

I. The Journey of Spiritual Growth

For the last couple of weeks, both Sunday and Thursday, I have been dealing with the aspect of spiritual growth. I felt like it was a time where we had a lot of time in the Bible. I went through many things that I had learned when I was growing and learning how to grow, and I just wanted to share that with you. The response has been overwhelming. Almost 800 people have been on our YouTube, and we appreciate that and hope it has been a blessing to them.

As I said, I have been going through the importance of our spiritual growth, taking this time not only with the high school kids who just came out of camp, but also with so many of you who are really trying to put the Word of God into your life and learn to grow and how to do that. For me, it has been basically a walk down memory lane, so to speak, of my early years. I mentioned the other night about my house in Canton, 1451 Old Avenue. Never did I imagine so many of you would have looked that up and seen that house there. As far as what I do, you can see the empty lot next to it where, as I told you the story, Mr. Anthony's house was.

In my early years, I had a great contrast. There is an importance of contrast when it comes to learning in the Bible and even in life. I had a great contrast that helped me. When I got right with the Lord, it was on a Sunday night. I do not remember the exact date, but it was on a Sunday night, and the Lord had been working with me and dealing with me. The great contrast for me was that on Friday, when I left my job at the Hoover Company, I was pretty much the same old me. But that Sunday night, everything changed. It became an incredible contrast for me, and my life has never been the same ever since. I was completely changed by the time I got to Monday morning. That Sunday night was truly the key.

I will never forget the people that God put into my life as I began to grow. As you begin to grow, there will be people that God puts into your life. You hear me tell the story of Mel Subaca all the time, who was my father in the Lord, and that is so true. There were a lot of other people that God used that really helped me, just like I may teach and preach to give to you and be here for you. Within our church, there are a lot of other people that are there for you to help you, no matter what it may be.

At the same time, I had an opportunity to hear some great preachers, and that really helped me. All those preachers are gone today, and it is hard to find anybody that is worth listening to, actually. There are some out there, of course. But back in that day, this is in the 70s, those old boys were still alive. They were in their 70s, 60s, some of them in their 80s, but they were still preaching. Our church back then had a program throughout the summer months that every Sunday night, they brought in some really good preacher from somewhere around the country. He was either a pastor or an evangelist or whatever. I always counted myself so lucky to be there at that time to actually hear those guys: Bob Jones III, R.G. Lee, Roy Thompson from the Cleveland Baptist Temple, Victor Sears, and Harold Sears. They were incredible preachers and

men who had spent their whole lives preaching the Word of God and had gained so much information. For me, as a young Christian, it actually helped me in my spiritual growth.

One of the great preachers that I heard was Truman Dollar, who years later, a couple of years later, was the reason I came to Kansas City and was a youth pastor for him. I will never forget the messages that he preached on those Sunday nights. I still have them, and I still preach them. Somewhere I still have the cassettes from back in the 70s. I am sure they would not play now because they are probably too fragile. But I kept all that stuff because all that stuff meant something to my spiritual growth. I remember hearing those guys preach and how it really helped me get on the right track of where I needed to go and understand my own spiritual growth and the importance of it.

It was back then when I got my first experience at camp, and I really knew nothing about Christian camps. I had just gotten right with God. Of course, I was into astronomy back then as I am now and had a telescope. I remember going to Mel Subaca and telling him that I would be willing to come out to camp and show kids things through the telescope. Well, they thought that was great. Obviously, Mel was looking at it in a broader sense than just that. He wanted to get me involved, and he saw that as an opportunity. Having said that, he put with me a young man by the name of Chuck Schuster. Chuck Schuster was a Christian that really loved the Lord, loved the Book, loved the Word of God, and he was really an influence in my life. For the next five or six years, he and I teamed up, traveled around the country, certainly around Ohio, and we developed the Gospel and the Stars program. Chuck Schuster will always have a special place in my heart, as will his brother Jeff, Dave Subaca, Danny Subaca, and so many other people back there that were really in my life at that time.

These were the things that I needed. I had just gotten right with God, but I had no direction where to go. God put these people in my life who helped me and guided me in the early years of my spiritual growth. I have said it many times: Mel Subaca was my father in the Lord. I am sure that Jean Subaca is watching this morning. She usually watches every Sunday morning with us. She is down in Tennessee, and we are her church, and she watches us. So, Mom, if you are watching, I love you very much and appreciate again all that you and Mel did for me. I love you so much. All of it, I recognize, was given to me by God to help me grow.

II. Lessons from Mentors

As I look back on it, as we all know, hindsight is 20/20. I see things differently now, and I see the hand of God in everything that He put into my life, the people that He put in my life. You are going to do the same thing at some point. Mel died a number of years ago, five or six years ago. I remember at the funeral, I was one of the privileged ones that got to speak. It was a great time for me and my family because we got to be reunited with people that we had not seen for 30 years, who were very valuable in my life. Chuck Schuster was there, his brother was there. It was a great reunion.

I noted something as I spoke. I wanted to just recap all of the things that he had done in my life. Mel was famous for one-liners, but those one-liners were so deeply rooted in scriptural truth. He

had a way of taking a concept in the Bible and then putting it into a one-liner that just carried with it a full impact. That day when I spoke, I walked back down and tried to show them the value that he had been in my life, of what he had taught me. It was Mel that you hear me say these things many, many times, but I am just parroting what he gave me.

It was Mel that used to say:

- If you want to keep it, you have got to give it away.
- God never sends green troops into combat.
- Some people give joy wherever they go, and then some people give joy when they go.

