mouth and say something stupid, but you won't go back. You won't recognize that it was stupid. You won't fix it because what you said was not by wisdom. It was by your own flesh or your own emotion or your own anger. You didn't look around you and say, "Hey, before I open my mouth and say something stupid, I have people around me that I'm disciplining and I'm ministering to, so I better think twice of how I say what I'm going to say."

He is so typical. Without any wisdom of the Word of God, he opens his mouth. There's a lot of that going on today. So we see that great contrast of somebody opening up their mouth. Here are our two men in the Bible. One is a wise man, and one is a foolish man. The whole book of Proverbs is built around that. The whole Bible is built around that concept. One's a fool, and the other is a wise man. The fool will open his mouth, and foolish things will come out. The wise man will open his mouth, and wisdom and understanding will come out.

Last week I showed you the great verse on ministry in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2. How that we are the manifestation of truth through that truth, and how do we do that? Not by what we say, but by commending ourselves to everyone's conscience. We manifest the truth of God, not by what we say, but what we commend to somebody else's conscience. How we live our lifestyle. What we say in a most crucial time that could be volatile, thinking through what you say before you just jump into it with your mouth. Laying out the truth of God's Word when you open your mouth. Giving people what they need to hear, but not necessarily what they want to hear, and doing it the right way.

Now look at the second part of this great verse. Truth can be hard sometimes. No question about that. You're going to deal with people who, after years and years of living in denial, that truth is hard for them to grasp. The Bible says here that "in her tongue is the law of kindness." So you look at that and you think to yourself, "I know I've dealt with people, and I know many of you have too, where you have the truth and they don't. They don't necessarily want the truth. When you try to give them the truth, it's very obvious that they don't want the truth." The reason why is because truth sometimes can be a tough thing to grasp, especially if you've deceived yourself all those years.

So we see in this next part of the verse, she, through wisdom and understanding, not only has the truth of God, but she has understanding through the wisdom of what she knows how to give out the Word of God. Because wisdom and understanding will produce discernment and discretion.

John 1:17

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The Bible talks about that when Jesus came, He makes a distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He says that the law came by Moses. But He says that Jesus Christ came

by grace and truth. You see, truth of the Word of God, but the grace to know how to use that truth.

Proverbs 31:26 says, "She openeth her mouth with wisdom," but it also says, "and in her tongue is the law of kindness." You always have to... having the truth is just not enough. You're going to find a lot of guys today have the truth, but they have no grace to use the truth.

Colossians 4:6

Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

There's the key right there: the ability to know how to answer somebody. Truth can be hard. Truth sometimes, when you're dealing with somebody, if you don't have the grace... This is an invaluable key in working and dealing with people, not just knowing the Bible, but knowing how to use the Bible.

Now what I'm about to say here, I want to use this as an example, but I want to be very careful, so listen very carefully. Nobody on this planet has more respect for Dr. Ruckman when he was alive than I do. I knew that man when I first met him at 20 years of age and was in contact or knew of him throughout my almost 50 years in the ministry. I preached many Bible conferences with him, preached in many churches with him, and preached together with him for many, many years. So I want to be careful how I say this.

First of all, let me say that he was one of a kind. He was the most unique individual I ever met in my life. Probably, not even probably, without a doubt in my mind, he was the greatest mind on the English Bible in the 20th century. I'll stop there, but I probably could go on back to the 19th and 18th century and right on down the line. I understand that. I understand the role that he played and how God used him.

He was a peculiar individual. He wasn't a very sociable guy, and a lot of that goes back to how he was attacked on every side, so he just kind of closed up and didn't really trust very few people. I get all of that. He started a school down in Pensacola, Florida, that was the Pensacola Bible Institute. We've had Dean Hayes up here. Dean Hayes teaches in his institute down there. I'm just telling you, you'll never find another mind on the English Bible anywhere. If you find one, I guarantee you, you better look at it carefully. This guy was incredible. God had a job for him. He fulfilled that job, and I don't have time to get into it, but I'll tell you what he did for all of us: we have a Bible this morning because of guys just like him.

