

I. The Devil's Weapons of Light

The last time we were together, it has been a couple of weeks ago. Last week Jared preached, and then we had our Christmas service the week before that. It was the week before that we were in John chapter 18. In that message, I talked about the weapons of light that the devil uses. We talked about how he blinds our minds from the truth of God's Word in the world system. That would be 2 Corinthians 4:4.

We talked about him taking captive the hearts and minds of men, but many times also of God's people, to keep them from ever having a real, working, meaningful relationship with Christ. I took you back to the book of Daniel, if you remember, and then I walked you through Israel's captivity. What I wanted to do back there is to show you the parallels and how they really match up today to the process by which the devil does what he does today through the angel of light and the weapons of light that he uses, and how he will change us from who we really are in Christ to try to make us who he wants us to be. We saw back there the alternative: you either stand for God or you are going to stand for the devil. It is just that simple.

II. Discipleship and Spiritual Growth

We have a couple of discipleship programs here that we use. You are all familiar with them. In Discipleship 1, we take a new person that just got saved or maybe somebody that has come into our church, and we use those lessons to kind of lay a foundation, basically, in your life of the key aspects of the Bible. Then we have what we call Discipleship 2. Discipleship 2 will be based on, actually, it is the next level, and it deals with the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved. It is so important that God's people understand those things. We take our time in each one of them, and we bring you through to get you to see who you really are in Christ, the seven things that changed about you the day you got saved.

When the devil does his work, when he begins to blind God's people, what he tries to do—and he is very successful at this—he tries to reverse at least six, maybe five or six, of those things that really changed about you the day you got saved. He cannot touch your salvation, but boy, he can get a lot of other things without getting that.

I am in the process, and I told you that I want to upgrade things this year, I am in the process of doing a Discipleship 3. I will have it ready probably in, oh, I do not know, maybe by May or June. I am working on it right now, and that will give us a complete area of that that we can put in a person's life. I am going to tell you why for that in just a moment.

You will remember that as we came through Daniel, I showed you all the components that are in Daniel chapter 1, and I laid it all out for you how the devil wants to undo in your life everything that God has done. I showed you all the components are in this chapter.

The first thing we looked at was a guy by the name of Azpenez. He was chief eunuch under Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel and the boys were in his charge. I showed you how that is so crucial. I remember talking to the parents and telling you that you want to keep the Azpenezes out of your kid's life. Who are they? They are the people who will begin that process to bring in all of the stuff of the world that in time will take away from God. That is what Azpenez did. He was given charge of these Hebrew children, who are a picture of your children, us as children of God. Then he began the process to indoctrinate them. That is exactly what the Azpenezes in your children's life will try to do. Somebody, male or female, will get into your kid's life because you allow it and begin to undo the process that you have done.

Then we looked at the captivity itself, the fact that they are held captive by Babylon, and we saw how that is a picture of the taking over of your mind. People come to the place where God, church, the Bible are no longer important to them, where one time it was. They become captive now through Azpenez and everything that they do.

Then we saw that they got a daily portion of the king's meat. That means the filth of Babylon, all the stuff that Babylon represented that they now were beginning to be indoctrinated with. They now were given this on a daily basis by Azpenez. Through that process, the last thing I showed you then was that finally they changed their name. I went through and I showed you how that originally their names were connected to God and everything that He did. But as Azpenez, under the direction of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, he wanted to change their names from God to bring their names under the gods of Babylon. All this took place that the Bible says that at the end of three years they might stand before the king.

Now, to me, that has always been a key thing: that three-year period. I have mentioned this to you before. You give me a young guy or a young gal that just got saved, and if they give me their undivided attention and allow me to work with them—and I do not care how old you are, you can start this process when you are 60, 40, 30, whatever—if they will give me their undivided attention for three years, that is about how long it takes to get you grounded in the Word of God that you are not going back anywhere. Now, if God does not do that and the devil does, hey, if Azpenez gets your kids when they are 11, 12, or 13, you will never touch them when they are 15, 16, and 17. It is just that simple. It only takes about three years.

A moment ago, I told you about our Discipleship 1 and Discipleship 2. I have been looking for a time and trying to figure this thing out without getting into a hurry and just doing something to do it. I wanted a program that would encompass about three years in a person's life. If we got a young man and a young lady, anybody, whenever, and they wanted to get grounded and they are willing to do what they have got to do, you take D1, D2, and then when I get finished with D3, it will take probably three years or more. But by the end of that time, you will know where you are at. You will know who you are. Now you will be ready to stand. I look at all of you out there who are standing now. But I am looking for something that will fit into that three-year program that if you give me a young man or a young lady and give me their undivided attention for three years and let me put the right people in their life with the right things in their life, you will stand for the right things at the end of that three years. It is just that simple. Every parent ought to look to that

and understand that. It is just that simple. The work of Babylon through the blinding of our minds of the truth.

III. The Importance of Spiritual Mentorship

As a Christian in your life, God will always have a man or a woman in your life. But I want you to also understand that the devil will do the same thing. We talk about it all the time. Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ." We have talked about that. But I want you to know the devil counterfeits that.

The Bible says there was a man sent from God whose name was John.

