

John 20-21

Sunday 5/14/2023

SEC: Introduction and Review of "Prove All Things"

I may take a few weeks in between to preach a couple of messages that I want to preach to you, but then we will most definitely get into a verse-by-verse study of the book of Psalms. That will be a great time for us to get into the book together.

Last week in John 20:24-29, we looked at the story of Thomas and his wanting proof that Jesus really had risen from the dead. He was not willing to take what the others had said to him. I explained to you historically that I understand what Jesus had said to him about the resurrection. I get that. Dealing with it in a historical context, that is very clear. But I took the aspect from a New Testament standpoint and developed it just a little bit further. I showed you how that even in Christ's time, right after His resurrection, and certainly in Paul's ministry, many false teachings were popping up, many false Jesuses, many false gospels.

I showed you that a great New Testament principle for all of us is how to accept the things that we hear today and that we see today, 2,000 years after all the events took place. Men are going to tell you today, you are going to find on the internet and in the books that are written, volumes and volumes of things about the Bible, Christ, and all of the things in Christianity, and much of it is not true. I based all of this for us, and more importantly for me years ago, on 1 Thessalonians 5:21, where it simply says:

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

I talked about establishing a chain of evidence, both historically and biblically, that will keep you on track and keep you from getting messed up. Thursday night, one of our ladies from online, from out in Oregon, texted in a question about how to deal with Jehovah's Witnesses that she is dealing with. We took the time to look at that. Simply, any cult like that you are going to get into, the reason why that person or people have gotten involved in that is because they never proved it out. They never proved all things. If you were honest about it and followed the Bible in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, you never would become one. It goes back to staying as exact as you can with the Word of God.

Last week, I laid out for you five areas in the Bible that we as Christians need to prove, to "prove all things":

1. Our relationship with God, from Malachi 3.
2. The will of God, from Romans 12.
3. The sincerity of our love, in 2 Corinthians 8:8.
4. The work that we need to be doing for God, Galatians 6:4.
5. To prove our own selves, in 2 Corinthians 13.

This is the proof text of our Christian life, who we think we are and then who we really are, and how important it is to prove all things.

SEC: Purpose of John's Gospel and New Testament Ministry

Today, we are going to enter into our last story. You remember I told you from one of the questions in Bible study that John 20 was broken down into six stories. Today, we are going to look at the final story in John 20, and then we are going to move on into John 21. I am going to show you an amazing thing: how the two go together. I think here again, we talked about the hand of God in the Word of God. You are going to see today an incredible picture of how the New Testament ministry is to operate in reaching people.

First off, I want to read John 20:30-31, the last two verses. Here is what it says:

John 20:30-31

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Let us pray. Father, thank you for the Lord Jesus. Thank you for the folks that have come out today. Thank you for a day that we can honor the mothers that were so important in our lives, and Lord, so dear to us. We just thank you, Father, for the day to be able to make them feel special. Take the Word of God today, touch our hearts, help us to close out this great book in a great way that we can see it and the majesty that it really is displayed. We will thank you and praise you in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

At the end of John, you will find the last story in John 20. I have told you this when we started the book: it really defines the book of John for us as to God's intended purpose for that book. John's purpose, from John 20:31, is to define the Lord Jesus Christ to the world, define Him as the Son of God, and then to show man through the book that Jesus Christ is the only hope for our salvation. You are going to find that that is really what the book focuses on.

We know that John writes five books. We went through those. Two of those books are key that are written to you and me. The Gospel of John is for our salvation. It is a great book to see and understand, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," every aspect. But then we also have 1 John. Remember I told you that where the Gospel of John will lay out for you our salvation, 1 John, after we are saved, lays out for us our fellowship and our relationship with Christ.

I also showed you how the Gospel of John is different from any other book, any other Gospel that you have. Matthew, Mark, and Luke have their places, but John is set apart from them. It is always a good practice when I deal with somebody who just got saved. They always ask me, "I want to begin to read the Bible, where should I start?" I always guide them to read the Gospel of John. I think the Gospel of John is a great place for a baby Christian to start when they get saved and to start to read the Bible. It is an easy book to read. There are not a lot of things that you have. You can just follow the flow of what is going on, but it gives you a sense of what you have

just gotten into. It is really the first book that you will read after getting saved that the Holy Spirit of God will begin to open up some things and to show you.

Another great book that goes along with John will be the Book of Romans. You will find that in many places. I know this is true at Bearing Precious Seed, where they print all of the Bibles. Sometimes they will not want to give out a complete Bible, but they want to get to the books of the Bible that are really impacting people. So they will put a little book together with John in it and Romans in it. John is the book that shows you salvation. Romans is the book that shows you what we believe after salvation. You will find that many, many times.

It is things like I want to show you today, and I have done a number of these, but it is things like I want to lay out for you today that makes me love the Bible above everything else and every other book that was ever written. We talked about it a couple of weeks ago, doctrinal consistency. There is a mind behind the King James Bible that is unlike any other book that you are ever going to read. There is no other Bible on the market put out by man that can even begin to compare with the mind behind the Bible that most of you hold in your lap today. God's hand is throughout the Word of God. We begin to see the real purpose of the Gospel of John going from John 20 to John 21 in a very unique way.

Last week, we talked about the hand of God in your life. How important that is. How important not only is it to have the hand of God in your life, but how important is it to recognize the hand of God in your life? Being able to actually see that God is using you. Not just like a little mouse in a maze with cheese at the end as you bump your way through the maze to find it at the end. No, clearly understanding your purpose, clearly understanding your perspective, clearly understanding that God has something that He wants you to do and His hand directly in your life guiding you every way. I cannot tell you what a great thing that is in God's people's lives, that you certainly understand that His hand is in your life. But I want to tell you that it takes seeing the hand of God in the Word of God first. When you see the hand of God in the Word of God first, then in time you will be able to see and understand the hand of God in your own life. I do not mean to be coy in puns, but the two go hand in hand. That is just the way it works.