Having said that, he was his own man, and he was a unique individual. He turned out of his school some very good guys. I know some good guys that are doing a great job. But having said that, he turned out some real goofballs too. That's not a criticism to him. I'll tell you what it is: he was a very strong individual. A lot of guys who are weak will go down to his school and want to be a Peter S. Ruckman. He could be very hard, and he could seem to be very indifferent. But once you got on the inside and knew him, he had a lot of compassion. I've seen him weep, weep, weep for people who were lost, but most people never would get to see that.

So you had all these goofy guys who had their own problems to begin with, would go down there, and they'd want to turn into a little Peter S. Ruckman. They would get the truth from his school, but they would have absolutely no grace. We had a guy back in Canton, I won't tell you his name, because at last I knew he was still alive. Dr. Ruckman is German. He took great pride in being German. He would go to Europe every year and go to Germany and just pass out tracts, and he'd weep for his people. He had a real burden for Germany. I don't know how many times I've heard him say that if God would let him, he'd drop everything here, and he'd go to Germany to be a missionary. He'd have fit in there really well.

But these guys got the idea that to be like Ruckman, you had to be German. So actually, there was this guy in Canton, Ohio—you remember this, the guy in Canton, Ohio—who changed his last name, which was close to being... I'm not willing to say the name, but he just put a "T-H" on the end and turned it into a German name. Everybody knew his name, what it really was, and it wasn't German. But suddenly, he came back from Ruckman's school, he was now a German, because Ruckman was German. He wanted to be like Ruckman, and he had absolutely no grace. He was the hardest line guy you ever met. He even spit out truth, but he had no grace.

These guys never get into the ministry. There are several of them here in Kansas City. I get phone calls from them every once in a while. "Hey brother, how are you doing?" "Well, I was doing just fine till I answered this phone. How are you doing?" We've had them come to church a couple of times. You can always tell them because they always wear a shirt and a tie and have a bunch of tracts in their pocket. Nothing against that, but I spot these guys a mile away.

I remember a couple of years ago, one came in, and I was preaching. I'm careful when I say what I have to say, but I'm not going to offend somebody. If you call me up and say, "Hey, I'm bringing..." I've had people call me up and say, "Hey, my brother or my cousin is coming to church today, and I just want you to know he's gay." So, "lay off the gay jokes." I don't go out of my way. I'll just say something to be goofy sometimes because that's part of my charm. But if I know, I've had them come in and say, "Hey, my brother's coming or my dad's coming, and he's Catholic." Okay. Now, do you think I'm going to get up here and say something about the Catholic church so he'll get saved? Because you think he'll get saved if I do that? I will steer away from it. I'll preach about something else. I would never attack somebody for what they believe. Now, you come to Bible study and you attack me, I'll put your lights out for you. I will, but I won't go out of my way because I'm not going to do that.

But this guy came up afterwards, and I think I said something about the Catholic church. This guy came up, and he said, "Well, brother, just want you to know I'm glad to be here today." I knew who he was. "You don't have to introduce yourself to me. You're Jimmy Goofus. I know exactly who you are." He says, "I'll just tell you, brother," he says, "you've got to do a little more whore bashing." You know, the great whore, Revelation 19 or 17, whatever it is. He said, "You've got to do a little more whore bashing. You've got to bash the Mother Harlot." I'm saying, "Yeah, that would go over really good, wouldn't it?" I said, "Yeah, I'll keep that down. In fact, I'm going to put that note in my Bible as soon as you leave." I'm thinking to myself, "No grace."

They don't go to church anywhere. They're not under any pastor's authority. They're not in any ministry. They just graduate from Dr. Ruckman's school, and they go around with all this truth, but absolutely no grace. They're all over the place.

I told you about the time that I was up there preaching in Boston someplace. I'm driving down, and this guy from Ruckman's school, he's taking me in his car over to where the pastor's house. We're going through downtown Boston about eight or nine o'clock. I just finished preaching, and we were going over to get something to eat at the pastor's house. So we're driving through Boston. Have you ever been to Boston on a Saturday night? People are all over the place. Maybe not now, but they were then.