John 1:6

In Acts chapter 8, when the Ethiopian eunuch needed a man, God sent him Philip. When you get into Acts chapters 11, 12, and 13, and you see the church at Antioch, you see the leadership of that church that brought about Paul and Barnabas. Then when you look at Timothy, you look at Titus and Philemon, God used a man in their life: Paul. God will always, that is the way He does it. He will use somebody in your life to get you where you need to be. But so will the devil. The devil did not miss that trick.

When parents do not do with their kids what they need to do, the devil will make sure he will do his work. When you have a church and you get young people saved, and young men saved, and women saved, and families come in, they will get swallowed up in a heartbeat if somebody does not get in their world and hide them, help them. The great words of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter 8, Philip says, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" And what did he say? "How can I, except some man should guide me?" That needs to be you.

In my life, God gave me a man, Mel Sabaka, that was my father in the Lord. His father in the Lord was Dr. Peter S. Ruckman. You see it all down through history. That is the way that it works. That is the way God works down through the church age. As I said, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ." Your job, your job, if you are in this church and you are growing and you love the Book and you want to do what God wants you to do, fundamentally your job is to be that man or woman in somebody else's life. It is just that simple. It is not complicated. Let God use you. Let God use you to be what somebody else needs.

If you are in this world, forget where God wants him to be. Because when God wanted to do His work in your life, when God wanted to do His work in my life and change the direction of my life, and certainly change the direction of you, He sent us a man, the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, the model is clear. We do for others what God has done for us. We need to be, you need to be that man or woman in their life.

I was so thankful last weekend as I saw the guys and the gals, and I enjoyed them. As I said, I look at it differently than most people. I listen to those guys, and there are things that I look for. There are things that I listen for, even in the girls giving the testimonies. But I could not help but think that those guys were doing that job last weekend simply because you guys invested your life in them. It is just that simple. They did not get there by themselves. They did not get saved

and go to bed and sleep or one day wake up and become spiritual. Somebody invested their life in their lives. That is what we do. That is what our job is. For me, it was just to sit back, and I know it was for many of you, it was just to sit back and enjoy what they did. It was a great weekend to start the year with. I just sat there, and I not only enjoyed what they were doing, but as I looked across that crowd, because I sat up here, I just saw face after face after face after face of you people who took out of your own life, based on a model of what God did in your life and somebody else did in your life, to invest in their life. That is what it takes. That is what it takes.

For a fact, the devil will always have his man or woman. He will always have his Azpenez, ready, willing, and able to take from you all that God has for you.

IV. Historical Examples of Following a Man

I remember back in my day, and this is true all down through church history, and soon you will be able to get some of the books on it, hopefully. One per person per Sunday. I saw some of you already running up to the hardware store to get a wheelbarrow. That will not work.

Back in the 70s and the 80s, if you followed Dr. Peter S. Ruckman, really in the 60s too, you were called a Ruckmanite. The word was, "You are just following a man." To the average person who knows nothing about history or the Bible or the church or real truth and the Bible-believing church down through history, they get caught up in things like that. They hear the thing, "Well, man, maybe you are just following a man."

When J. Frank Norris broke with the Southern Baptist Church and started a fundamentalist movement that gave you your King James Bible, the people that followed him were called Norristes. When Martin Luther broke with the Roman Catholic Church, they called his people Lutherans. John Huss in the 1400s, he preached the Bible in Czechoslovakia, and they called his followers Hussites. In the Dark Ages, when they followed Paul instead of Peter with the Roman Catholic Church, they were called Paulicians. In the Dark Ages, the Waldensians were called that after a man that led them and founded them. His name was Peter Waldo. The Novatians, the Roman Catholic, were called that after a man named Novatius who would not succumb to the changes that were going on in the early church. The Nestorians, they got their name because their pastor's name was Nestorius, and he would not submit to all the heresy that was coming into the church, all down through history. All the way back, they were first called Christians at Antioch, "Little Christs."

So you need to understand, as you look at this next year and you examine where you are at and who you are, what God has done in your life, the fundamental job of every Christian is to reproduce themselves, first in their family and then in others. I know sometimes things happen late and things get messed up and the family goes out the window and there is no way you can try to get that back. I understand that, but you know what? Do it with what you can do it with. There is a woman in the Bible who has always been a great sermon when I heard it preached. I always like to listen to it. She was doing some things there, and the apostles kind of got upset with her, and Jesus said, "Hey, leave her alone. She had done what she could." Just do what you can. You do not have to set the world on fire, just do what you can.

V. The Power of "I Am He"

Today, we are going to move a little farther in John chapter 18. Let us read together, if we could, verses 3 through 6. It says this:

John 18:3-6

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Father, we ask You today to help us to put together this great passage here and some things that we all need to see today. Help us today to look at these things and look at ourselves, and help us, Father, that we realize that the greatest calling we have is to do for others what Christ has done for us. Thank You, Father. We love You. We pray You will use this time now in Jesus' name and sake we ask it. Amen.

We are moving along in our story here, maybe slowly, but we are getting there. We are moving toward the final hour, which we know will be His crucifixion. Now we see the men coming to take Him away. We are entering into the final act of the betrayal by Judas. There are a number of things that come to my attention as I look down through this verse, and I would like to just point them out to you so some of you Bible students can mark them in your Bible and then maybe come back at it later or I can help you with it or something.