In John 20:30-31, which we just read, you have the purpose of the book of John, and that is to win men to Christ. I have told you this many times. Now today, we are going to begin John 21. He has placed, and this is what I love about the Bible, He has placed by design a great story on winning men and women to Christ. We got the purpose of the book as we end in John 20:30-31. Now we move into John 21 and we see the model. We talked about this last week, the readiness to will out of 2 Corinthians 8, having a willing mind and the performance that God will do with us. When you get into John 21, you now see clearly how we are to take what we learned in John 20. Now we begin to do with it what the Gospel of John was intended to do, and that is reach men and women for the Lord Jesus Christ.

SEC: The Fishing Expedition: John 21 and New Testament Soul-Winning

Let us read John 21:1-14, and we will come and make some comments on it.

John 21:1-14

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.

There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.

And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.

As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

Simon Peter went up and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not their net broken.

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

It is very clear to me from our Thursday night questions and Bible study questions that many of you are in the process of doing what I encourage you to do throughout all of our teaching, and that is developing your trained eye. Being able to look at something and see it and go past just the letters and the sentences and go behind it to see if there is something else there. You may not always be able to figure it out at this point in your life, but you know that there is something there and you ask the question. That is how you learn. You never learn anything by not asking questions. That is how you learn. That is how you grow. I am seeing that in so many of you as you are coming through the Bible.

Here is a story, and I ask you this, what do you see in this? This is a little more than a verse that we have had on the third, but what do you see in this story? I already gave you a key. I already told you that John 20, as we closed it out, really dealt with the purpose of the book. And now it is just like God to show you the purpose of something and then to give you an illustration of that purpose. That is what He has done in John 21. I am going to take the time to lay it out section by section, verse by verse, so that you can see this. But I ask you this, as I read it, what do you see there? What pieces do you pick out? What red flags pop up that should mean something to you? I will point them out to you as we go along because for me, this just is not about giving you a sermon. I want to teach you through anything that I teach you, the way you look for things, the way you can build things in your own life.

What you have here will be after He gives us the book on John, the book on the Son of God and the Gospel and Salvation. In John 21, He opens with an incredible story and picture of New Testament ministry and New Testament soul-winning. We now see what our performance should be. You hear me say this all the time, and this is nothing new, but the ministry is people. The ministry is not a building. The ministry is not some program. The ministry is people. When we began to train many of you to work with me in ministry, we called it the "people ministry." I called it that because I never wanted you to forget that ministry is people. The purpose of ministry is to reach them with the Word of God.

Fundamentally, churches, pastors, preachers, it is really just about two basic things. Everything else that we would come up with will be added in after these two are done. We are told in John 15:16, He 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.

Everybody here, if you are saved, you have been ordained. That ordination is to take the Gospel of John, show people Christ, show people His salvation, and that you bring forth fruit. The Bible goes on in other places and tells us that "prove all things by their fruits you shall know them." It is an incredible first aspect. That will be the Gospel of John: win them to Christ. But then the second half of John 15:16 says, "I have ordained you and you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." That will be the Epistle of 1 John. You develop people after you get them saved and you train them.

Reaching them and training them is the job of the church. It is the job of every one of us. I told you last week and over the last couple of weeks, we took a couple of walks down history lane about Baptists, about Baptist churches, about great Baptist preachers. I told you and tried to show you how we got to where we are, how it all developed. There is a pattern in John in almost everything that you are going to look at, whether it is in the Bible, whether it is with Christ, whether it is in history, whether it is in America, whether it is in Europe, it does not matter. History follows a pattern. The pattern that I tried to show you was the pattern of why we are a Baptist church, why we are not a neo-evangelical mindset and taking "Baptist" off our name like

so many, why we are still preaching today what I have preached for the last 50 plus years of my ministry. It is a thing where I wanted you to see that.

Having said that, as good as they were, and we know that the transition changed and it all fell apart and now they are gone today, one of the things that they failed to do, and this is before most of your time, you will understand it, Eddie will understand it, Jean will understand it, Diane will understand it. You older folks that have been around for a little while, John, I am sure you and Betsy see it. The emphasis was on soul winning. We had all kinds of programs to win people to Christ. They would sit around in staff meetings and come up with all kinds of plans to get people to come to church. Their purpose was that they wanted to get them saved. Now I cannot speak to the legitimacy of their desire to get them saved because there may have been some ulterior motive back in the day; there were plenty of them. But that is what they did.

You know what we had, you remember this, remember "Friend Day"? Bring a friend to church. You brought a friend to church, and then the preacher preached, and you hoped you got people saved. We had Friend Day. We had Mother's Day, which was always a big day. Bring your mom, all these special days that we had. We had "Heaven Sunday," and you were supposed to bring everybody to church, and the pastor was going to talk about Heaven. I remember being in those staff meetings, and I said, "Well, if you are trying to get people saved, I would not talk about Heaven Sunday. I would have a Hell Sunday," but they did not want to be that direct. The emphasis was on bringing them and getting saved.

But the downside of that was once you got them saved, you never trained them. There was no discipleship. There was no working with people. There are many churches that follow that same pattern today. They were told back then that if you come Sunday morning and Sunday night, Wednesday night, and you tithe, your life will be just fine. If you do that, the pastor would tell you, and I have had him tell me this, that "the people will figure it out." Of course, it got out of balance. We put so much emphasis on people getting saved, but nobody ever got disciplined. Nobody ever got grounded in the Word of God.