It was things like that that were so deeply rooted in biblical concepts. He is the one who said that God never asked you to be able, but God just asked you to be willing, because if you are willing, then God is able. What a tremendous thing that was for me back in my young life.

He said one time, "God owns the cattle on a thousand hills." That is a popular song. It was very popular back in the day. "God owns the cattle on a thousand hills," but then he would add to it, "but sometimes He only gives it to you one hamburger at a time." What an incredible principle and concept that is for life for you and for me.

He is the one that said:

- Never doubt in the darkness what God has given you in the light.
- God always pays for what He orders.
- Some people think the grass is greener on the other side, but where do they see the water bill?

What insight he had! The thing that amazed me as I went through this list with some other things also, I said, and what amazed me was all of the old guys that were back in the day with me, they all almost without exception thanked me for what I said, told me what a blessing it was. Then almost without exception, every one of them said, "You know what? I had forgotten all those things." I thought to myself, "How could you forget that?" I mean, I was like Samuel, I let none of his words fall to the ground. I cataloged those, and I have a whole list of them along with everything else that he said that was of value to me. I have never forgotten what people did for me to help me grow spiritually. Honestly, I just tried to reproduce that in our church with you.

Of course, our church is totally different as it was back then. It is a whole different world today than it was back in the 70s. But at the same time, there are a lot of things that I am able to do better because of the time we are in. Everything that I do for you people is based on what somebody did for me. I will tell you something else, and the quicker you learn this one, the better off you are going to be. I learned never to take the things or the people that God had put in my life to help me along my way for granted, because that is an easy thing to do. It is almost like as we grow spiritually, we get our spiritual strength, we have a tendency to forget the people who got us where we are. We have a tendency sometimes to even criticize them of where they got us where they are.

I know that there have been people in my life that helped me that did not turn out the best and maybe had some real issues and some problems. If you would talk to certain people about them, they would tell you all the bad side of it. I never do that. I realize that all of our feet are clay, and we all can make mistakes. None of us are above it. At the same time, I always want to remember and never take for granted the things that they did for me. There were times in my life when I needed somebody, and they were there, and I will never forget that. I have a lot of problems and I have a lot of issues, but one problem I do not have is ingratitude. I am never not thankful for what people have done for me and what they have put into my life. What I have tried to do in all my life since those early days is catalog all of that and put it into a working format for myself that now I can give to you.

III. The End Result of Spiritual Growth: Reproduction

Today, I want to go the next step. We have talked about Ezekiel chapter 47, and we talked about how the river coming out of the sanctuary, which is called the Holy Oblation in the Bible, is a picture of the Spirit of God and a man wading into it, a man measuring him and all the different aspects. I showed you how it started at the ankles, then the knees, then the loins, and then waters to swim in. We went through that. Then I took the practical side last Thursday night, and I basically walked you through the basic notches on your spiritual wall, your spiritual growth, going through six things that in my own personal life, I put it all together and follow as best I can and am constantly asking myself where I am at. I am realizing that, just like I told the kids at camp about building a wall, not only will you be building a wall this week or begin to build a wall, but the thing you need to realize is that you are going to continue to build it the rest of your life. It is also going to have to be in a constant state of repair. That is so true. It is not only just about building a relationship with God, walking in the Spirit with God, but maintenance in it, making sure that everything is the way it needs to be.

Today, I want to talk about the end result. I want to talk about the end result or the goal in your life that will come naturally. You do not have to make it happen. There is no book you can buy on it. It will just naturally happen to you in a natural way if you continue to walk in the Spirit of God. We have talked about the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, and how that when you get saved, you are indwelled, sealed unto the day of redemption. Then we talked about the infilling on a day-to-day basis as you get into the Word of God and renew your mind day by day. Today, I want to talk about the third aspect of it, and that will be the leading of the Holy Spirit of God in your life.

There is a great verse back in Genesis 24:27 that has always been a premier verse in my life, and one that I think is probably one of the greatest promises and principles anywhere in the Word of God. It simply says, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." I want to talk to you this morning about the leading of the Holy Spirit of God and where it ultimately leads you.

Let us have a word of prayer, and then we will get into our time today, and let us see what God has for us. Let us pray.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and we do love You so much. We thank You for the time that we have set aside today to get into Your Word. Even though, Father, we are apart today and we miss each other and miss what our church has and the camaraderie and all the great things that we have together and the fellowship, we know that we are still held together by the bond of the Holy Spirit of God. We know that we will weather through this just like we weather through everything else that has come our way. Lord, we will even come out stronger. We thank You for loving us. Thank You for putting up with us and thank You, Father, for giving us what we need. Now, help these people to learn from this today, add it to what they already know, and we will give You the honor and the glory and the praise in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

Now, I want you to turn to Acts chapter 8, and I will be there in just a little bit. John 15:16 says:

John 15:16

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

The end result of our growth is, and I say end result, there is really no end to it. But if you want to put the place that you want to get, as you follow the flow of the Holy Spirit of God, and you put the leading of the Holy Spirit of God by walking in the Spirit, the end result will be reproduction. You reproducing what you have in you in somebody else. That is God's plan. God could have got the gospel out to man any way that He wanted to. For a while He did. In the Old Testament, He used the nation of Israel. In that intermediate time before Christianity really got started, He used the things that He made, Romans 1:20. Then when it came to the church age, God chose to do it through you and me. He chose to save you and to save me and put the Holy Spirit of God in us, seal us unto the day of redemption, separate our soul from our flesh, seal that soul within you with the Holy Spirit of God, and then begin the process of you growing that you would reproduce yourself in somebody else.