The first thing I see here is simply this: they are looking for Him. They are coming to take Him, but they are not quite sure who He is. That is why they have Judas with them. He says to them, "Whom seek ye?" They say back to Him, "Jesus of Nazareth," and then He says, "I am he." Now that probably does not look like much to most people. I might suggest to you that probably one of the greatest studies anywhere in the Bible will be built around the context when He says, "I am he." That phrase "I am" in the Bible goes back to Exodus chapter 3, verse 14. In the theological world, it is called the Tetragrammaton, the fact that Jesus back there said when they asked Moses, "Who should I say?" He says, "Tell them, 'I AM THAT I AM.' Tell them the I AM sent you." Wow, what a great study that is. You find that I have marked in my Bible every time it talks about Christ or Christ says something where He uses the term "I am." You better mark it because it is all leading. It is not just a phrase in language that He is saying. That "I am" is one of the greatest studies in the Bible. "I AM THAT I AM."

In verse 6, the Bible says they fell backward on the ground. There it is. The man-made light of the world, and we have preached on this a couple of times, and a couple of weeks ago, will never

be able to stand up against the light of God's Word. When the I AM says it, they hit the ground, baby.

Matthew 24:35

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Proverbs 19:21

There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

All the man-made light and weapons will never stand the test of the true light of the Word of God. Verse 6 shows us that nothing man fabricates or what he does to get around the light of God will ever stand before the Word of God, and down they go. If they do not go down in this life, where do they go? To the Great White Throne Judgment, and down they go to the lake of fire. One of the most incredible things found in the Bible that shows you the power of that Book.

VI. Getting Honest with God and Ourselves

As I read down through these verses, it came to my mind that in this passage will be found one of the three great questions found in the Bible that God is going to ask every man and every woman. Today, I want to talk to you out of this passage simply about one concept for all of us, and that is getting honest with God.

Last time we were together, I showed you the fact that you and I are an epistle.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

I asked you for inner reflection, "What kind of book are you?" I gave you six or seven different books to kind of illustrate my point. The truth be known, most of God's people, if you read their book, it is a fairy tale. Nothing real in it, all made up with fancy things that are never built on anything in the Bible. It becomes a Christian dream world, a life built on things that are not real.

Haggai, that Old Testament prophet, one of my favorite places to preach, in Haggai chapter 1, verse 6, he talked about people just like this. People who get everything they can, amass money, amass possessions, amass everything that they can get their hands on. Their whole life is built around getting things that they want. He says in verse 6 of chapter 1, at the end of that, after trying to get all that, all they do is put it in a bag with holes.

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.

A bag with holes. At the end of life, when you dump out everything you had in that bag, you find it fell out through the hole. That is us, man. That is what we do. You have so many of God's people that you know that their lives are a classic horror story. Everybody dies spiritually. The husband dies, the wife dies, the kid dies, the dog dies, everybody dies spiritually. In every case, no matter what your book epistle is about, it all boils down, when it is not the right book, that we just do not want to get honest with God.

Having said that, I will say this: getting honest with God will always require us to first get honest with ourselves. Human nature. I never get deceived by anybody until I first deceive myself. I think the thing they say is, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." But we want it to be true. Dr. Ruckman said one time, he says, "You will never deceive an honest man because an honest man will always be just satisfied with what he has, and he will know the grass is never greener on the other side, and when somebody tells him that it is, he knows better."

I have seen over the years God's people go through some of the most horrific things in their lives, and I feel sorry for them. I really do. Sometimes you just want to smack them up alongside the head and say, "Hey, man, look at what is going on!" But they just never see the proverbial elephant in the room. They never see why they have the issues they have. Husbands, they have marital problems, and they never see and never understand that whatever problems your wife has, it is because of your failure in leadership to be there for her. You know what Abimelech said to Abraham one time? He says to him, and this is an unsaved pagan guy, and he said to Abraham, "You are a covering to your wife's eyes." She should see things through your emulating Christ. It is not just you and the little details that Christ does. Never happened. Never happened.

I see it in there. I mean, it is a thing where multiple divorces. I mean, marital issues to kids having struggle with kids. Medical issues. I mean, one after the other. You would think at some point somebody would stop and say, "Why is all this going on with me?" Like Asa. He had a disease in his feet back in the Old Testament. He went everywhere to fix it instead of taking it to God, and you know what? He died. He died. Yet they just pretend they are okay and keep living their life doing their own thing. Fairy tale book, man. That is what you are reading.

Their emphasis is not on the Word of God. It is not on people. But it is on more money. It is on bigger things, more things. It is on the fun of life. It is on the things of the world. It is on cars. It is on boats. It is on motorcycles. It is on big homes. It is on making money. When disaster hits, you do not have enough room in your casket for all those things. But you think you do.

