

I. The Model of Ministry and Evangelism

You will remember last week we ended Chapter 20 of the Gospel of John and we entered into Chapter 21. I showed you before we left Chapter 20 a couple of verses that really make up our sixth story in Chapter 20. You remember I told you that John Chapter 20 is wrapped around six different stories, and each one of them will show you something different about what is transpiring there during that time.

I put it together for you what the Bible does so clearly and so incredibly, and that is building its great doctrines into the stories of the Bible, ensuring that doctrinal consistency that never, never, never wavers. This can be found throughout the Bible. In John Chapter 20, we saw the purpose for the Word of God; we saw that it is to bring men to Christ. We understand that.

Then last week we got into John Chapter 21, and after he told us what the book was all about, then he showed us the model of ministry in getting the good news of the Gospel out to man.

Matthew 4:19

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

We looked last week at evangelism, or winning men and women to Christ, like you do fishing, using the right bait, the right lures, or the right net to bring in men to Christ. I told you how Christ had set all this up way back in Matthew Chapter 10 when he first called the twelve apostles, and the first ones he called were commercial fishermen. Then he told them, "I'll make you fishers of men."

I showed you the difference between the model of biblical evangelism versus what we have today in this Neo or New evangelism, and how different they really are. I used the example of using different ways, lures, and techniques to reach the people that you're trying to reach for Christ, like a fisherman would. Actually, it is nothing more, as we said last week, than you understanding the culture that you live in, understanding where men and women are today, and what means something to them.

When you go down to Central America or Mexico or some of those third-world countries in South America, their need is food, their need is clothing, their need is medical. When we went down to El Salvador and Guatemala and those places years ago, we actually took medical teams down with us. We took food, we took clothing. It was through the culture, the need of their culture, that we opened up the doors to talk to them about the Lord Jesus Christ and saw many of them be saved. Every culture has its needs.

Now, you take America. America doesn't need any clothes and it doesn't need any food. Are you kidding me? You go to the mall and you've got 6,000 shades of lipstick to pick from. You go to get a pair of jeans and you have to pray about it all day long. You get 504s, 503s, 516, 2899, and

some of them are very brand new. Some of them look like they've been worn for several years. We don't need any clothes in America.

America's culture is an emotional one. America, for the most part, is an insane asylum run by the inmates. It's broken. It's busted. It's busted lives. It's busted families. It's busted marriages. It's people who have everything that the people in the third world don't have, but yet they have nothing. The more they get, they think that it's going to make them happier. In reality, the more they get, the more miserable they become.

It's being able to transcend into your culture, and how that applies today to our soul winning, to be fishers of men. It's learning how to get into an unsaved man or an unsaved woman's world to be able to show them the Gospel of God, but not being worldly and showing them what the Word of God says.

The first thing you have to do in transcending any culture is you have to accept people where you find them. Too many times, too many preachers want the people that come to their church to hit some point of perfection before they really accept them. Baptist preachers in particular are famous for standing up at the top of the stairs with the people down several flights down and screaming and yelling at them to get up where he's at. That's not how you transcend the culture. You have to go down those stairs yourself, put your arm around that person, and then walk them up those stairs one step at a time.

You have to prove, as in 2 Corinthians 13:5, your own self first, that there's something different about you that they need. You let that change come from God, but by God's design, that change comes from God, but it comes through us, our transformed life.

This today is, in my estimation, the terrible failure of modern-day missions. Modern-day missions, when they go to a mission school or wherever to send somebody out, they all follow the same protocol. They send you to a foreign country, but you're trying to change that country's culture into your missionary American mindset culture, and it never works. I've seen them down in Mexico, where they build missionary compounds, where you had four or five missionary families trying to reach the Mexican people who are very poor. They live in big houses and they drive fancy cars. They have their American flag flying in their courtyard. They have all the American holidays that they celebrate. What they try to do is take an indigenous culture and try to change it to be an American Christian culture. They fail to transcend into that culture and become one with them.