I do not know how many times I have seen it. Churches were so hard up for people to work because they were not training anybody. When a new guy came down and got saved, I mean, 30 seconds ago, the bus pastor, the children's ministry guy, somebody would be over there slapping him on the back and say, "You need to get involved in ministry." No training, no teaching, no grounding. Put him into work. Then after a year, when they got burned out and they could not function anymore and they left the church, what did the churches do? We blamed them. We never blamed ourselves.

I saw it. I watched it. I have been told by several pastors over the years that the discipleship lessons that we use here that I wrote in 1977, I have been told that many of these guys that we went to their churches, that it was the opening for their churches to the next level for American churches to ground their people. I do not know if that is true or not. I do not really care. But we did back then send teams around the country, around the world, taking those discipleship lessons, and probably over 300 churches we did. Many of you were part of that, you older folks. We went to at least 20, 30 different countries.

I look at what is going on over there in Ukraine, and everybody looks at it as Russia invading in the war. I look at it totally different because I sent five teams into the Ukraine in Bible-believing churches to teach those people, ground those people into the Word of God. That is how I look at it. Where are those people today? How did that help them? Are those churches still thriving? I remember when the wall came down, the Berlin Wall, and all the communist countries like Romania and Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which is no longer around, but all of those churches and Christians now were free. We were right there. I will tell you, I had teams crossing the Atlantic, going over to Europe and coming home, taking those people the Word of God. Those lessons have been put into over 20 different languages from South America to Korea, to Japan, to Europe, to Russia, all because it was a thing where we have to ground those people. It was something that God took and God used, and you were part of it.

I remember several years ago, Mike Veitch from New York, we went up to his church. Remember when we preached the anniversary up there, many of us? Mike has got a burden for the Philippines. He has basically just bought that country. He goes over there two or three times a year. He texted me a while back, and he was at the airport getting ready to come home, and he just wanted to thank me. He told me that they had a pastors' conference. They had over 150 Filipino pastors. All these churches were using the material that we gave him on discipleship and teaching these guys how to disciple their people. Winning them to Christ is not the only answer. He says, "I have ordained you that you bring forth fruit, but your fruit needs to remain." We did that, as I said, in over 300 churches. Some of you here today were part of that. Here today is a story that will show us both concepts of that: winning them, training them, and then keeping them.

The art of building a New Testament church will be nothing more than the art of building New Testament people. Making an investment in their life. Most pastors, they want to make an investment in their building. They will build a building, \$60 million, and that is where all their money goes into the investment. It is not about the building. It is about the people sitting here. That is where the money needs to be invested back into. That is what you need to do. You need to find every avenue to get into a person's life to help them, not only the Gospel of John, find salvation, but then the Epistle of 1 John, building a relationship with Christ. I have said it many, many times. It is simply building a Philadelphia church in the midst of a Laodicean church age. The church is people. The ministry is people. It is not just winning them, but then establishing them.

SEC: Aggressive Fishing: Reaching Different Demographics

Now look at John 21:3. Peter says, "I go a fishing." And everybody else says, "Great idea. Me too." Everybody likes to go fishing. I do not know if you ever saw this, but this is where when you look at this with your trained eye, this is the first thing you should have caught. We just saw in the previous chapter what the Bible says the Gospel of John is for. Now Peter says, "I go a fishing." The moment I read that, I remembered something that really begins to set a context for this story. That simply is, did you ever notice when Jesus called His first apostles? Every one of them was a commercial fisherman. Every one of them. Then He tells them a little bit later on, you are probably with me now, He tells them in Matthew 4:19, "I will make you fishers of men."

Now the story begins to develop. Now He is setting up a model for us in winning men and women to Christ.

I must confess to you, I am not much of a fisherman. I do not have the patience for it. My style of fishing would be a boat with a bucket full of hand grenades, blow them to the surface, and then pick them up. My dad was a fisherman. Sharon, my sister, listening this morning, Darlene, we both know that Dad was a fisherman. Darlene, you remember back there, I do not even know if it is still there. I tried to get an aerial view of it, but I could not find it. But remember down right from your house, down that path, you had that pond down there. When we would go back there, my dad would fish that all day long. It was filled with a lot of big fish, and he would just have a ball. I do not have the patience for fishing. I just do not. I mean, you know me, I cannot stand still 15 minutes. I just do not.

In our church here, we have some great fishermen. Troy is a great fisherman. He has got secret places that the CIA tries to find out where he is fishing through satellite. He knows how to fish. I did not know Eddie was going to be here, but Eddie is a fisherman. He knows how to fish. Steve Rakeen is a great fisherman. His boy Matt is a better fisherman than Steve is. Bubba and Donnie are great fishermen. Josh is a great fisherman. John Christensen is a great fisherman. Norbert is a great fisherman. We have them in this church. They know how to catch fish.

But today in fishing, stay with me. You would all agree we are way past the worm, bobber, and a cane pole for fishing. That is more like passive fishing today. Real fishermen go after the fish. To me, it is amazing. I do not know anything about this. I mean, I do not know a lot about nothing in life. I see it. I enjoy it. Sometimes I have to pretend I know so people will think I am smarter than as stupid as I am. But, I do not understand things. When it comes to football and baseball and hockey and golf, I mean, I know nothing about that. I mean, I really do not. For years and years, I could not wonder why you had to be an umpire. You had to have the name Al. They all got Al in their hat. Then somebody told me that is the American League. I did not know that. I had no idea. I do not understand how it all works.