I love studying the Egyptians. I am not an Egyptologist, but I love studying the Egyptian culture. The dynasties, they can get a little crazy sometimes, but I love the idea of these guys, these pharaohs, thinking they are God. The great pyramids that they built and the great tombs that they built for them. We look at that and we think how pagan they were. They worshiped the sun. When they died, they had these, they were so afraid that somebody was going to break into their tombs and take, because they had all their treasures in there. They had boats. If they could have had them, they would have had a Ford F-150 to pull it. They had boats. They had gold everywhere. Jewels. They had jewelry. Statues. There were even some of those guys that buried their slaves. Their slaves were so faithful, they wanted to die with their pharaoh. They got sealed

up in that tomb and died of asphyxiation. You know why they did all that? Because they wanted that stuff for their afterlife. They wanted a big boat because they thought they were going to have to go across the great sea. They wanted their servants. They even got buried with their horses to pull their chariots. I love studying that because you have got to know, man, what a reality check it was the moment they closed their eyes in this life and wound up in the lake of fire, man. We look at that and we think how foolish, how stupid. Oh, give me a break. God's people do the same thing.

They say, "Well, I am a guy one time," honestly, this is a true story. This guy got buried sitting on his Harley motorcycle. He died. He was a member of a motorcycle club. He slept and drank and everything for a motorcycle, which is okay. I mean, none of this stuff is bad as long as you keep it in perspective. Not this guy. So when he died, his instructions were, they embalmed him. I do not know how they did it, but they put him on his motorcycle, and on the way to his burial, they drove him with his guys and his bikes behind him on a trailer all around town for his last trip. Then they buried this guy, sitting on his cycle, down in a 20-foot hole. Yeah, that is what we think. We think of that and how stupid. Are you kidding me? God's people live their lives like they are going to take it all with them too. Except the reality check for us will be in the judgment seat of Christ.

When disaster hits for these folks, they are back in church until they feel better. They are back in church until all the pain goes away. They are back in church until they, you know, it happens all the time. They are back in church for what? Three, four months or so, but when they start feeling better, right back to it again. See you next year. See you next disaster. I am telling you, you will never in a hundred thousand years, you or me, get honest with God until we first get honest with ourselves. That is really hard for most of God's people. You know what salvation is? Salvation is nothing more than you getting honest with yourself that you are a sinner before you can get honest with God that He can save you.

In our passage today, I find one of the three questions that God will ask every man and woman to get to see if they will be, number one, honest with themselves so they can be then honest with God. It is New Year's. I do not normally preach New Year's messages. This just happened to come with where we are at in John 18. I am sorry. I mean, maybe I could have preached on something else and put it back in later, but it fits for a New Year's message, but it was not my plan. I am just where I am at in John 18.

At New Year's, you see it everywhere. As I drove around town this last week, you saw that especially on the churches, all the marquees, "Happy New Year 2023," "A New Year." One of them said, "A New Year for a New You." Somebody else says, "Let this year make a difference." Somebody got really spiritual and put on their sign, "2023 will be better for thee." For a brief time, if you work with people any length of time, you know that Christmas and New Year is the most depressing time for most people. They are coming down to the end of the year. They have, and for a brief moment of time, they look back and see what a disaster their life has been. So they get depressed. Suicide rate is much higher during this time of the year than any other time of the year. The counselors' offices are full during this time with people who just cannot cope with the holiday because of the reality that their life, there is nothing to be happy about. It is just

that simple. For a brief time, very brief, man will look at himself for a fleeting moment and try to get honest with himself.

New Year's was on Sunday this year, was it not? New Year's Day. Monday, I went to the gym. The place was packed. Normally on Monday, early in the morning when I go, there are probably what, 15 people there, I know them all. There are a hundred people there. You could not even get on a machine. They are just everywhere. I was talking to a buddy of mine there, and we were kind of laughing about it, and he says, "Wow, look at all these people." I said, "Yeah, it is New Year's, man. Everybody looked in the mirror and saw how fat they were. Everybody looked in the mirror and saw how they knew what they needed to change." For a fleeting moment, just a fleeting moment, just a fleeting moment, just a moment, they all show up at the gym. Two weeks from now, it will be back to normal.

People, guys say, "Well, I am going to stop drinking." "I am just, you know, I am making a New Year's resolution. I am going to stop drinking." Somebody says, "I am making a New Year's resolution. I am going to stop smoking." Whatever it is. Somebody else says, "I am making a New Year's resolution. I am going to lose weight." It lasts about two weeks. Christians, they will say, "Well, I am making a New Year's resolution. I am going to get in my Bible more. I am going to get more into it and more discipline with it. I am going to..." Somebody else says, "I am going to get back to God." Somebody else says, "I am going to make some spiritual goals in my life. I am going to get my life back on track. I am making a New Year's resolution." Look, you do not need a New Year's resolution. You need a New Year's revolution. You need to dethrone whoever is on the throne now and put Jesus Christ on it. You need to get honest with yourself. I see it every year, man. I deal with it every year.

The first thing I want to point out to you here as we come down through this is, and I told you to mark this in your Bible, the fact that Jesus in verse 4 knew all things that was about to come upon Him. This was not a surprise to Him. You want to get this: when I lay out these three questions that you have to answer in your life, saved or lost, the Lord knows the answer to these three questions when He asks you those three questions. You say, "Why does He ask them then?" He wants to see if you will be honest with yourself and then be honest with Him.