He's driving there, and he's got a CB in his car. He picks up the microphone and turns it over to the PA. We're at a stoplight. There was this nice-looking middle-aged woman just walking from one side of the street to the other. Well-dressed, classy. He says, "God knows where you're going tonight, you hussy!" She looks at him, and I'm going... Then there's a guy walking down there, and he's saying, "God knows where you're going tonight!" He starts preaching. I'm scooting down in the seat as far as I can get. Then we get to the next stoplight, and he says, "Here brother, you go for it for a while." I said, "You know what? My throat's really bothering me tonight. In fact, do you have any throat lozenges here?" I said, "I need to save my voice." I'm thinking to myself, "God, just get me out of here. Give him four flat tires. I'll take a cab and just let him get mobbed by these people." Absolutely stupid. I'm saying to myself, "I just..." But that's the way these guys are.

This is no reflection on Dr. Ruckman because he turns out a lot of good guys. I'm going to tell you something, nobody bats a thousand. Do you think all the guys that I've taught have come out good? I mean, I spent my whole life teaching these guys the King James Bible, the Word of God. There's a bunch of them around here today that have dumped the Bible and gone their own way. We've got guys that grew up in my ministry, who knew what the church was, who knew what the Bible was, who knew what pastoral authority was. They don't go to church anywhere. They get this great goofy doctrine that only God gave them. They don't go to church anywhere. They don't have any pastor in their life. Their own family won't come to church with them. But they have the truth. Goofy, man, goofy.

I know God's not in favor of mercy killing, but sometimes I am. It's a thing where you see this stuff. You have to have grace. Truth is not enough. Truth is absolutely vital. But if you don't have the grace to give that truth out...

There are two things here in this verse. The first one is the mouth. The mouth is what you speak when you open your mouth. The second thing is the tongue. Tongues were defined for us in Acts 2 as words. You don't have to look around and wonder what it says when you find "tongue" in the Bible and "mouth" and "tongue." The Bible defines tongues in Acts 2 as words, language. So the mouth is what you speak. The tongue is how you say it.

You go down to the plaza on a Saturday night, and our guys are down in Westport. I have to say, Chris Pascano, I've always been against street preaching because of the way it's done. Chris Pascano heads up our street preaching ministry here, and he does that because he does it the right

way, and he's as good a guy as you'll ever find. Loves the Lord, loves the Book, knows the Book. His wife is as sweet a woman as you're ever going to have. He's down there, and he takes some of you guys down and some of you young kids down. He does a great job with it.

But I'm telling you, you go down there on the plaza, there's a church up here north of Independence, someplace that's been running now for about 40 years. All the guys are connected with Ruckman or Ruckman graduates, and they're down there in the plaza with their big signs of people burning in hell. Out there preaching on the street, yelling at everybody, telling them, "You're going to die." Now look, all that is true, but I'm telling you, in a world that we live in that is so out of the mindset of real truth, that kind of stuff is offensive. I agree, they are going to hell. I agree, they're going to burn like a torch. I agree, but that's not how you reach them.

Do you know why you do it? Because you're not in any ministry. You're not dealing with anybody one-on-one. But you're a big brave guy when you stand down on a street corner and yell at everybody. It takes more than that. You can have all the truth in the world, but if you don't have the grace to use it, you're out.

It says that she has the law of kindness in her tongue, a law. The law of kindness in her tongue, what is that?

James 2:8

If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

This will also be called the law of Christ in Galatians 6:2.

Galatians 6:2

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

The law of Christ is the fact that you have truth. Jesus came with truth, but He also came with grace, grace and truth. You may have the truth when you open your mouth, but you better have the grace in your tongue of how to say what you have to say.

Christ set this law in motion in Matthew 22:36-40 when He said:

Matthew 22:36

Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Matthew 22:37

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Matthew 22:38

This is the first and great commandment.

Matthew 22:39

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matthew 22:40

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Do you know what He did? Jesus took the Old Testament Ten, which was given by Moses, and then brought them into grace and truth in the New Testament and put all ten in two. Love God first and love your neighbor as yourself, and as you love God. If you follow that, you'll never not have grace when you deal with people.

He takes all the commandments and puts them in two.

Romans 15:1

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Bearing each other's infirmities, not criticizing somebody because of their weakness, not criticizing somebody because they made a stupid mistake, not criticizing somebody because they didn't handle the situation right, bearing their burdens. Take the word "negativity" out of your vocabulary. Bearing one another's burden. Your burden becomes mine. Your struggles become my struggles. Together, with the truth and the grace to use that truth, there's nothing we can't get through. That's just the way it works.