When it comes to fishing, it is a whole new world today. You have bass boats. When I grew up, you had luxury boats, pontoon boats, rowboats, canoes. You had cabin cruiser boats. But today they have bass boats. A bass boat is a boat for fishing. You do not pull skiers behind it. It is designed for fishing. You do not have an electric, you do not have a gas-powered motor on the back. You sit up high on it. It has places to put your fishing lines. If you want to troll, you put it back here. Open up the bottom. It is a place for your beer. Open up the bottom. Throw your fish in there. Keeps them alive. You drive it around with your gas motor, and then you get to where the big ones are, and the gas motor scares it. So, you know what you have now? You have a trolling motor. You know what a trolling motor is? It is an electric motor that makes no noise. You sneak in on the fish. Fish are down there, just checking it out. If they heard a big propeller coming through the water, they are gone. But they do not hear that. You sneak up on them.

I cannot believe it. They have, these boats have sonar on them. You can actually look on the sonar screen and see where the fish are. That is pretty incredible. They have depth gauges. You can see how deep the fish are, so you know how to put where your line is. That is incredible.

They have temperature gauges. It tells you where the temperature is, where the fish are at. Add a couple of depth charge racks, and I am in. That is like a World War II destroyer, man. You have all this stuff. It is for fish. You are not looking for U-boats. You are not looking for Russian satellites or Russian submarines. It is fish. High tech today. High tech.

It is important the time you go to fish. Some fish do not bite in the morning. Some fish bite at night. Some fish are seasonal. It is the time of day. It is what part of the lake you go. Now you guys think I know what I am talking about. I looked this up on the internet yesterday. There are all kinds of different lures that you use. You have jigs. You have spinners. You have fake minnows. You use real minnows. You have those things that float that look like a fish, and you throw it out there about 30 feet, and then you just jig it like it is jumping across the water. You have silver spinners that spin through the water. A fish sees that. He is going to take that over some worm on a hook holding its breath. They catch fish. Sometimes they use cheese. I catch two dogs doing that every day in the kitchen. They love their cheese. Sometimes they use crickets. Sometimes they do fly fishing. They try to catch catfish, bass, trout, walleye, crappies, bluegills, carp, sturgeon, all different kinds of fish. You just do not go out anymore with a bobber and a pole and a worm and a hook and throw it out there and catch a lot of fish. You have to go after the fish you are trying to catch. Hang tight!

In ministry and reaching people, being fishers of men, there are a lot of comparisons here. Most churches, sadly to say, most pastors, sadly to say, still just use a worm and a cane pole on a bobber and a hook, and occasionally they will catch something. But remember, the key to reaching people and the ministry is people will always be to understand the culture that they live in. It depends on how you fish for them. Then using the fishing tackle of the Word of God to penetrate that culture. This will be the number one failure of churches and pastors today: not getting into or transcending into the culture of the people that they are trying to reach, becoming one with them through the Word of God.

Years ago, I saw this concept and knew if I was going to be successful in building a church and reaching people, I was going to have to go after men with an aggressive program of fishing. None of this that I do is by accident but by design. I knew that God put young men and young ladies out there, and our church is filled with them. When pastors come in or they talk to me or they have come through here, they just marvel at the young couples and the young people that we have here. Most churches today, where the people are over 70 years old, it is like a dinosaur graveyard. I realized that if I was going to build it, I was going to have to go after men with an aggressive program of fishing. I wanted to reach young men and young women because I knew that that was my calling. But I also knew that that is what is the lifeblood of any church. It keeps the church from growing stagnant.

The Bible says in Proverbs 20:29, there are two great principles here that I see that need to be in every church. First of all, He says:

Proverbs 20:29

The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head.

You see, it takes both. I thank God every day for the older men of this church who work with me working with you young guys. They teach you how to preach. They work with you here. They help you through your tough times, and they are invaluable to me. They are the great unsung heroes. They do not ever get called out. Nobody ever knows who they are basically. You are just the balance of this church that we have, the young men that have the strength, but we have the older men who the gray head represents the things that you have learned in life and from the Word of God that you can help me take these younger guys and build them and bring them along. It is invaluable. It is invaluable.

So I developed, understanding that, I developed outreach ministries around the things that they wanted to do in their lives, like a fisherman would use the lure to try to hook them. We do not do it here today, but years ago, many of you probably remember this. We had basketball programs. We had probably 30-40 basketball teams, all intramural, where you invited young guys in to play basketball, and we would use those as an outreach and win many of them to Christ. Some of the boys that are out there preaching right now, pastoring churches today, came in through that program. We use softball today, still we do, and back then we not only had softball, but we had a little league, and we probably had 60 teams at its height of little league teams where all my people were coaches and assistant coaches, just bringing families in and reaching them for Christ. We still do volleyball. We just finished it. What a great opportunity that is. These are things that you build to penetrate your culture. This is aggressive fishing. This is going after your culture.

Some of you remember the old days. Remember when we had the COPS ministry? COPS, C-O-P-S. It was an acronym for Counseling Officers Professional Services. We actually ran a counseling service for police officers, firemen, whatever the case. Remember how many times we trained them how to rappel off a 20-story building? How many times we worked with them? Then we developed the Fort Osage Tactical Training Association. We got some guys out of the police department that were ex-Navy SEALs and ex-Special Forces guys. We all piled in together, and for the next four or five years, every year we held a SWAT team competition out there and brought teams of police officers and state troopers in from all over the three-state area and had a chance to witness to them. Had a chance to help them bring them through. That is aggressive fishing. That is seeing a need and then creating an environment to get into their world. We did a softer program on that a couple of times called the Iron Man, not to the extent that we did it out there. These guys were hard chargers, and it was an incredible time to get into their world and get into their lives.