Let us look at our first question here that God is going to ask man. In all my years of pastoring and preaching, I have never found anything better than these three questions. I mean, this is it, man. Everybody has to face them. For just a moment here, before we get into this, I better do this. Come over to James chapter 1. Let me show you what happens. Let me show you what happens when you start out at the gym or you make some great profession, "I am going to do this" or "I am going to do that." "I am going to quit this," "I am going to quit that," "I am going to get back to God." Let me show you why you probably will not.

James 1:22-25

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of

man he was.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

That is you looking into a mirror. We all know the verse, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?" It is not you, ugly wench. She did not like that. We all get, and you know, ladies, this is true. It is true with the guys. Hey, I have been in them. Yeah, I have been in a man room once or twice, and I watched these young kids in there, and they will stand in front of that mirror. Here is what they do. He wants to get it all right. He wants to get it all right. He wants to get it all right. See, I do not have that problem. I wash my hair with a washcloth. But anyway, he is, and I will stand there and watch him for a little bit, and he will just get it just right. Then I will walk up and go, "Blah, blah, blah, blah," on his head there, you know, and ruin his day.

When you look in the mirror, you see what you really look like. Now, please, ladies, do not take this wrong. This is not a slam in any way, shape, or form because I think you are beautiful either way. But this is why most women will not go out of the house without putting their makeup on. No, I am just saying, I do not think you need it. Well, one or two of you back there, maybe you need it, but I do not think, you know, but that is what we are. We look in the mirror, we get up in the morning, we walk in, guys are the same way. We walk in there and we think, "Oh, I cannot go out like this." So you know what you do? You pull out your body shop material, you know, and you buff, sand, paint, and, you know, paint your eyebrows. I mean, put everything up there, and you get it there, and then you look really good, and then you go get your clothes on, and then you stop and change tops four or five times. You know, then you watch your husband and say this, never mind what you ask your husband. But it is a thing where, you know what, we all do it. Guys do it. I mean, you go out on a wild drinking binge at night and get up in the morning to go to work and look at yourself in the mirror, and you know you are not looking at a perfect specimen. When you look into that mirror, it shows you. See? That is what he is saying here.

Verse 24 says, "He is like a man, beholding his natural face in a glass." Here it comes, "For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." You see the key there? He looks in the mirror, but then he goes his way. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty," the Word of God, "and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." You see, you have a natural looking glass in your house that shows you who you really are, but you have a spiritual looking glass in this Book. You look in the mirror, anybody, and do not like what you see, you want to change it for New Year's, but you will never be able to do it. But you have got to get honest with yourself before you get honest with God to really change who you really are.

VII. Three Great Questions from God

Our first question. This one will go back to Genesis chapter 3. Here we go. This one is dealing with Adam. I do not know if you are going to work with people and deal with people and you are going to, you know, get things in your life and help people. Adam will be our greatest study on human nature in all of the Bible. I do not know, Adam and Eve both. I do not know of any other

place that you can go that you will get all the fundamental issues of human nature like you do with these two.

This will be the first question asked by God in the Bible in Genesis chapter 3. But I have got to point out to you, the first question asked in the Bible was not asked by God. It was asked by the devil in Genesis 3. What? You want to mark that. There is a reason for that. Okay, moving on.

Adam and Eve, you know the story. They are in the garden. They are in fellowship with God. They meet with God seemingly every day. They walk hand in hand in the garden. The Bible says in the cool of the day that God was coming down to them. Then when you come down through here, one day there is a no-show. God comes down to have His time with them, and they are not there. They miss His Bible study. Then what happens, and I used to hate this when we had to do it back in the day, now here is where you find the first visitation program, God goes looking for them.

When you come down in Genesis chapter 3, verse 8, you know what you find? You find that they hid themselves from God. Now that is interesting. So let me just stop here to help you parents out. Let me tell you something, parents. You want to remember this. Do you know when you are going to, when you know you have an issue with your kids that needs to be dealt with? I am going to tell you. You know when you are going to have an issue with your kids? It is when they start hiding things from you. Hiding who they are with. Hiding where they are going. Hiding what they are doing. How many times over the years have I had a parent that thought their kids were suspect, while the kids were not home, went through their room and found all kinds of stuff that the kids had hid from them. So when you find Adam and Eve, who are like little children if you put it all together, and that is where the basic human nature falls. When they get out of fellowship with God and break fellowship with God, the first thing they do is they hide from God.

Would you allow me to develop this just a little bit farther? They hid from God, but they never left the garden. They hid from God, but there is no way, "Am I going out into that nasty world?" "I want all of the nice things of God's garden, but I am going to hide from Him." A lot of God's people are there. You folks who work with people, you know it is true. You know when you are working with somebody and it is going pretty good, and then suddenly something happens. Now you know there is a problem because they are hiding things from you. They do not want to meet. They do not give you a good reason. Things change.

Now parents, let me give you a little more piece of advice here, and this will help you maybe. People who want to hide things from you, your family, your kids, people you are working with, they will always do three things, and you will want to pay attention to this, and if you do not get nothing else out of this, take this home with you today. It is free.