We are to treat others like God treats us. We would never stand, or we would be upset with God, or we'd be so mad at God if He treated us the way we treat others. If He said the things about us that we say about others. Instead of complaining about them, why don't you put your arm around them and help walk them through it? That's what God would do with you and me. He says, "Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet..." God wants to reason with you. Why can't we reason with each other?

We have camp this week, and I have a series of messages on building the wall. Great theme, Zach, great theme, guys, great theme. One of the questions I always want to ask young people is, "Why do you treat each other so badly? Why do you girls tear up other girls? Why do you say nasty things about them that aren't true? Why do you guys pick on and belittle the other guys?" It seems at that age group that that's exactly what they do. Why can't you guys get it together and realize the very people you're picking on right now, five years from now, if you stay with it, are going to be your lifeline in ministry to help you deal with people?

I get it, you're young. I get it, you're stupid. I get it, I realize, hey, I was the same way when I was... I was worse than you. That's no excuse. You ought to be better than that. Do you know why? Because your parents are better than that. Parents, you ought to look for that in your kids, and you ought to stomp that out when you see it, instead of always sticking up for them.

Ephesians 4:32

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

I moved myself by saying that. I want to say it again. We should never use the Word of God to hurt somebody. We should never use the truth that we have to hurt somebody. I get it, we all do dumb things. I do. We all make mistakes. I do, you do. I know that. We're all human. But I am telling you right now, we should never use the Word of God to hurt somebody.

My life, and I get criticized for this a lot, but I'm telling you, my life, when I'm dealing with people, is out of the chute. I always give a person the benefit of the doubt. Do you know why? Because I want God to continue giving me the benefit of the doubt. It's just that. You have truth, but you have no ulterior motive. You have truth, but you have no hidden agenda. You have truth, but you have no secret message you're trying to give to somebody. You just preach the truth.

I can't be responsible. I'm not going to sidestep a verse in Proverbs or anywhere else if I think it's going to... You know what? I would think of it as something that we all need. I don't sit there and say, "Well, so-and-so needs this." First thing I'll think is, "I need this." You manifest it through, you're commending yourself to every man's conscience. Look, I'm no better than you, and you're no better than the person sitting next to you. So quit thinking you are. We're all in this together. We'll all make it together, or we'll all, as somebody said during the Revolutionary War, "We'll either hang together or we'll all hang separately."

In ministry, you have to deal with some very hard issues sometimes. You have to make some hard calls. You always want to make sure you're doing it based on the principles and not your personal preferences. But you commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. You be honest, you stay with the principles.

Last week, the rich young ruler. Things like this will jump out at you. Here's a guy who came to Christ. Christ told him what to do. He walked right out the door and didn't do it. What would most pastors do if I came to you—and I have it all the time—where I come to you and tell you what you need to do, and you don't do it? You just go out and do your own thing. If you're not careful, and don't have grace, you can get an attitude about that. "Well, they didn't want to do what's right, so forget it." It's easy to get an attitude. I should say it's easy to get the wrong attitude.

But I want you to notice, that rich young ruler, even though he didn't make the right choice and he walked away from it, the Bible made it clear that the Lord loved him. God loves you and me in spite of the bad choices we make. God loves you and me in spite of the stupid things that we do. You would think that we're Christ-like and have these two royal laws working in our lives. We could do that to other people around us, but we can't.

When you and I don't do what's right, God still loves us. That's grace and truth in action. We need that in our own lives to work with people. Sure, we have the truth, but the question is, do you have the grace? Sometimes in the ministry, you have to love people when it's hard to love them. Do you know what you do? You have to love them through Christ, because that's the only way you can love them. Do you know what it means when you love them through Christ? You go back and realize that you didn't look too hot the first time God saw you or me. Do you know how God loved you and me enough to get us into heaven? God looked at us through Christ, and He loved us through Christ. Sometimes that's what you have to do.

So she has God's wisdom and understanding to open her mouth, and she speaks truth. But her words are always by grace, seasoned with salt, the Word of God, to help people and not just hurt them. I say it all the time, to the best of my ability, I know it's true of my world with you, I never do anything to hurt somebody. I never say anything. I may have to keep you accountable, but it will always be by the principles. I'm not doing it to hurt you. Just like your parents when they whipped you, they didn't do it because they enjoyed it. Hope not, anyhow. They did it because it was for your good.