It is the same thing we are going to do with Memorial Day. I get you to bring people to Memorial Day. We get to meet them. We get to feed them. We do not charge them. Show me another church that if you use the bathroom, you have to put money in for the toilet paper. I mean, come on. They do not want to give you anything, and people are so suspect of churches today. A real Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, evangelistic church that is trying to reach men, it will not be about what you give us. It will be about what we give you. Making you feel special. So we have Memorial Day picked up. We will pack it out just like we did for Easter, like we did for Halloween, like we did for Christmas. You did not see anybody out there with a gate saying,

"There is two dollars to get in," and then, "I want a bottle of water." Over at the Royals Stadium, a bottle of water, that will be nine dollars. Hotdog forty dollars. You pay forty dollars for a hot dog that has been sitting there for nine hours. You do not do that. That is not what you do. That is not good fishing.

We trained you, trained others in time to see how it is done and how it is built. To look at the ministry as a team concept. Most athletic ministries that are even remotely by churches are Christian. Their philosophy is, "Yeah, we are going to get a softball team together, we are going to get a volleyball team together. We are going to play ball, and then we are going to figure out how to get the gospel to them." Not here. We are going to put teams together. We are going to give you the gospel, and then we are going to figure out how to play softball. We put you guys in charge, you girls in charge. It is part of your leadership training. It is part of putting everything back together. That is no accident. I saw that years ago. I may not know how to fish in a boat. I know how to fish for men.

The next thing I wanted to reach were parents with kids in my fishing expedition. I understand the challenges that parents face today. In the world that we live in, they certainly need all the help that they can. The church will never replace you as a mom or dad or parents. It can never do that. But it certainly needs to be your ally in support. I have seen parents, bless their hearts, that are good people, but they make some terrible mistakes when it comes to their kids. They will do things that in their mind they think that they are helping their kids. They are going to get closer to their kids. But in actuality, all you are doing is assuring that you will never reach your kids. Helping families. So we developed our elementary department. We have it from the nursery to the Bible Buddies, to the Bible Explorers, to the Timothy, to the high school class, five divisions. That all to help parents navigate. We are not there to take over your child. We are there to support you as the parent on the principles of the Word of God.

Then we have our camping program. I have been doing camps for 50 plus years. I personally have preached probably over 100 camps in my time, two or three a year anyhow. When I first came to Kansas City is where I had my first camp. You were there. Where is Penny Hansinger at? You were there. Penny has been doing cooking and doing things for as long as I can remember. Steve Bracken was there. I remember Steve. He was a pistol. But you remember those days. It was the first time you all heard Mel Sabaka. Remember. Brought my father to the Lord to do the first camp. It was a rough time. That was camp. I had all the Sunday school teachers' kids, the deacons' kids, and everybody, and at that camp, they all got saved. Now you want to know, going back to mom and dad, who are these big prestigious people in the churches, and their kids were lost and going to hell, and I had a camp and they got saved. I was not the most popular guy on the block. Praise the Lord they got saved. That was in 1977.

Camps are one of the hardest areas of ministry. There is a delicate balance of time, the Bible, emotions, their age. Then you throw in the Holy Spirit of God trying to do this and the devil trying to undo it. It is a balance that has to be almost balanced hour by hour. But it builds kids. I would suggest to you moms and dads that nothing stand in the way of your child being at the camp this year. Do not let money be involved in it. Do not let anything. We will. It is one of those things that what we always try to do, and we did it for years, was that we did it and we did

it all down through my other history, that we take those kids and try to build them around the leadership in the youth department that they can hitchhike off of that and build off of it for the rest of the year. It is just that simple. It is a thing where you know, you get those kids away from the world, away from their phones, away from their music, away from their friends, and for four days they are just bathed in the Word of God. You can get something done. Do not let that not happen to your child this year. At the same time, it is great for building leaders. All of you young couples that are going and you young singles that are going, it is one of the greatest training platforms that I have for you. You counselors and staff, everybody working together for the same purpose, no matter what the job is that you are doing.

So I saw that, and then I saw the issues of marital problems. Young couples' marriages are under attack today. It is a thing where we need to have people who can take a young couple who are struggling, sort it out, figure it out. Many times they get into marriage, which it was designed by God, and they simply try to run it by another system that God never intended that they are run by, and it will not work. So what do you do? People ministry. What do you do? We take them. We develop them. We bring them. We get them to the point where, and I know sometimes you have to wear a stripe and a whistle. I get that. But you begin to work with them and separate it out and show them his role and her role and how to make the marriage work. That is what you do. That is aggressive fishing. That is not just standing back and saying, "Well, here, read this book on marriage, and it will help you." I have a book on marriage, several of them I wrote, and in the last one I did, I told John, I said, "I want it. This is it. This is going to be my end book of marriage, and I want the cover to say it all." So we have a wedding cake, then you know every wedding cake you have the bride and the groom and a little plastic statue up top. You are going to have one of those, Caleb. You do not know you are getting married on Sunday. You better figure it out. But you have a little plastic people up there, and she looks so sweet, and he looks so dapper, and it is like, "Oh, this is going to be good." No, no, no. When I put my book, you have the cake and you have the two, but she is pointing a handgun and he is pointing a rifle at each other. That is where marriages are today. People get married and not even understand marriage, and then they struggle. You know how you help them? You fish for them. You fish for them. You bring them in through athletics. You bring them in through camp. You bring them in through whatever. You fish for them because we are fishers of men.

Then I like the older folks. I am not leaving you out. You older folks, as far as I am concerned, when I say older folks, I mean 60s, 70s, 80s. You represent the greatest generation of this country. You represent this country in your age when things were the way they were supposed to be for the most part. You have a sense of decency. You have a sense of good work ethic. You have good morals. You know what is going on in the world today is wrong. You will never attend Gay Pride Week. I mean, you go over to John Knox Village and walk down those hallways about 11 o'clock at night, and you do not hear any acid music coming out from under the doors. You do not hear any Elvis Presley rock and roll. Now you may hear a little bit of Boxcar Willie, but that just goes with the time. They are a different breed. They are called old-fashioned. They are called behind the times. No. They have just been around for a while longer than you, and they have proved some things that you have not yet proved. They have a comparison that Haggai 2:3 talked about, and they are drawn to a church that represents their old paths. Clear Bible preaching. The

old hymns that you grew up in love instead of all this new stuff that comes out. We are to be fishers of men. That is my fishing expedition.