I know that today, in the day and age that we live in, most Christians do not do that. Most Christians unfortunately get saved and they never step past that point of just wading into their ankles. They become the waiters of Christianity, as I said a couple of weeks ago. I want to talk to you today about what you need to understand and how this process works, that you get to the point where God can use you to change somebody else's life through your life, and how important that is. Proverbs 11:30, no strange verse to any of us, says:

Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

The state of Christianity today as far as our fellowship and walking in the Lord is simply 1 John 1:7, walking in the light as He is in the light, having fellowship one with another. When we do that, a natural process begins to take place in our lives. When I preached at camp, I told the kids, and I preached on the building of the wall. I showed them how that in Ezra and Nehemiah, in Nehemiah in particular, there were nine gates in that wall. Those nine gates represented things in

our lives that we needed to have. The wall was just not to keep the world out, but there had to be entrances through that wall into our world so we can reach people. I told them that the first two gates that are listed were the Sheep Gate and the Fish Gate. I told them that the Sheep Gate represents that at some point in their young life, they have to understand the sacrifice that was made on Calvary's cross. When they do that, then they begin the process of growth. The next gate was the Fish Gate. I told them that the Fish Gate was a picture of our evangelism, our winning people to Christ. Because the bottom line, if you are a Christian this morning, the bottom line in your life and my life is winning people to Christ with our own lives and what we do.

Unfortunately today, a lot of soul winning simply has to do with words. Somebody telling somebody how to get saved instead of showing somebody through their own life the real change that takes place when a person really does get saved. I told the kids at camp, "You are lucky this week because within your counselors, within the people that are here, the people cooking the food, the nurses, everybody that is doing something here to help you, the laborers that are running around putting everything together, you are in the presence of some of the greatest soul winners that you could ever find." I told them that. I said, "You can learn by their example." I remember telling them, "They could have been anywhere else this week, and they chose to be here with you because they want to make the investment in your life." Giving to our kids as we give to others that come into our church what God has put in our lives. In the process of that, we reproduce ourselves into their life.

Winning people to Christ is nothing more, and I want you to understand it. Winning people to Christ is nothing more than the evidence of the Holy Spirit of God in your life in an intimate, personal, practical way. It is just that simple. You are going to find that when it comes to the world system, the souls of men is the last thing that they care about. I am always reminded when I talk about things like this, over there in Revelation 18:12, it lists 27 items that the world prioritizes and religion prioritizes in their value system. Obviously, the first one is gold, and everything is in between. Do you know what the last one is? The last one is the souls of men. Honestly, the souls of men should be the first thing on that list.

When we went through Ezekiel 47, I showed you how that you begin to walk through the water and get to the point where your feet are off the bottom, and how that you are just carried along with the flow. This is where you need to understand that the end result of that, which is reproducing yourself and others, we will call it soul winning. It has to become a lifestyle. Too much of Christianity today has taken salvation and winning people to Christ and made it into a program. They made it into something that you try to package and sell. It never was and never will be. Reproducing yourself in somebody else through soul winning has to become your lifestyle. The only way it becomes your lifestyle is by the indwelling Spirit of God. You get saved, the indwelling Spirit of God on a day-to-day basis, and then letting yourself be led by the Holy Spirit of God. "I being in the way, the Lord led."

The Bible says in Matthew 7:16, "By their fruits ye shall know them," because winning people to Christ is the ultimate. Now, I want to say this, and I will come back to this a little bit later. That does not mean you win every person to Christ you ever meet. That does not mean that every

person you run into that you witness to is going to get saved. I am going to explain that a little bit later on. Understanding soul winning is a much larger concept than just sitting down and witnessing to somebody. That is what I want you to see as we finalize our study on spiritual growth. I have talked to you about the indwelling, the infilling. Now I want to talk to you about the leading of the Holy Spirit of God and how it really changes everything about that.

IV. Evidences of True Conversion

It is a thing where you know my issue with the 20th and 21st century about salvation. I think the Laodicean church has most genuinely created a Laodicean salvation. Honestly, I am just telling you, and I have said it many, many times, unfortunately, I think that most other people who claim to be a Christian today have never truly really been born again. The reason I say that is because I know we have lost the Bible. With the Bible, we have lost truth, and we have lost doctrine. But I am still a Bible believer, and I still believe what the Bible says. I still know that there has to be evidence of your salvation. It is not a matter that we just claim that we are saved. Somebody can say, "Well, I live in Missouri." Until you have a house that you live in, or an apartment with an address in a physical place, that is just words. Somebody can say all the time, "Well, I am a Christian." But if the evidence is not there, then it is suspect. I know the world that we live in today does not want to be confused with a lot of facts, like a lot of people. But that is beside the point. The Bible is still the Bible. It never changes.

There are evidences. In fact, there are four evidences that a person has really genuinely been converted, or born again.

1. Your attitude toward the world. The first thing that stands out is a question of why if somebody gets saved and they still want to be part of the world. What do you not understand about the doctrine of sanctification, or the doctrine of salvation, and the doctrine of you turning from your sin, and all of those things? Realizing that you are separated from the world now. When you see Christians that claim to be saved, that do not have the evidence of staying away from the world, that is the first red flag you might want to see.
2. Your attitude toward the Word of God. I know people who claim to be saved, and they have no more relationship with the Word of God than they do with a telephone book. They just have no love for it. There is no desire for it. There is no, like we talked about last week, there is no a baby. Every time I talked about babies last week, I told you how the young Christians need to get everything that they can, as much as they can. The example is a baby. You realize that when a baby is awake, all it wants to do is eat. For a young Christian baby, all you ought to do is eat. That is where you begin the beginning of the relationship with the Word of God. When you do not see that, that is your second red flag.
3. The fact that there is no understanding of church or ministry in their life. Church becomes like the government made it when the pandemic hit. They become non-essential organizations. It does not matter if you go or do not. You go whenever you feel like it. You go whenever it is convenient. But you just do not go based on the fact that you see how valuable it is in your life.