But I tell you many times, nobody in this church will hurt you, but that doesn't mean you won't hurt yourself. That doesn't mean that you won't reject truth or help or whatever the case may be. I know, just like Jephthah, you blame your problems on everybody else. His daughter did nothing but be a sweet daughter. But he says, "You're the one that troubles me." No, it was your own big mouth that troubled you. When we get into trouble and want to blame other people, nine times out of ten, it's because of our own big mouth that we got in trouble in the first place. Our goal, my goal, is never just to win a battle, but rather to win a brother, because that's where the real victory is.

VIII. Avoiding the Bread of Idleness

Then it says in Proverbs 31:27, "She looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness." We touched on this a couple of weeks ago, and I want to develop it just a little bit farther here as we come through this. There are two things here.

➤ Looks well to her household.

5. That will be her family. We've talked about this many, many times, ministering together. Her first responsibility and obligation. Proverbs 31:15 says, we saw it, that she gave meat to her household. Proverbs 31:21 talks about clothing them with scarlet. She gives them the Word of God, and she gets them saved. We've been through this. In Proverbs 31:25 now, she's rejoicing in what God has done with her family. So that's the first aspect.

➤ The bread of idleness.

We talked about this. We touched on it a couple of weeks ago, and we're simply not applying the Word of God to our lives to where it needs to be applied. Very honestly, this is why a child of God here, anyhow, can listen to 300 sermons on the mind of God, over 500 hours, and they never change. Because we're too busy applying it where we don't need it instead of where we do need it.

We all have issues. Every one of us. We all have things we need to work on: as husbands, as wives, as parents, as ministers, as a pastor, as Christians in general. We all do this, and it's something that you have to really discipline yourself not to do. That is, we always like to major on the minors. We'll take the Word of God that we get and we'll apply it to some place that really doesn't need to be applied, when you and I know full well there are things in our life that we need to change. But we sidestep that and put the Word of God someplace else because we really don't want to deal with the issue. That is the bread of idleness.

In John 6, the bread of life is the Word of God. We come to the place that we have an issue in our life. We get the Bible every day; we're in the Bible every day, but we just conveniently sidestep what really needs to fix it. So we never go anywhere with it. You see it all the time.

You know me, I'm not political one way or the other. I'm not a Democrat, nor am I a Republican. I'm in the middle; I could care less. I know that if I'm a Republican, then I can't minister to Democrats. If I'm a Democrat, I can't minister to Republicans. I'm like the American Red Cross; I don't take any sides. I just know this: there isn't anybody going to fix this country till Jesus comes back. So everything else is just a bunch of chess pieces on a chessboard being moved around.

But I'll tell you this, let's talk about Trump for a moment. I'm not against him; I'm not against anybody. But I'm just telling you this, I watch a lot of Christians. When Trump was running for president the last time, and I'm glad he won, when he ran for president the last time, he got the neo-evangelical crowd on his side. He told everybody he was a Christian, and that was great. Everybody got on the bandwagon, and everybody was happy about it. He got him elected, and I think they played a major role in it. He's played somewhat of a key thing. He's coming up for election again in November, and I'm sure he'll play to that crowd again.

I know a lot of Christians. I get emails from them all the time. They think Trump's the second coming of Christ. I don't care. But I will tell you this, here's the problem I have with it: I watch these people, they put out, they pass out flyers on Trump, they pass out this, they talk to everybody about how good he is and how our country needs him. I agree. Do you think I want Nancy Pelosi? I get it. I understand that. But here's my problem. Here is the bread of idleness. You spend so much time talking about him, passing out his literature, and in your own personal life, you have nothing going on with God. You don't go to church anywhere. You're not involved in a ministry, and you should be here today, and you're not. Bread of idleness.

I don't care. I hope he wins. I do. If the Democrats get in, I'm not political. I don't care. I can just read the tea leaves. I'm just telling you, if they get in, you're going to have some trouble. No, I say to you, I'm not going to have any trouble because I don't care. They say, "You'll take away your personal rights." Hey, I've got five Jeeps, I'm good. You can take everything I've got. I'll just drive them around and be happy. You're going to take everything you've got. They're going to do this. They're going to do that. They're going to raise taxes. You raise my taxes all you want. The guy that's in charge of me having money to pay my taxes, He's up there. He's not in Washington.