I see that same failure in modern-day churches today. We're wanting people to be someplace spiritually before we're willing to accept them. All I can say to that is, none of us looked very good the first time God looked at us. He was patient with us and He sent somebody to each one of us in whatever condition we were in. Jesus Himself, when He came down in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, He didn't come down as just the Son of God. He came down as the Son of Man. He came down, wore the clothes, ate the food, did everything that the culture He was trying to reach did. If that isn't the model for us, then I don't know what is.

It's a thing where the importance of being able to, through your transformed life, to reach people. It's proving through your own life the five things last week that we talked about that we as Christians have to prove: that what you have with God is better than what the world has without God. On these will rest the failure and the success of any ministry, any Christian, any pastor. What do we have? In your life, in my life, what really is the difference between what the world does and what you do? Why would some lost person look at my life, look at your life, and say, "I want what that person has"? That is really the answer today.

II. God's Final Invitation in Revelation

Next week, we will finish out the book of John. But today, I'd like to show you one more area that the Holy Spirit of God put in this book, along with what we have studied so far in Chapter 20 and Chapter 21 in the last couple of weeks. You see in the book of John what you see in the book of Revelation, and other books in the Bible too.

Revelation is a great book. John writes it as the last book that he writes, somewhere around 90 A.D. on the Isle of Patmos. He's in exile by the Roman Empire. I showed you how the book of Revelation will cap off the New Testament at the Bible's end. John is told to write in three tenses: he's told to write what he has seen, the things that are, and the things that shall be. I showed you how he was taken up to the Second Coming of Christ the Lord today. So he writes in those three tenses. That's the aspect of the book of Revelation when you want to study it.

I gave you quickly how the book of Revelation has a natural breakdown:

- Chapters 1, 2, and 3 is the church age.
- Chapter 4 is the rapture.
- Chapter 5, the judgment seat of Christ.
- Chapters 6 through 18 is the tribulation.
- Chapter 19 is the day that he's caught up to, the Second Coming.
- Chapter 20 is the millennium.
- Chapter 21 is the new heavens and the new earth.
- Chapter 22 is in eternity.

That's the picture that it is, inspirationally. But you don't want to miss what I'm about to show you. When you look at these books in the Bible, every one of them, and I told you, every one of them is distinctly different. You have to find the breakdowns of those books if you're going to ever really understand it.

The book of Revelation has 22 chapters in it. I think it runs all the way down to 21 or 22 verses. But technically, the book stops in Revelation 22:6. What you have then from verse 7 of Chapter 22 to 21, fifteen verses, will be a completely separate thing. He now shuts down the book of Revelation. Now, in those last fifteen verses, he gives man one last invitation to Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. It's almost like this is the end of the book, and the Holy Spirit of God got to the end when eternity begins and everything that God's plan is going to fulfill. But before he could just end that book, he had to give man one more chance to find salvation from God.

So in Revelation 22:7, it changes gears completely. It's no longer the plan of God. It's no longer the crystal sea coming out of the throne of God. Now, Revelation 22:7 says, "Behold, I come quickly." And they're admonished to keep the Word of God. In Revelation 22:9, he says again, "Keep the book." In Revelation 22:11, he says, "Here I come, ready or not."

When I was a kid growing up, you young kid generation don't play these games anymore. You're too busy with your phone and all this stuff you've got on there. But we used to play games just to get all the kids in the neighborhood together. One of the games we played was hide-and-seek. Hide-and-seek works like this: somebody is going to be the guy who finds them. You have a base where if you touch the base, you're in free. But everybody, he counts to 50, everybody runs and hides, and then you have to find them. He gives you like a minute to hide. Then you know that he's coming to look for you. He yells in a big, loud voice after he gives you the time, "Ready or not, here I come."

That's what Jesus is saying here. You know what he's saying? He says, "He that is filthy when I come, you're filthy still. You that are holy when I come, you're holy still." What he's saying is when I come, and I'm coming quickly, whatever state I find you in, that's the state you're going to be in. He has a desire, because he closes out the last book, to see men be saved. He says, "If you're righteous and holy when I come, then you'll be righteous and holy. If you're filthy when I come, then you'll be filthy still. Ready or not, here I come."