1. The first thing that they will do is lie.
2. When you hold them accountable with a lie, the next thing they will do is deny.
3. When you get the goods on them and hold them accountable, once they lie and deny and they are trapped, the next thing they will do is deflect.

See? How many times have you nailed your kid for something and they say, "Well, so and so did it." "So and so's mom lets them do it." The parents stop for a minute and say, "Oh, what am I going to do?" Let me tell you what you are going to do. You say, "What in the world has that got to do with you? The fact that their mom and dad allows them to do something that is wrong, I am not going to." I am never allowing your kid to dictate what is right or wrong based on what somebody else is doing. You are the parent, you are the grown-up, do not get caught in that deflection. "Well, there are all other kinds of people who do this." So what? There are people that are mass murderers, there are people who are drug dealers. What is any of that? That is called deflection. It has nothing to do with you and the problem. But when you do not want to deal with it and do not want to get honest about it, you try to serve the ball to somebody else to draw the attention off of you. "Well, so and so does it?" Take that home with you.

Then God finds them and He calls out to them, "Adam!"

Genesis 3:9

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

Let us go back to John 18, verse 4 for a moment. Jesus knows all things. He knew exactly what tree or what bush he was hiding under. He knew exactly what he had done, and He knows exactly why he did not show up to meet with Him. Somebody asked me one time, "Well, if He knew all that, why did God say, 'Adam, where are you?' if He knew where he was?" He knew where he was. It is a question to see if Adam really knew where he was. So God will ask you, "Bob, where are you?" You see, He knows where I am at. He wants to see if I will get honest with Him. You cannot get honest with God until you get honest with yourself. That kid agrees with me, and I love that kid. He knew where Adam was. He wanted to see if Adam knew where he was. The first question in getting honest with God will be the one where you get honest with yourself.

I love this. He comes to Adam and He says, "Adam, where are you?" Finally Adam comes out, and He sees he has got a fig apron on or whatever he is wearing, and probably had a Levi's stamp on the back, and he comes out there, and He says, "Where have you been?" He says, "Well, where did you get this garment?" Just get up. He says, "Well, I was naked." He says, "What? Who told you you were naked?" Now here is a perfect chance for Adam to get honest. You know what he does? He lies, he denies, and now he deflects. "Well, gee, God, the woman You gave me." See how it works? "Well, gee, God, the woman You gave me," the woman You gave me, that is called deflection. He should have said, "I just screwed up, Lord. I will tell you what, this guy came over, you know, a husband, I think was his name, and he gave my wife something to drink and eat. Then she gave it to me, and I know, I know what the Word of God said. I screwed up, Lord. I am sorry. I do not know what to do, but I am coming to You. I am going to throw myself at Your feet, ask You to forgive me." But "the woman You gave me." See how it works? Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Deflection, deflection, we do it every day. I will not sing the rest of that song. "Whenever I get in trouble, I know it is the only way. I am going to throw myself at You. I am going to throw myself at You." Yes, I was making that up as I was going along. Be one for the old path boys to get going here. Where are you at today? See?

The second question God will ask man will be found in Genesis chapter 32. This question will be asked to Jacob. I said I do not know any place in the Bible that you can go to find any better study on human nature than Adam and Eve. That is true, but I am going to tell you this: I do not know anybody who could go to find a better picture of you and me than Jacob. Oh, Jacob is a pretty good picture of all of us. The name Jacob means "schemer." It means "supplanter." All through his life, he plays the game that so many of us play so well. He is a very good teacher. He plays the game that so many of us play so well as Christians. He lies and cheats and schemes his way to the top. The list is endless.

- In chapter 25, he schemes and steals the birthright.
- In chapter 26, he lies to Abimelech in another scheme.
- In chapter 26 through 34, he schemes again and gets the wrong wife.
- In chapter 27, now he schemes to get the blessing.
- In chapter 28:10, he runs from God.
- In chapter 29, he gets into another scheme with Laban over Rebekah, and he gets caught in that scheme with Leah.
- He schemes in chapter 30 for the cattle all his life.

He works all the angles to get what he wants and never one time considers in his life what God wants.

I love this. Chapter 32, verse 1. "Jacob went his way." You have got to mark that. He went his way. He had been going his way for a long time. We all have that time in our lives when we go our way, do we not? We all do. It is a thing where I am no different than you, and you are no different than me. We have all had times in our lives when we went our way and not God's way. Come on. Come on. Come on. So Jacob went his way, Genesis 32:1, and the angel of God met him. You bet he did. He went his way. This question deals with the day God gets you or me alone and asks you the great question number two. You see, number one was Adam, "Where art thou?" But He asked Jacob, "What is your name?" "Who are you?" Now that is a question we all have to answer. The first question is where you are at. The second question is who you really are.

Now that question is a little different than the first one. This one may be asked when you are on the operating table right before they put you under. This one may be asked when a doctor comes back with a report that says, "Not good." This one may come back when you are pinned under a car at four o'clock in the morning. This one may come in, the question may come in, when you are standing there looking down into the casket at the death of a child or a loved one or somebody, and through all the trauma and all the scheming and all the things that brought you where you are at, quietly, like a little wind blowing out of the east, you hear the voice that says, "What is your name?" Really.