SEC: Using the Darkness for Light

As our story here develops in John 21, we see some great lessons about what I just laid out for you to be fishers of men. We are told today, I have heard this for years, that building a church is such a very hard thing today. I have heard guys use that excuse all my life. Now that may have been true if you went to Europe to build a church in Germany, France, or one of those countries, or on a mission field back in the day that we have talked about, but it has never been true in America. You know why? Because America for over 200 years has been bathed in the Holy Spirit of God working through this country. There has been more awakenings by the Holy Spirit of God given to America, seven of them, than any other country in the history of the world except the nation of Israel. Guys will use the state of the world and Christianity as an excuse for their failure and because they are just lousy fishermen.

I know the world is a mess. Do not kid me. I know Christianity is a mess, and as I stand here before you, I realize that all across this world and certainly in America, the lights are going out and darkness is descending upon Christianity and America. But can we learn the lessons of history for just a moment? All that is going on today, folks, if God is who He said He is and His mission in the Gospel of John is to reach the world, then all that is going on today is that we are entering into another Dark Ages. The Dark Ages started in history from 500 AD and lasted up to the Reformation, 1500-1600 AD. This is what is happening today. In both cases, you have no Bible, and the Roman Catholic Church prevails and squashes everything that is biblical when it puts the lights out. It is no different.

But here is the key. Now, you can look at it as a doomsbury. You can look at it as, "Oh, what am I going to do?" You can look at it and say, "Oh, I am so fearful," or you can be scared of the dark, or you can use the dark. Bob Jones Sr. used to say, and I never really understood this until the last maybe four or five years of what is going around here, he used to say, "If the devil is going your way, ride him." I never really understood that, but I understand it today. I will use the darkness. I am not afraid of the darkness because I understand history when the darkness came in the last time. I am not afraid of the darkness, but I will use the darkness. Darkness will always illuminate the smallest light.

Some of you guys have been in the Navy on a ship, and you know probably the darkest place on planet earth is the mid-watch on a ship when you are running under a blackout and there are no lights anywhere on the ship. You are on the bridge with a pair of binoculars, and it is like you are looking into a coal mine. It is pitch black, but do you know what they tell you? When you are on the mid-watch, no smoking. You cannot light up a cigarette, just a little cigarette, because the Navy tells you that that little cigarette in the pitch blackness of that night can be observed by another ship over 10 miles away. You know what happens? The darkness will illuminate the smallest light. So I will use the darkness.

You see, I still believe what Jesus said in John 12:32:

John 12:32

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

And then He said in Matthew 5:14:

Matthew 5:14

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

If I get enough of you to turn the lights on in the darkness of this country, as it descends and the lights go out, if I could just get half of you to turn the lights on, that light will shine and cut through the darkness like a cigarette on the bridge of a destroyer for 10 miles in the middle of mid-watch. Because the darkness will illuminate the smallest light. You use the darkness. Too many people fear the wrong things. You fear the country. You fear you are going to lose your money. You fear you are going to have to buy an electric car. You fear you are going to lose your dishwasher. You fear you are going to lose this. You fear you are going to lose your money in the bank. What you ought to fear is the judgment seat of Christ. Excuse me for yelling. It is part of my charm. The darkness.

Now learn history during the Dark Ages. What was it? The Roman Catholic Church made it a capital offense for you to have the Bible you have in your lap. If they caught you, they killed you. They suppressed the light of God everywhere. They built great cathedrals in all the cities of Europe, and they shut the lights out of the Word of God. And yet, it was the greatest soul-winning time in the history of the world. It was not done by the big mega-churches. It was done by the common, ordinary man on the street corner who they could not extinguish his light. He told everybody he could over and over and over again about the Gospel of John and the salvation that God had given to man. Salvation during the Dark Ages spread over Europe like melted butter on popcorn. Thousands were saved. The Waldensians here, the Anabaptists, the Huguenots, the Paulicians, the Hussites. Nobody could shut their individual lights down. Do not you fear the darkness of America. Do not you fear the darkness of the world as long as the light of God and the hand of God is still inside you? Because the light shineth in darkness. The darkness comprehended it not.

SEC: The Laodicean Church and Lack of Doctrine

So these guys go fishing, John 21:3. The Bible says they fish all night and they caught nothing. Now let us see where your eye works. You should have caught this one. Maybe not. What you have in this story, right after we are told the purpose of the Gospel of John reaching men, is a picture of what you have in the last days of Christianity, which we know is Laodicea, Revelation 3:14-22. The church that is called the church of the closed door. We know that doors in the Bible represent opportunities. Paul told us that in Colossians 4:3, where he talked about a door of utterance, a door opening that he may be able to give the gospel.

It says they fished all night. In the Bible, you should know this, night will always be a picture of the church age. We go to Mark 13:32-37, and that great story there talks about the church age being likened to four watches. Those four watches go from six o'clock at night to six o'clock in

the morning through the night. It is a picture of the church age. You have the even, you have the midnight, you have the cockcrowning, and you have the morning. You know that when you look at John 21:4, it says, "But when the morning was come." Here we go, this is the fourth watch now. This is the morning of Mark 13 in picture. This will be the last watch from 1600 right up to where we are at, right up to the second coming of Christ. So let me just say this, we are at the end, the very end of this fourth watch of the morning.