Then he says in Revelation 22:12, "Behold, I come quickly." He says, "My reward is with me, and I'm going to judge every man according to his works." Then he closes out in Revelation 22:17, and he says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Let him that is hungry, come. Let him that is thirsty, come. Whosoever will take of the water of life freely." That is the last invitation you have in your Bible. Then what follows is the last prayer in your Bible. It sets the model for what our prayer should be over and above everything else we pray for. He says in Revelation 22:20, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." You have the last invitation in the Bible in Revelation, and then you have the last prayer. He goes through all of that in Chapter 22, but when he gets to verse 6, the book is done.

You'll find that same thing in the book of Acts. You'll find it in other books too, but as I want to show you today, you'll find the same thing in the book of John. As he closes the book on salvation to mankind, let's pray.

Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We thank you, Father, for all that you do for us, all that you've given us. We thank you for those that are here today, and Lord, this next week, how busy it's going to be. But what a great time to just have a great time of fellowship with each other and enjoy each other and have fun and laugh and enjoy the things. Lord, I don't know how much longer that will be able to be. But Lord, we need to covet it and take every opportunity to enjoy each other while we can around you. Bless this message today. Use it. Help it to weave its way into the lives of your people. And we'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name for our sake. We ask it. Amen.

III. Peter's Restoration: A Model for Getting Back to God

You will remember when we came through John Chapter 20 and we came down toward the end of Chapter 20, we showed you the purpose of the book, and that is for men to find Christ as their own personal Savior. Then in John 21:1-14, he says, "I will make you fishers of men." And now we saw exactly the model that we should follow in taking John, the book, and the purpose of salvation and taking it to mankind.

Today, we want to look at John 21:15-24. Here now we have, and what we will see here, the story of a man who was out of fellowship, a man who has lost his discipleship. We see the model of how he comes back to God and gets right and then starts again his purpose in life. We know that man to be Peter. What we have here in this last portion of this Chapter 21, as we close out the book of John, is we see God's desire for every Christian to be in fellowship with Him.

Several months ago, I taught you the character study of Peter. We looked at it. We went through all these verses in great detail. We're not going to do that again today. I'm going to preach through them and then preach around them. I laid out this study completely of how through his denial he lost, and now he was out of fellowship, and then how God made a way back for him to get back. We looked at that in John 21:10-24.

For us, and you know the story because we went through it in great detail, you should have the notes in your Bible. For us, the final story is a picture of us, God's people, who will get out of fellowship and how to get back. It's almost like in the end of Revelation, before he closes, he just couldn't close the book without giving man one more chance to be saved. Now in John, which is the great book on our fellowship, he can't close out the book without telling us as God's people one more time: we need to come back. We need to get right. All that God has for us, the plan of God for your life, the work of God for our lives, on getting back to God when we deny Him, whether it be in word or whether it be in action.

I want to talk to you today about taking this passage in the story of Peter. I want to take it to another level where I didn't take it the last time because I was dealing with Peter. But I want to talk to you today about getting back to God and restarting your purpose. We live in an electronic age, and everything's electronic today. You all have your iPhones. You all have computers at home. Some of you have those tablet things, whatever they call them. You know as well as I do, we all have cable TV. But you know, every one of those things at some point, you have to reboot them. You have to hit the reset button. Sometimes your iPhone goes crazy, and all that's really wrong with it is you've had it on for so long that it's confused or whatever it does. So you have to shut it off and let it reboot itself. Your computer's the same way. Things that man makes can only go so long without having to readjust themselves.

I notice that that's true of every one of us that God made. We go through life, and sooner or later, all of us have to stop and hit the reset button. I don't know where you're at today. I really don't. I don't know where you're at in your own personal relationship with the Lord. That's between you and the Lord. I will tell you this: it's hard to criticize folks for losing their purpose, because we all do it from time to time. I'm not talking about bad people here. I'm talking about really good people. I'm talking about good people who live in this world. We have to deal with everything,

and all the pressure is on us to not do what God wants us to do. It's really hard to criticize folks for losing their purpose because it happens to all of us.