You see, there are three reasons why bad things happen to us. I am not going to get into it. It is a sermon unto itself, and I have told you this through Bible study many times. But one of them is not very good. One of them is because of where we are at and not being honest with God.

I preach a lot of funerals. I have done them for years and years and years. I have learned that the best funerals you preach are funerals you preach through a man's life or a woman's life. But there

are some times I am called to do a funeral, and I would never say this, but I would rather not do it because I do not really have anything to say. So you have to preach the funeral around their life and not through their life. I have had some good ones. When John Gowans passed away and went home to be with the Lord, John was as good a man as you ever want to find, and that was a good sermon to preach that touched people's lives. A couple of last year sometime, when Bob Gregg went home to be with the Lord, he was at the top of his game. I had lunch with him the week before. We sat in this very church because he came over to see it, and we went to lunch, and we talked about what God was doing in his life. Others I look at and I think to myself, "What a waste."

I have done funerals where in the casket they put the guy's Bible that was open to his favorite verse. I have done funerals where you walk over and all the memorabilia that they put on the table has an open Bible on it with all the things that they did and loved about the Lord. Then I have done them where people put cans of beer in their casket. People put a joint in it. You see, the Egyptians really did not have anything on us. We just think they did. I have looked at many of those, and I am thinking, and honestly I will tell you, I do not do them outside of my church anymore. I used to. I have had people call me up, "You know, well, my brother died or my uncle died, and we do not have any place." I said, "Well, where did he go to church?" He said, "Well, he did not ever went to church anywhere, but we want you to do the funeral." Really? Can I preach what I really need to preach at that funeral?

My first funeral in Kansas City, I did not preach it. I just got to Kansas City. We had a guy on staff there. Some of you remember Harold Massey. Harold Massey was blind, but Harold Massey was a good guy. He is home with the Lord now. I would drive him places. He would make hospital calls. I would drive him, you know, I love spending time with him. Well, this is when, back in the day, at the Chiefs game, a guy got killed by being hit in the head with a thermos bottle. You may not remember this, but they banned thermos bottles from that day on. You cannot take a thermos bottle in. So Harold, I do not know how he got involved in it, but they asked him to preach the funeral. Harold said, "Would you take me to the funeral?" I said, "Sure, Harold, I will take you." So we went to the funeral, and I walked in there, and I will tell you what, I think there was ever, this guy was a biker, motorcycle guy. He had his casket and had his leathers on, you know, and the guys had all around there, you know. There were more motorcycle guys there than there were on Route 66 on the way to Hell Island. I mean, I am not kidding you.

Now Harold is blind. He cannot see. I had no idea. I thought Harold was just going to get up there and just talk about this and that and whatever, and we would go home. Well, the guy's mother, girlfriends, friends, and everybody was there, you know, and everybody is boo-hooing and crying and everything, you know. This guy is lost. Harold knows he is lost. I know he is lost. I am sitting there saying, "I wonder what Harold is going to do." So I walk him up to the platform. If I had been smart, I would have left him and got in the car. I walked him up to the podium. I almost said, "Turn the light on," like he needed the light. Put his mic on him, and I stood over here, and he got real quiet. He says, "Let me tell you some things that a blind man can see." He says, "There is a lot of weeping and crying going on today over the death of this young

man." He says, "I dare say if all these tears and crying were shed over his salvation before he died, we would have a time of joy today." I am thinking, "You just signed our death warrant. They are going to kill you, and they are going to kill me." I am moving farther away, and I am saying, "This guy picked him up on the road outside. I do not know who he is. He is a blind guy. I felt sorry for him. I put some money in his company, asked me to bring him here." You know, I am thinking, he is going to get us killed. You know what he did? He told them the truth. He told them the truth.

I am just not going to do it anymore. I just do not. I am just not going to. It is a thing where I just, I am just tired of the lies that you have got to propagate about somebody who cared nothing about God, cared nothing about the Bible, cared nothing about anything that God had done for him. He claimed to be a Christian. Here he is dead in a casket because he would never answer those three questions. He asked Adam, "Where art thou?" He asked Jacob, "What is your name?" God knows his name. He knows it is schemer. He wants to see if Jacob would be honest. You want to note, you want to get the little add-in to the story. You go over to Hosea 12, verse 4. You will find that God, this battle that is going on here between God and Jacob, is over Jacob's will versus God's will. God wanted one thing for him. Jacob wanted something else. You know, in the story, what God finally did, He had to reach down and give him a medical issue before he saw. He limped, the Bible says He touched the hollow of his thigh. He limped the rest of his life. I heard a message one time, a guy preached, and he said, out of this passage, he says, "Folks, we all make mistakes, and there is nothing wrong with mistakes because we all make them." I am not here to criticize anybody who has made a mistake because I made as many as anybody. But he says, "Here is what you need to do in the text: learn from your limp."