I appreciate that. Everybody likes to get a stimulus check, but I'll tell you what. You need a stimulus check this morning, but not one from the government. You need one from here. Some of you need to be stimulated. I just thought of that. I'm going to write that down since this sermon's over.

I see it with Christians. Pastors all my life and Christians, they put all this emphasis on soul winning and winning people to Christ and ministry and doing all this. I get that, praise the Lord. But that's bread of idleness when your own family's not in church with you this morning. It's a waste of time if the very thing you're entrusted with, but now you want to put all this out here when you have nothing going here. That's the bread of idleness. It's just that simple.

I had a guy one time... I mean, here again, I'm great on scenarios. I have thousands of them in the Bible that I use. In Mark 5:19, he had a crazy guy. He was a lunatic, like most of you. He was out of his mind, and he was a picture of an unsaved man. He meets Jesus, and Jesus casts all the demons out. The other ones that go into the pigs, 5,000 swine, and then jump into the river or mountain ocean and drown. First case of deviled ham in the Bible.

Anyway, he's back in his mind now, and he's whole. He said to Jesus, "I want to follow You, I want to worship You, I want to go with You, I want to be with You, I want to be a soul winner, I want to do this, I want to do that, and I want to follow You forever." Do you know what Jesus said? He says, "I appreciate that. First thing, you go back to your family and you make it right with them." Because that's where the real damage was done. How great you want to be a soul winner and serve God. Go back to where the damage was done first before you ever try to follow Him. That's a principle. That's a principle.

I had a guy one time—and I get them all the time; they come in from time to time my whole life—they get... I don't know why they pick on me. I've had, like I said, a lot of guys in my ministry who turned out to be real bozos. They get some heresy going in their life, that they think that they're going to change all of Christianity. They'll come in. I had them come on Thursday night. Bob was done. They had him text me all the time, had me and me all the time. They'll send me this and send me that, and they'll say this. Sometimes they want to challenge me to a debate. They say they want to prove their point and all this stuff.

I told a guy one time, I said, "You know what? This guy was completely messed up on the Bible. I said, 'You know what? If you put as much energy and time into ministering to your family as you would putting out this heresy that you're so spent on getting everybody else, you'd revolutionize your family. Your family would be in church with you. As it stands right now, you have no church, you have no pastor, your family thinks you're an idiot, and they won't have anything to do with you when it comes to the Bible.'" Bread of idleness.

I've seen parents put time and energy into getting their kids into all kinds of things, and it doesn't matter what it is. It can be anything: sports, theater, education, whatever you want to do. But they'll never take the Bible and give them the meat that they really need. Bread of idleness.

She says, "eating the bread of idleness." Don't spend a lot of time in the Bible on things that don't make you better. I say that, and I say at the same time, you have to learn your Bible, but you have to have, just like you have to have a balance between grace and truth, you have to have a balance in your Bible. You can't... You have these guys that all they do is spend their time in the book of Revelation studying prophecy. You have these guys that all they do is spend their time in the book of Daniel. You have these guys that all they do is come up with some heresy that nobody's ever heard of in the last 2,000 years of Christianity, and that's their hobby horse they ride off into the sunset with.

Let me tell you something. Don't spend a lot of time in the Bible with things that don't make you better. This is why some of God's people will go 20, 30, 40 years and never change and still have the same issues all of their life. They're no closer to their family. They're not in any church. They don't do anything in ministry. They just have their little world that they live in.

The Bible's like medicine. It's called a salve. It's called the balm of Gilead back in the Old Testament, and it will heal you. But you have to put it on the wound. You can have the right Bible and carry it to church every Sunday, but if you don't apply it to where it really needs to be applied, it's just the bread of idleness.

I get it. Bible is like a bad-tasting medicine. I have to take medicine every night. Most of you do as you get older. You get one of those little pill things that hold all your pills in it. My legitimate stuff, I mean, I have issues with me that most of you don't know. It's a thing where, "Oh, that hurts. Ah." Anyway, so I take about two of one, another one of this, another one of that, all legit stuff that my doctor's got me on because I'm falling apart. So I'll take them, and you put them all in your mouth. One time I just accidentally chomped down on one of them. It was the worst-tasting thing you ever saw in your life. Most medicine tastes terrible.