4. What we are talking about today, the souls of men. I preach funerals for people who lost a brother or son or grandpa or whatever, mother. It is a thing where I preach that funeral, and certainly I am no judge of anybody's heart. But given the lack of evidence, there was a very good chance that that mother, brother, son, probably was in hell and never got truly saved. I have watched the people who were the relative to that, who I thought were Christians, probably were, that that point never fazed them. It was almost like a point of denial that they could not come to grasp with the fact that that kid is probably or that person is probably in hell right now, destined for the lake of fire. They just never get it.

I am telling you, you can claim to be saved all you want. You can stand up and yell and buy your airtime on the radio or television and just defend yourself that you are saved. But the bottom line is, it is not words that prove you are saved. There has to be evidence. You go to a court of law. It is not about what you know or what you think you know. It is not about what you say. Do you know what a court of law is interested in? What you can prove. What is the evidence that supports what you are saying? For your life and my life as a Christian, it is not about the verbal things that come out of my mouth. It is about the evidence. Is there any evidence? Of course, in this Laodicean Christianity, that is certainly a problem today, and I worry about it. I worry about it. No life change. No spiritual growth. They have not moved off dead center since the day they got saved, if they ever did. There is no evidence. It is a thing where there is no fruit. The Bible says, "By their fruit ye shall know them."

V. The Problem with Program-Based Soul Winning

Again, let me address this now so I do not forget, because I know that there are good people out there. Some of you are going to worry about this. I am not saying that you have to be out knocking on doors and winning people to Christ. What I am saying is this, as you will see in a moment, there are three different aspects to soul winning. You are part of that soul winning process, no matter what three parts you are in. That is what is missing today, because what we have done is Christians today have been victims of every kind of soul winning trickery that man can come up with.

I grew up in it. In the 70s, when I first got right with God and moved on, I want to tell you something. Soul winning was a program, and there was a race to see who could make more money off making a better program. There were all kinds of guys that were out there selling their books on soul winning. One guy put a book out, "How to Win to Christ, Three Out of Every Five People That You Meet." There were tapes out there. There were seminars out there. Everybody had their gimmick. Christianity was bombarded with high pressure, promotional ideas, just like the big businesses that it was. People made thousands and thousands of dollars off of it back in the day, and still do today in many, many, many, many cases.

The key to soul winning being led by the Spirit of God is laid out in many ways in the Bible. These guys would get up and they would talk about, "Buy my books or buy my tapes for \$20." They would clean out their tables, and people would buy it because people really wanted to be soul winners. But it was the leadership of the churches, the pastors, that never gave them the biblical truth to show them that soul winning was never a program. It can never be taught

through a system of tapes. You can never get it through a book. You only get it through the walking of the Holy Spirit of God in your life: the indwelling Holy Spirit, the infilling Holy Spirit, and the leading of the Holy Spirit of God.

I laugh at some of the techniques. They used to have a thing back in the day, I do not know if they still do it now, what is called the gas can technique. That is on a Saturday night or Friday night, two or three guys would go fill up a five-gallon gas can, and they would drive up and down a freeway or highways looking for somebody that ran out of gas. Then of course, they would give them the gas, fill it in there, and then use that as an opportunity to witness. Okay, I am kind of okay with that. I really am. I understand that. I mean, God is the God of gas cans. I can get that. I realize. There are a lot of people who just call people up on the phone and cold turkey try to win somebody to Christ. Door to door was big back in the day and still is today in some churches that do not have anything better to offer.

I am telling you, that is a very dangerous thing. It is almost like we want to win people to Christ, but we do not want to take the time to get into their life to really have a relationship with them and then win them to Christ through that relationship as they see our relationship. That is the problem. For a long time, I have always been against street preaching. I think street preaching has been, it is one of the most misused, and boy, I will tell you, you see it. I mean, do not tell me about it. I grew up street preaching, but I see it today. Most of it is done with guys who do not go to church anywhere. They are under no church authority, no pastoral authority. It was a thing where I am totally against it as it is today. And yet we have in my mind, probably one of the greatest street preaching ministries that you are ever going to find because we have a guy who heads it up, Chris Pascano, who there is nobody like him. He understands the concept. He knows his Bible. He knows how to deal with people. They go down at Westport. I do not think they are doing it right now because of the pandemic. But when they get back to it, they go down at Westport and go to places. They actually take our young kids down and some of the other people down, and they do it the right way. They understand how to do it. That makes all the difference in the world because they have the biblical understanding that soul winning is not a program. It has to come out of our lives into somebody else's life. That is the way that it works.

Jack Hyles, I will tell you a funny story. Jack Hyles, he is dead now. He pastored a church in Hammond, Indiana, and it was a mega church. Back in the 70s, it was running 10, 15,000 people. Jack Hyles was noted as a great soul winner. I knew Jack Hyles. I have heard him preach on a number of occasions. He was an incredible, hard-nosed, old-school, completely outside the biblical concepts of soul winning. But he was a great preacher, an old paratrooper out of the 82nd Airborne in World War II. I loved to listen to him preach, even though there is a lot of stuff that he said I did not buy it. But he was a great motivator. I heard him preach several times. He really pushed soul winning, but he pushed the programs. He pushed the different things that you do. I have even seen some of his guys go door to door. When somebody came to the door, they would talk to them about salvation. They did not want to get saved. So they would have a little plan. They would trick them into saying the sinner's prayer and then go out rejoicing that they had just won that person to Christ. Are you kidding me? It is incredible some of the things that were done

and probably still get done by a lot of these guys out here that have no connection with any real Bible-believing church. They are just out there flapping in the wind, so to speak.