Now they are not catching any fish. Here is the other problem. Jesus is standing on the shore, but the disciples cannot recognize who He is anymore. There it is, there it is. Laodicean Christianity who have lost the sight of who the Lord Jesus Christ really is. The church of the closed door now, Revelation 3:20, and Jesus says, "I stand at the door and knock." The church not recognizing who He really is and putting Him out of His own church, just like in John 21:4. Then replacing Him with a bunch of worldly, flashy garbage that Christ would never be part of.

Here is the real issue. John 21:5. How are you doing so far? John 21:5, trained eyeballs. How are you doing so far?

John 21:5

Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? And they answered him, No.

You and I are children of God, children. "Have ye any meat?" And their answer is, "No." I have showed you many times from Hebrews 5 and 1 Peter 2 that meat in your Bible will always be a picture of Bible doctrine. Hebrews 5:12-14 lays that out so clearly. Doctrine will be the glue that holds Christianity together and keeps us exact. It gives us the doctrinal consistency. The issue today with churches, they have no meat. They have no doctrine. Today, trying to reach people in Christianity with the world and the things of the world. Sadly, it is okay to social drink. Now that we have legalized marijuana, it is okay. Steve Bracken told me this morning that we played volleyball out where we played, right across the driveway. There was a marijuana place that sold marijuana. There was on the news that guy does a hundred thousand dollars a day and sells marijuana. We are in the wrong business, guys. They even have drive-thru now. Do not try to tell me, "Oh, you thought it was a McDonald's." I will not believe you. Meat, doctrine. He says to them, "Children, have you any meat?" That is why they are not catching any fish. They are doing it their way. They are doing it man's way. When you cannot recognize Christ anymore, John 21:4, you will lose the doctrine, the meat. You will build a church on milk or nothing at all in some cases. All you have is like the Dark Ages, a mega-church with a Roman Catholic Bible, and the Dark Ages have come in.

SEC: God's Way of Fishing and Feeding the Flock

New young pastors usually can be very naive. I know that I was. You get into something new. You think you know a little bit about it, but in actuality, it is like the iceberg. You see the 10% on top and 90% underneath. It is easy to get bad advice. It is easy to get off on the wrong foot. I thank God every day, we have talked about it over the last couple of weeks, the men that in my local church back home in Canton who were doing the work, who had proved every aspect, they kept me from getting the wrong advice and kept me from making a mess out of things. Even

after I was here, I would burn up old Mel's phone, boy, asking him, "How do I handle this? How do I do this? How do I do that?" God only knows where I would be today if it was not for the men that God put into my life.

In John 21:6, Jesus tells them, "You are not catching any fish. Have you any meat, children?" "No, we do not." "Okay, here is what I want you to do. Cast that net on the right side." Does that turn any lights on for anybody? That is great advice for any pastor or any Christian, because we know what the right side or the right hand of God means in the Bible. The Bible says that Christ is seated on the right hand of God. The right hand in the Bible will always have a good meaning. The left hand will always have a bad meaning. The antichrist, you are told, has a bad right arm, forcing him to be left-handed. It is a thing where Jesus is God's right arm. In the ministry, you ought to be your pastor's right arm. Guys will say, "Boy, he is a great guy. You know what? I would cut my right arm off for that guy." You realize that is exactly what God did for you? His right arm was Jesus. He cut Him off. Then you could have salvation. So He says, "Cast it on the right side."

Now that gives me a great truth. If you are going to be a fisher of men and you are going to be successful at it, and you are going to do the ministry, you are going to have to do it God's way and not man's way. They have been trying to fish with their own intellect. And Jesus says, "Are you catching anything?" "No, sir." "Got any meat?" "Nope." "Try it on the right side. Do it My way." I see pastors today that start churches, bless their hearts. They are good guys. They really are, but they have never had anybody. They have no understanding of anything of how to do it. Only been what they have been told today. They all try to do the same thing. They try to reinvent the wheel. They try to come up with some new program, some new idea, some flashy thing to do this, to do that, to reach people. "We built a big mega-church and built a \$60 million building. People are going to come because it is, we are really big, and big means success." I am going to tell you right now, folks, old Mel Sabaka used to tell me this. He said, "Just because you have got a crowd does not mean you have a church." Nothing will ever take the place of solid, good Bible-based, well-balanced Bible teaching and preaching. That is how you fish aggressively. But learning the Bible and teaching and preaching the Bible is hard work. Today, most of that generation, they do not want to put the effort in.

Look at John 21:6 continued. So He tells them to put it on the right side. When they did it His way, they caught more fish than ever before. So many fish, they could not draw in the nets. They had so many. A Christian life should be nothing but a lifelong fishing trip. At the end of your life, literally hundreds or thousands of people, your life has influenced for Christ. Last week I talked about your building a work, your proof. I told you about old Glen Mays back in the day. He has gone home to be with the Lord now. But at the judgment seat of Christ, old Glen, he invested in so many young guys like me. He took those guys out like he did me, and he made an investment in our lives. I know of at least seven or eight of those guys right now that are in full-time ministry. I think to myself, my, my, my, at the judgment seat of Christ, how full his net will be of the fish because of the men that he invested in. I think old Mel Sabaka, probably in his years, invested in what, two, three, four, five thousand young men that are in the ministry today. What is his net going to be like? A church or Christian after 40 or 50 years, your net ought to be full of

people here and around the world that you have had God use you, God's hand in your life to impact people. Fishers of men directly or indirectly.

Last week I told you the church is a Bledsoe's Tool Rental place. You have a job to do for God. This church has all the tools that you need, and we will teach you how to use the tools. That was last week. This week, this church, we are a bait and tackle shop. We are going to show you how to use the lures to be fishers of men, winning men to Christ and then keeping them. Your whole life, your work, your purpose, is to be fishers of men, have your net full.