Bible truth, out of the chute, hitting you between the eyes, can taste terrible. You know what the song says, "Let a little bit of sugar make the medicine go down," or whatever it was. Well, in the Bible, it's honey. That's grace and truth. The honey, the Word of God, is the grace that when you put with the medicine, the truth makes it palatable for you to be able to take it. It's that great concept that God gave us the truth, but God gives us grace. God will give us time to get through the truth.

IX. The Imperative of Change

Christian life, like it or not, agree with it or not, doesn't matter. The Christian life is about one word: it's the word "change." When you got saved, the Word of God changed you out of the darkness into the light, from the devil's family to God's family. The Word of God changed you. Most people want to stop right there, but that's not where it stops. That's really where it starts, because God will continually change you as you grow after your salvation.

Most of God's people are okay and will allow the change of salvation, but not allow the change in their life as they grow and God wants to change. I'm going to tell you right now, I don't care if you like it or not, we all have things about us we have to change. The moment you got saved, praise the Lord, you're on your way to heaven, but now you're only on the highway of change. As you grow, God's going to change some things. We resist that sometimes.

So, they never open their mouth with wisdom. They have no grace, no law of kindness to administer the truth. They spend their whole life eating the bread of idleness and will never allow the Word of God to change them.

I ask you today, 301 messages, over 500 hours of study, just on Sunday morning alone. We haven't even got into Thursday night Bible study, which is two hours. We haven't got into Institute and People Ministry, which is two hours. We haven't got into all the time that you spend being disciplined. Just on Sunday alone, over 300 messages out of a book that is clearly God's mind, and over 500 hours of study time. The real question is, was there any point to it in your life? Are you sitting here now, 300 messages? I know not all of you were here. Some of you got through half of it. I guess you have to ask yourself the question, "How much do you have to hear God's mind before you let it change you?"

The real question is, how has it changed you? What did it change about you? Did it change anything about you? Are you still sitting here with the same old issues and the same old problems that you had? Come on. The reality test for all of us, it's how does the Word of God change you? How do you allow it to change you?

When I have people come in with problems, and I have issues that they want to solve, whether it's husband or wife, it happens all the time. They'll come in, I'll sit down for an hour. I'll lay it all out. I'll tell them, "This problem is not that bad. This problem is not that serious. I can show you situations that are a thousand times worse. We can fix this if you want to." Then you walk out the door, and you never see them again. Do you know why? Because they don't want to change.

Change will be the thing that will defeat us every day of our lives. Because God changed us at salvation, and God, through the process of spiritual growth, wants to change us, to perfect us, to be more like Him every day. What a reality test that is for all of us, because it's about change. It's about understanding the reality of what God wants to do.

Four more verses left in Proverbs, and then we'll be done. We will be finished with a book that is God's mind, and it will be on the internet forever and ever that people can get it. But the bottom line is, it's about change for all of us.

I'm going to pray here in just a moment. Those of you who are not here for camp, if you at all can, go out to the foyer so Danny and Zach can have this room and move out of here. We can visit out there all you want. We'll close the doors, and they can have their meeting. If you're here for camp, once it all vacates, why don't you move up a little bit so you can hear very well. One week, pray for camp. We have kickball tonight, and we'll have a great time. It's going to be beautiful weather and a great chance to interact with other people and be part of everything that is going on there.

So let's have a word of prayer, and then we'll be dismissed.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and we do love You. Thank You for these good people. Thank You for the ones that have bought into what we're trying to do and the ones that are on their way to be more like You every day and understand that change is vital in our lives. Thank You, Lord, for today. Thank You for what's coming up with camp. Thank You for all the people that have put so much time in it and all the leadership that goes into it. I pray, Father, that You'll just give us a good meeting today and then give us a good day and then get us ready. So much needs to be done this next week for next Monday when we all hit the door running. So we pray for that. I pray for the Sunday service tomorrow that You get the honor and glory out of that. I also pray for John Christensen that You be with him, leading and guiding the doctors, Lord, and take care of him and his family and Betsy. We'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.