One time Jack Hyles, they were teaching people how to soul win. He was using people in his church who were saved. Young Christians were going through the process of witnessing to this person and trying to lead them to Christ. But the people they were talking to were in the church and were saved people. So this kid is talking to this guy. He is learning how to break the ice a little bit. Finally, it came down to the question, and he says, "Have you ever trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior?" And the guy said, "Yes, I have." And they stopped it and said, "No, no, that is not what you are supposed to say. You are supposed to say, 'No, I am not. I do not know that.'" So they ran it again. Actually, they were making a video of it for the show and got to the same spot. The kid said, "Do you know for sure if you died today that you go to heaven?" The guy thought for a minute and he said, "Absolutely." And the guy said, "Stop, stop, stop. You cannot do that." He says, "You are supposed to say, 'No, I do not know.'" And the guy looked up and says, "Hey, look, pal, I am saved and I am not getting lost for anybody." That was his mindset on it. I get it. I understand it.

Today, I want to look at what the Bible says that once you get into the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, I want to show you what the Bible says and teaches about winning people to Christ. You need to know this because the end result of your walk, the end result of your walk, is going to be what you do with this understanding of what I am about to give you.

VI. The Threefold Process of Soul Winning

Now, take your Bibles. I know we are in Acts 8, but take your Bibles and turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Let us look at that for a moment before we get into this. I want to show you that first of all, there are three parts to soul winning.

1 Corinthians 3:6

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

There are your three parts to soul winning. If you do not understand those three parts, then you are going to be a victim of all this other program stuff that is out there today. Paul said, "I planted." He witnessed to somebody, but he never won him to Christ. Then Apollos watered. Notice the water from Ezekiel 47, praying for them in the Spirit, but he did not win him to Christ either. Then it simply says, "God gave the increase." Somebody else got to win him to Christ.

Now, here is the problem. How do you know when it is time to plant the seed of the Word of God, but not go any farther? How do you know when it is time to put out the Word of God to somebody, but to stop before you try to win him to Christ? Because it clearly says there are three parts here. Paul planted. Somebody else prayed, but somebody else got the increase. You have got to understand that the thing that you do not want to do is you do not want to be trying to get the increase when God just wants you to plant or water, or you do not want to be just planting when God wants you to go for it and win the person. How do you know that? The answer is the

leading of the Holy Spirit of God. You become so in touch with the Holy Spirit of God that He leads and guides you.

There have been times in my life when I have been witnessing to somebody that God simply says, "Shut up. That is it. You are done." Then you pray for them, and maybe somebody else wins them. There have been times that I have witnessed to somebody that God said, "Okay, go the distance. He is ready." And he won them to Christ. But you do not make that decision on your own. You only get to that place in your life by the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, and based on the daily infilling and based on the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. This is my point. Here Paul preached, gave the Word, Apollos watered. Somebody else won. All three people get credit for this soul. It is not about notching your spiritual pistol or another scalp on your belt, but a one person who won the Christ. It is a team effort. It is a process. It is not a program. It is a process of spiritual growth that we work together, just like we do in our church. I get people come to church, they hear me preach, and you start working with them. How many times does this happen? You start to disciple them, and then you find out that they are not saved, and you win them to Christ. That is the way it has to work. It is not whether you open up your Bible to the Romans Road and win them to Christ that you get the crown. It is based on your attitude of heart towards souls in general, and then allowing God to use you through the process and through the system. Of course, that is the problem, trying to sow when you ought to be reaping and reaping when you just need to be sowing. The key to that is the intimate relationship you have with the Holy Spirit of God, and all that God is trying to do with you.

VII. The Leading of the Holy Spirit in Soul Winning

Now I am going to go back to Acts 8 now, but I want to read this and then we are going to make some comments on it. Hopefully, you will be able to learn some things. I will pick it up here in Acts 8:26, a very familiar passage. You all know this passage, you probably read it by heart and certainly know the story, so that will save us some time this morning.

Acts 8:26-40

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot reading Esaias the prophet.

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

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

I call this message, "Black Lives Matter." I say that because I do not know if you have ever seen this or not, or ever got this, but the world always takes something out of the Bible, and then they try to use it, sometimes right, sometimes wrong. But they never really understand where it all begins. I have told you many, many times, everything comes back to the Bible. Now we have in Kansas, across America, the Black Lives Matter movement. They are putting big signs on the street, and all those things. People wear face masks and T-shirts. I understand. I have told you before, I think the black man in America has got a raw deal for 200 years, longer than that, probably. I understand why they are saying what they are saying. I understand their frustration. I do not agree with all the violence, but I understand that black lives matter, and a black man should have every right a white man should have, no question about it. But that is not where the real "Black Lives Matter" starts.