Now, John 21:1-6, that is the book of John right there, winning men to Christ. Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Do not want to miss this, do I? Look at John 21:7. In the darkness of that Laodicean church age, when they are trying to do it their way and not catching any fish, they all look over and see Jesus standing on the shore in the middle of the dark night of the church age. But the only one that recognized Him is John. We have been there before with him. We will not have to go that again. You get it. John recognized Him. There you are. We see and recognize Him when others do not. Yeah, we are like Bledsoe's. We have the tools. We are like a bait and tackle shop. We give you the lures, but we are also like Arby's. We have the meat.

Now, what follows John 21:12-13? Here we go. Now we see 1 John. What a picture this is. After you win them, then you feed them. Look at John 21:12. Christ prepares the food. They come off the ship, and then He says, "Come and dine." That is taking people and teaching them the Bible after they get saved. He says in Revelation 3:20:

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

"Sup," Old English for supper. "Come and dine, the Master calleth. Come and dine." You can feast at Jesus' table anytime. Then it says, "Jesus then cometh and taketh bread." It also says that He brings fish likewise. Now, once we just saw how you fish, let us look at what you prepare for the ones you catch, because this great story illustrates that He has ordained us to bring forth fruit, but that fruit should remain.

The first thing that He has for them is bread. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of the living God." It is the Word of God that starts with teaching people the Bible. That is Discipleship 1, Discipleship 2. That is the history of the Bible, the history of the church. That is the seven things that we teach you that changed about you the day you got saved. The stuff that lays the foundation in your life on salvation. Laying the building blocks of the Bible, basically on the foundation of your salvation, like Isaiah 28:10 says. Teaching men and women the Bible, a systematic way of laying the Word of God out and giving you the Bible. By design, when we started this church, 20 some years ago, I knew God was not going to have another 40, 50 years left. So by design, I began to put into you first, but put them on the website second, the stuff that long after I am gone, somebody can still get what they need to get to grow.

The second thing you find here is fire. We know that fire will be the judgment of God. In your Bible, you have seven judgments. We teach you that in the process of discipling you and giving

you the things that you need. When you understand these seven judgments and you know how to apply them, you now are ready to go to be a fisher of men. The seven judgments, and you know them already, the first three are all toward you. We call it sinner, son, and servant. How that you were a sinner at Calvary, Isaiah 53, but when you got saved, you are no longer a sinner. Now you are a son on this earth, 1 Corinthians 11:29, Hebrews 12. Then you have the judgment seat of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5. Those three judgments are to you. When you understand how those three apply to you, and then you can apply them to somebody else. Then the last four are outward judgments: the judgment of Israel, that will be the tribulation; the judgment of the nations, that will be Matthew 25; the judgment of angels, 1 Corinthians 6:3; and then the judgment of unsaved dead, the Great White Throne Judgment, Revelation 20. When you understand those seven, and you can apply them, you see where they apply to you and who they apply here, you are ready to go fishing. Those are the first seven lures you need in your tackle box, fishers of men.

Then the third thing was there was fish. You give them the bread, you show them how to keep things warm on the fire, and then you give them the fish. You teach them to be fishers of men also. You teach them how to use the lures, you bring them into your ministry and show them why we do what we do, how we do it. This is the why and the reason that we do it. You get the young guys that will work, and then you get the old guys that teach the young guys and bring them along and help them. It all works together. You teach them the three aspects of soul winning that Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 3: sowing, watering, and reaping. You learn how to use those. You understand those are three lures. They need to be added to your tackle box. Then you take them over to Acts 8 and you show them the greatest picture in all of the Bible of a New Testament man getting saved. Everything you need with the Ethiopian eunuch. Then you put that in your tackle box. You walk up through Romans 10, Romans 3, you put that in your tackle box. Now you are ready to be a fisher of men.

Now you can see the hand of God behind that book. In closing out the greatest book in the Bible that shows man who Christ is and the salvation that He has brought him, then the next chapter He shows a great picture of how we are to be fishers of men. He set it up. He called commercial fishermen out of the gate, told them, "I am going to make you fishers of men," put the story in John about learning who Christ is, and then gave you example of being a fisherman. There are no excuses for not building a good solid church in any age. Too many good guys have done it. The real issue has always been trying to do it your way and never getting into the culture to go a fishing. All that produces, whether it is your own life or a church, pardon the pun, is a can of worms. That is all you have to fish with.

You young men and young ladies, you midliners, you young couples, you have a tremendous opportunity. Some of you are not married yet, but you will be. Some of you just got married, you are going to have kids. Some of you have been married, keep having kids. Not a bad thing. Some of you are older and you have older kids. You have in the darkness of this hour the greatest opportunity to build a dynasty and a legacy of your life with Christ to give your kids the light to shine in the darkness, and the darkness will never comprehend it. Do not fear the darkness, do not be afraid of it. It is okay. Use the darkness. Use how dark it is to illuminate that little light

that is shining in you. Like that old destroyer out there where somebody in a U-boat is looking out there on a bridge and he sees this little light and he calls down to the captain, "There is a light in the horizon," and they come up and they find out that some guy in the Navy is sneaking out and having a cigarette. The next thing he knows, he gets two torpedoes right in his midsection of the ship, all because of a little light that was illuminated by the darkness.

We have a job to do. Your purpose is found in that camp. Everything we are doing for Memorial Day, everything that we do for softball, it is all about penetrating our culture, reaching the men and women out there that need to be reached. Then keeping them, training them, giving them what they need to be everything God wants them to be.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. Thank you for all you do for us today. Thank you, Father, for loving us. Thank you for great stories like this and great pictures of how you put the Bible together. What a mind behind that Bible. We love you. We thank you and praise you for all you do for us now. We will just thank you and ask you, Father, your blessings upon our church, the people in it, the mothers here today, and everybody that is here today that loves you and loves the Word of God. Thank you. In Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.