The question He asked him, "What is your name?" is the same question He is going to ask you and me. Your name now is either going to be like the Hebrew children when their name was of God, or it is going to be now the name that Babylon gave them. Who are we really today? Most of us will put off when it comes to the truth, getting right, and God touches us, and He does something in our life, and we know where we are at. We will do the same thing the two guys did in the Bible that illustrate human nature in a greater way. Old Pharaoh back there when he is confronted with God and all the plagues that God put on him and everything back there in Exodus chapter 8, verse 10, when Moses stuck his finger in his face and says, "Let God's people go." You know what he said? "I will do it tomorrow." Famous last words. Old Festus says, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." We put it off till tomorrow, but tomorrow never comes. We look in that glass and then we go our way and forget what manner of man we are.

Coming back to John chapter 18, we have our third and final question that God will ask all of us. So far, He asked Adam, "Where are you?" Then He asked Jacob, "Who are you? What is your name?" Now He asks some people here in John 18:4, "Whom seek ye?" Now that is a great question for all of us today going into the new year. Three great reality check questions on life.

- Where are you at?
- What is your name? (Who are you?)
- Whom seek ye?

What are we really seeking in life? Whom seek ye? A boyfriend? A girlfriend? A wife? A husband? Education? Fame? Riches? Position? Parties? A good night at the casinos? Drugs? Booze? Seeking some new thing to be happy with because you are so disappointed in life and do not really have anything that is real? I mean, we look back at our life and we say to ourselves, "Last year there was not one tangible thing that I can lay my hand on that I did for God. It was all about me." I mean, what are we going after in life? What is our pursuit? What are our priorities?

You do not want to miss this. I showed you how that Adam and Eve sinned and they hid from God, but oh, they did not want to leave church. They did not want to leave the garden. Now look at John chapter 18. Here is a second little gold nugget for you. When you look at this, these guys are actually seeking the Lord, but they are seeking Him for the wrong reason. Today, that is what most of God's people do. They just use God. They use the church. They will use their pastor. They will seek Christ, but they will seek Him in all the wrong reasons and all the wrong places, and that is what they do.

On Christmas cards, you know, Christian Christmas cards. I have seen this many, many times. I have seen it on billboards too. I have seen it on church marquees. You know, they will have a nativity scene. The manger, the stable, Mary and Joseph, cattle, sheep, the star over the manger, and then the wise men standing there, the three of them with their gifts, and they will put a little quote underneath when you get that whole picture there. It will say underneath, "Wise men still seek Him." Well, first of all, if we are going to be honest, the Christmas card is bogus. There was no star over the manger. The wise men did not go to the manger. It is the difference between Matthew 2 and Luke 2, but that is okay. It is just one more pretense, pretending something is real when it is not. I will tell you something else. Nobody seeks Him today. Nobody seeks Him today. Are you kidding me? "Whom seek ye?" Just like the boys in John chapter 18, most of God's people are seeking Him for the wrong reason and the wrong place. "Whom seek ye?" Christ? The Word of God?

Last weekend, New Year's was a high point of our year. You got to see in the lives of the young men and the young ladies that your investment and tremendous support, how you gave of yourself in their lives, and what happens in what you taught these kids that preached is what we are going to continue to try to do this year. They were only here because of what you did, and you taught them to seek the right things the right way in the right place. I know I could bring up 11 and then another 11 and then another 11 and another 11, but that night or that weekend you saw 11 changed lives because somebody helped them find the right way. Somebody helped them seek the right things because in life, folks, everybody seeks something. In life, everybody follows a man. You just need to make sure you are following the right one, and you need to be that man or that woman in these young men and women's lives that are coming into this church, into the couples that are coming in that are a little older than that, no matter how old they are. "Whom seek ye?" What are you looking for in life?

Let me tell you, watching these kids, those special times, they do not come along very often. I sat there and listened to those guys and listened to those testimonies and watched them get up there Saturday night and Sunday morning, and I thought to myself, "They are only here because they seek Him, and you helped them seek the right things." I know that they all struggled. I know I

had issues. None of them were perfect, but look at them. They are the best of the best. Why? Because of you. Because you saw in them what God saw in them, and I am sure when you dealt with them, you had to correct them. You had to move them this way or move them that way. All because you wanted them to seek the right things. That is our job. What God called us to do.

There you have it. The three great questions God asks to all men and to all women. "Where are you at?" "What is your name?" "Who are you?" And "Whom seek ye?" Before you can answer those three questions to God, you have got to get honest with yourself because that is where it starts. Looking like Adam, Jacob, and these men, getting honest about what you are doing and why you are doing it. I will tell you that when I saw that in there, I thought to myself, "You know, I do not know of three greater questions that we all have to face in life. Every one of us." Whether we make it in life or whether we do not, spiritually speaking, is going to depend on your honesty, not with God, but first with yourself, then with God, and then God can get something done with you.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. We do love You so much. Thank You for all You do for us. Thank You for the fine people here. Thank You for the good weekend You gave us last week. Thank You for the young men and young ladies that just blessed my heart to watch. Watch what changes You put in their life. Watch how well they articulated the things that You gave them. How that they could look at the Bible and pull out content and use the things in life that we all identify with, that they could make it so clear, the parallels between our life and what God has for us. Those young men were not born like that. They were born sinners just like all of us. But there came a time in their life when they trusted Christ as their own personal Savior. Then God put a man or a woman in their life. Help them to seek the right things in the right places. Help them to never forget who they really are and always keep them aware of where they need to be at. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.