Do you know where it starts? If you are a white supremacist, you are not going to like this. If you are a racist, you are not going to like this, but I am sorry. The Bible is the Bible. Do you know where black lives matter? Black lives matter to God. I know they do because of what they stand for. Do you realize that your whole New Testament, everything in your New Testament, revolves around the lives of four black men? Think about that for a moment. When Jesus Christ is going to the cross, guess who they throw in the mix to help Him carry the cross? A black man, Simon the Cyrenian. Cyrene is North Africa. You find over there when the church starts in Acts 13, the church at Antioch, four men that it mentions. One is a Gentile. The other one is a Gentile who was connected to Rome, and then two of them were black men. Then here in Acts 8, when we are

dealing with a man getting saved, this is the first time that you get to see New Testament salvation, the way you and I got saved. This is an illustration of Romans 10:9-10. I know in Acts 2:38, Peter was preaching for people to get saved, but that was not to you and me. I know when Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they went out, but that was not to you and me. No, no, no. The first time, the very first time the TV cameras panned down and showed you exactly how you and I got saved, it was a black man. Black lives matter in the Bible because of what they represent to you and me. This guy is a bondsman. This guy is under somebody's authority. You and I were bought with a price. We are a servant of servants. We are a bondsman. That is why the New Testament is built around those four black men. One of the most incredible things that you will ever see. I guess some of you are probably pulling your hair out right now because you have racist tendencies or you are against black people or whatever. I am just telling you what the Bible says. You cannot get around it unless you get an X-Acto knife and cut it out.

Now let us look at this. I want to show you through this story. I have already showed you the indwelling. I have already showed you the infilling. Now I want to show you the leading because you need to learn, folks, the end result of your spiritual growth is understanding that you need to reproduce yourself in somebody's life. When you do that, all the other things that get in Christians' way to become their little stumbling blocks or little "wham-wham" things do not matter anymore because you see the real goal for what it is. You realize that God saved you for one purpose: that is for you to grow and get to the point where you can reproduce yourself in God's program.

I want you to see here. The first thing it says here in Acts 8:26:

Acts 8:26

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

The first thing I want you to see here, and this is a great principle, you have got to get this down. The first thing we see, Philip looks to God's leading, not the circumstances to make a decision. Wow. I do not even know. That jumps out at you. Here he is, the evangelist. Philip is one of the deacons at Acts 6, but he is an evangelist. He is down in Samaria where there is a great revival breaking out that has never happened before because up to this point, the Jews and the Samaritans never got along, but God's Spirit now is moving. Here you see that Philip is the lead evangelist. When God tells him to go, he does not look at the circumstances. He does not say, "Well, God, You do not understand. I have a sermon to preach tonight. I have 10,000 people that are coming to hear me tonight. We are having a great revival here. Why would You pull me out?" He has learned Ezekiel 47. He has learned to go with the flow. He has learned to let the Holy Spirit of God take him wherever He wants him to go. Philip looks to God's leading. He does not look at the physical circumstances and then make his decisions. Physical circumstances will change daily. The leading of the Holy Spirit of God, once you have that relationship, will clearly define for you what to do. This is something that you look for in yourself.

I know a lot of God's people all my life that every decision they made, they made on what somebody else told them to do. It was either their family. It was either this person or that person.

They would shop around to get whatever answer to whatever they wanted to do. Then they would pick the best one that they wanted. They never, never considered following the Holy Spirit of God and what He wanted. They never saw the big picture. They never saw the greater seed that is in you that is in the world. So their whole life they make decisions based on circumstances, not based on the leading of the Holy Spirit of God in their lives. That is something that every one of us needs to look at in our own lives.

Then I want you to see this. There is a total obedience. What we have here, and I do not know if you have picked this up yet, you have heard me say this before. What we have here is a picture of a prepared servant, Philip, and a prepared sinner, the Ethiopian eunuch. It was not circumstances that brought them together. It was the Holy Spirit of God. Philip, because of his relationship with the Holy Spirit of God, knew exactly what he needed to do. He sees the green lights that take him from point one to point two to point three. Acts 8:27 says:

Acts 8:27

And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

Now, I want you to see the second thing here is that Philip does not say a word. He just goes. Notice Acts 8:29:

Acts 8:29

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

Let us stop right there. Can you recognize when the Spirit talks to you? Can you really, or are you so cluttered up with all the circumstances of life and everything else that everybody gives you that you cannot discern the voice of the Holy Spirit of God in your life telling you what to do? I will tell you right now that only comes as a process of wading in the water, growing to the place in your life where you have such a relationship with the Holy Spirit of God that you recognize His voice.

One of my favorite movies is Saving Private Ryan. I do not know if there is, and I have seen lots of movies about D-Day. There was one back in the sixties with John Wayne called The Longest Day. I do not know of any movie that probably depicts the horror and the devastation and the tragedy that those boys went through as they went ashore on Omaha Beach, Utah Beach, and all those boys that lost their lives in the most horrendous slaughter that tried to get a foothold in the occupied Europe. I have watched those opening scenes where they are trying to get across and guys are being blown to pieces and shot. I always think to myself, "Boy, I bet God heard a lot of strange voices that day." I bet God heard voices that He had not heard for years. I am telling you something. Can you recognize when the Spirit of God talks to you? Can you discern that it is really Him or just your own feelings and emotions speaking to you? How do you know? Well, the answer is obviously clear, but how do you know? Can you really discern that? I could talk to people all the time, and they will start talking about this and that. I never really say anything, but in my mind, before I am 30 seconds into the conversation, I can understand it. God did not give

you that. Somebody else gave you that. Well, that is what you wanted to hear. But the Spirit of God, do you understand?

It says, "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Now let us talk about Philip for a minute. Look at the next verse, Acts 8:30:

Acts 8:30

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

He is my kind of guy, man. He did not sit around and say, "Well, I need to pray about this." He did not sit around and say, "Well, I need to check with so-and-so to see what he thinks or she thinks." No, no. He understood the voice of the Holy Spirit of God, and he ran. He ran. He did not walk. He did not jog. He ran. When it comes to the things of God and the Word of God and your spiritual growth, you cannot run fast enough. He ran. He did not sit around and think about it. He did not call this or that and say, "What do you think? What do you think?" He is so intimate with the Holy Spirit of God. He knows when God's Spirit speaks to him, and he ran.

As he gets close to that chariot, here is the first green light for him. He sees and hears this guy reading out of the Old Testament, and in actuality, he is reading out of Isaiah 53, which we all know is the blood atonement of Christ listed in the Old Testament. So Philip already knows that somebody has sown, and obviously somebody is watering. So he has got two green lights right there. There is a reason why the Holy Spirit of God pulled him out of revival in Samaria, dumped him all the way on the backside of the desert for an Ethiopian eunuch. Philip, through the leading of the Holy Spirit of God in his life, completely understands what God wants him to do. Are you always dependent on somebody else? Do you look at the circumstances you face on a daily basis? Can you really discern when it is the Holy Spirit of God telling you what to do? Do you even know how that works? Maybe I ought to take next week and explain how that works. We do not have time today.

He is reading Isaiah 53, which says in Acts 8:32-33:

Acts 8:32

The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

He is reading about the blood atonement. Martin Luther said, "Isaiah 53 ought to be written in diamonds on black velvet." That is how precious it was. It is one of the most precious places in the Bible that shows us the crucifixion of Christ. Obviously this kid did not have the New Testament. So God is using the Old Testament. It is a thing where he hears him reading that. The greatest opening line for beginning soul winning 101, Philip goes over there and says, "Hey, pal, I see you are reading Isaiah 53. Do you understand what you are reading?" Third green light. Acts 8:31:

Acts 8:31

And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

That is so true. Kids, folks, you will never figure it out by yourself. That is why God gave me a church. That is why God gave you a pastor. That is why God gave you people in our church who will work with you and help you through everything in life. That is why we care about you and want to help you get to that spiritual place in your life, because that answer is true for all of us. At some point in life, it was true of me. "How can I, except some man should guide me?" Then it says in Acts 8:31, "And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him." Man, the lights are turning green. Philip, man. I will tell you what, who Philip is there? He is just going with the flow, man. Somebody gave him Isaiah. Somebody is obviously praying for him. Now here I am. Now I know why God pulled me out, and I am just going to go with the flow. I want to hold his splitter. God said, "Go join yourself to that man's chariot." He ran. What do you do? What do I do? We actually sit around discussing it, checking with this person, see if it is okay with this person. What a great passage this is. What a great study this is.

Then he desired Philip to come up and sit with him. Of course, I read you Acts 8:32-34, the place that he is reading. Look at Acts 8:35:

Acts 8:35

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

This guy got saved. Yet at the same time, it shows you again, a little deeper, a prepared sinner and a prepared servant. Now here is the problem. As far as I see it, God has a lot more prepared sinners than He has prepared servants. Because God's people today always look at the circumstances and never see the leading of the Holy Spirit of God in life, because there is none. Yet they are saved. They are on the way to heaven. They have the right Bible. They talk about loving God and all the things, but you know what? It is not about that. Do you know what the bottom line is? You are probably not going to like this, but you know what the real bottom line is? Do not give me this gas about how much you love God. Do not give me this gas about your Bible. Do not give me this gas about how precious He is. Do you understand when the Holy Spirit of God speaks to you? Because if you do not check off the rest, it is all fluff. What good is it that you have all those things if it has not led you to the place that when He speaks to you and says, "Go join yourself to this man's chariot," or "Go do this," or "I want you here," or "I want you there," or "Do not worry about this, do this"? Laodicean Christianity, it is an empty shell. It is a lot of show and a lot of talk and a lot of fuss, but there is no real directing of the Holy Spirit of God in most of God's people's lives.

At the same time, Acts 8:35, he opened his mouth at the same scripture. He started where he was, and he preached. Now this is a good definition of preaching. See, we always think preaching is screaming and yelling at the top of your lungs. That is not true. There is no evidence here that Philip said, "Hey, wait a minute, let me get a pulpit. Let me get something to stand on and then open up your Bibles to Isaiah 53." No, preaching is simply just telling the story. He laid out and

explained Isaiah 53 to this guy who somebody had sown, somebody was obviously watering. Now it is time for God to give the increase, and Philip was God's choice. Can God choose you to give the increase? Can He? Are you just one of those people that you are a shotgun Christian, you just shoot a scatter gun at everybody? God wants and has a plan for each of us. The only way that we can fulfill that in reproducing ourselves is for each of us to understand the leading of the Holy Spirit of God. I know you have the indwelling down and you have the infilling down. How about the leading? How about when He speaks to you?

He began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. He got the guy's theology straightened out. The guy was going to Jerusalem and obviously got disappointed because he is thinking that it is like Solomon's time when he got there and found out it was not, but he never heard what happened. He never heard about Jesus. Now he is coming back and he is confused, but God saw his heart, and God prepared that sinner, and then He matched him up through the Holy Spirit of God with a prepared servant. I will say it again. The problem is in my own mind that God has more prepared sinners than He has prepared servants.

This is such an incredible, beautiful picture. Look down here in Acts 8:36-38:

Acts 8:36

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

At that point he made his confession, and now he is baptized. This story leaves nothing to the imagination. It even shows us not only the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, how this guy got saved, and all the ramifications that is a picture of the leading of God in our lives. Now it even shows you the mode of baptism. They are in the desert. The eunuch says, "See, here is much water. What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip had already told him what baptism was. It was immersion. They are in the desert. Do you think the guy did not have a canteen? Do you think if sprinkling was the mode, he could have just got some water out of it, shot it in his face? I mean, what does baptism represent anyhow? It represents death, burial, and resurrection. We have all been to funerals. When you bury somebody, do you stand them up in a corner and throw dirt in their face? No. The Bible makes it very clear that he goes down into this much water and comes back up. He is immersed. This thing does not miss a trick, man. It is one of the greatest end result pictures of what happens in your life and my life when we get the Holy Spirit of God in our lives. Then we come to the place where we allow God to indwell in us through salvation, fill us on a daily basis, and then through the process of spiritual growth. Ezekiel 47, 2 Peter, last week that I gave you in 1 Peter 2, grow to the point where now God can use you in the final form to reproduce yourself.

VIII. Soul Winning as a Lifestyle

I love Acts 8:40. First of all, Acts 8:39, the Ethiopian eunuch, he goes on his way rejoicing. He truly got saved, and he is going back now to tell everybody what happened to him. That is great. That is what he is supposed to do. But I want you to see Acts 8:40:

Acts 8:40

But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

It shows me that my job is never done as a Christian. You may work for a corporation. You may work for some business, and you know, they will come to a point where when you get 65 or 70, whatever it is, you retire and you are done there on a daily basis. You work nine to five. But when you go home, you are done. You work five days a week, Friday, you have Saturday and Sunday off. You are done. As a Christian, there is never a time that we are done. There is never a time that we are to retire. There is never a time that we can say, "Okay, my job is over. I have done it. I am off now. I am off the clock." Never. Because soul winning, reproducing yourself, is a lifestyle. It is not a job. It is not a program. It is not something you start and stop. It is the intimate relationship that you have with the Holy Spirit of God that will produce fruit as a tree planted by the river of waters as you go, Ezekiel 47.

To me, the most amazing thing of this is that I cannot answer this, so do not ask it on Thursday night. Sometimes, who gave that guy the book of Isaiah? You do not know. Do you know what that is a picture of? That is a picture of so many of God's people out there who just sow the seed, but they have enough common sense of understanding the leading of the Holy Spirit of God that they know when to stop and let somebody else pick it. Because not everybody is ready to get saved when you give them the Word. Sometimes it takes some time. Sometimes it takes some prayer. Sometimes you may win them. You may sow the seed, may pray for them, get your friends to pray for them. But I am telling you, somebody else wins them to Christ. You never know that. Not only do I not know who gave him Isaiah, but the person who gave him Isaiah probably never understood and knew that he ever got saved. That is the great process of God. Yet all people involved got credited with his salvation. When the crowns are passed out for soul winning, everybody involved in that will get one. In our church, dealing with people and your prayer for them, watering for them, everybody, whoever gets saved, even though you never sow or you never reap, but you were part of the watering process. You are part of that. You get your crown. It is an incredible concept. It is an incredible concept. Someone had sown, someone had watered, and now someone reaps. It is a prepared servant. It is a prepared sinner, and the Holy Spirit of God putting it all together. The prepared servant is so in tune with the Holy Spirit of God that he knows, she knows when God speaks to them.

People out there need Christ today. Probably, I almost said more than ever, but I do not know that that is true, but certainly, there is a lot of bad stuff out there. People need Christ, but they need Christ the right way. I thought about a story that I, a number of years ago when I was still in Ohio, it was a story about a hotel fire. They had gotten everybody out of the hotel, or they

thought they did. Then as they were doing a headcount, a lady screaming broke down that her little two-year-old baby daughter, she could not get to her, and she was still trapped on the third floor. The fire was raging, and yet two firemen or three firemen doused themselves with water and braved the fire, went up the stairs to the third floor, got into that hotel room. Smoke was so thick, fire was everywhere. They could not see. They had to, if you know anything about it, they had to get down on the floor where you can actually have, because the smoke rises. So they are feeling their way along, and they found the bedroom, and the fireman is reaching up, and he is feeling, and he feels the baby, and he grabs the baby in all of the smoke, he wraps it inside of his jacket. As they ran out, the whole building collapses, and he takes the baby out, and all of the TV cameras, the mom, everybody begins to scream and applaud, and what a great hero he was, and he was for what he did. He gives the baby to the mom. The mom opens up the baby from the blanket, and she screams. He had picked up the baby doll instead of the baby.

I want to tell you today, folks, there are a lot of people out there. They have got the wrong baby. They have got the wrong Jesus. You might be the only thing that stands between them and eternity. Just as that fireman tried to snatch that little baby girl from some of the fire, our job is to snatch the souls of men and women out of the fires of hell. But it will only happen as you and I walk in the Spirit of God, build a relationship with the Word of God, grow and learn how to listen and understand the Word of God. I want to tell you today, learn how to listen and understand when God speaks to you. When you get to that point in your life, it will be as clear as a bell. You will not have to wonder who else is telling you because the process to understand that is so clear, and I do not have time to get into that this morning. But it is a thing where this is one of the greatest stories for my own life that put together years ago, years ago, as I was growing. I realized that the Holy Spirit of God was the key in my life of everything that I needed to do and the leading of it. It is something that it is the end result for every one of us. We get indwelt with the Holy Spirit of God at salvation. We get filled with the Holy Spirit of God on a daily basis. Then that leads to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, which leads to the final process of your spiritual growth. Understanding what New Testament salvation is in its three parts and understanding how God, like Philip, wants to put you in a place where you can do for Him what He wants done. But you need to understand the leading of the Holy Spirit of God.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for today. We pray, Father, for all You do for us and the blessings that, Lord, we love You, and we just pray that for our people out there today and hope that we know the great reports of so many of them getting better and a few out there that are still struggling, we just pray, Father, to help them and encourage them and let them know that we love them and pray for them. Lord, we will be thankful to give You all the honor and the glory and the praise. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.