Obviously, the key, the remedy, the reset button, the rebooting, is through preaching. Sometimes it's hard preaching, but it takes whatever it takes to get us to stop and to think, and then to get honest with ourselves. The other key is helping that person get back. What is always key is no matter how we decide to help somebody back. We saw it last week. The real key is we have to do it. Remember when he threw the fish out and they were fishing all night and didn't catch anything? Then Jesus said, "Okay, throw it on the right side." When they did that, they caught all kinds of fish. My point was, whatever you do, you've got to do it God's way. When you hit the reset button, when you try to get back to where God wants you to be, and we all get that, you have to do it God's way. There's no homespun remedy for getting back to God. There's no grandma's secret recipe.

I totally understand in the Bible when it talks about the victory in Christ. I understand that when you're saved, we have overcome the world. I talk about a time about a child of God living above the circumstances. But it is so easy to drift away from God's purpose that He has for us. I've told you many, many times the story of Luke 2:41, how Jesus and his parents were walking, going to, I believe they were going to Jerusalem. The Bible says that they had been traveling for two days, and then they looked around and they saw, "Where's Jesus?" They had lost Him and didn't even know He was gone. That is such a perfect picture of what happens to us. They thought He was with them when He wasn't. We get feelings sometimes that He's still with us when He's not.

Romans 12:1-2 says that we have been called according to His purpose. What happens is, when we kind of step out of that mindset and then start living our lives according to our own purpose. Let me just say this: I know many of you work with me in the people ministry. You work with me in all different aspects of dealing with people, and you're valuable to the ministry here. But, over the years, I have found in dealing with people, and this may be something that will give you a little more insight or help you: not only do you deal with saved people who get out of fellowship with God, you deal with saved people that really get out of fellowship with God.

I have found that when it comes to saved people and helping them, if they do not have any foundation in their life, if they've never been in church to the point where they ever got grounded in much, it's really hard to try to get them back because they don't have anything necessarily to build on. They're saved, but they have no biblical truth past that point. Now here they are caught up in something in the world. You're trying to bring them back to God, but there's absolutely, it's very hard because there's absolutely nothing to work with. But when you deal with saved people who have a foundation in their life, they went to church, they got disciplined, and they get off track, it's always easier to bring them back because you can always bring them back to a point of reference that they can understand by what they built on their foundation.

I have found over the years in dealing with people that when God's people get out of fellowship, if they have some kind of foundation, they've been to church, they've got something on the salvation foundation, it's a lot easier to get them back than it is someone that has nothing on that

foundation. Saved people with a foundation who fall away are much easier because you have something of a base to work with.

IV. Guarding Your Christian Life Against Satan's Attacks

In your life and my life, to keep us from getting out there in left field like Peter is here, there are five basic areas of our Christian life that we need to guard above everything else. I know that when you're saved, your eternal destiny is sealed and done, but you have to live your life down here, and God has a plan for you, a purpose for you. It's up to pastors and churches to keep that before you, but it's up to you to make it happen in your life. I talk about these things all the time, but there are five areas of our lives that we need to guard above everything else in our life.

1. Your perspective. Your perspective is who we really are in Christ. You never lose sight of that. Perspective is what God means to us. Perspective is understanding why God saved me and understanding where I fit into that. That's perspective.
2. Your purpose. The purpose is why did God save you? What is the work in your life right now? If you've been saved, I'll give you the first ten years free. If you've been saved ten years or more, can you actually, and you know you're saved, can you actually put your finger on it and say, "This is God's work for me"? I'll tell you why, if you're in that position that you can't do that, I'll tell you why you can't, and you're a good guy, good girl, you're good people. It's not bad. You just never got a perspective.
3. Your passion. Once you lose your perspective and then you lose your purpose, you know what goes next? Then that goes your passion. That's your love for the things of God.
4. Your perception. Once you lose your passion, then you lose the ability to perceive your perception. That means looking at any given situation with what I know, how do I perceive it, and how do I use the Bible in any given situation with any person that I'm working with?
5. Your position. When you lose those, you lose your position, and your position will always have to do with the judgment seat of Christ.

These are five areas of your life we all need to guard, but it starts to go downhill when we lose our perspective. Losing your perspective, then as I said, you lose your purpose and then your passion for the things of God, and down the list you go.

Just as God has a design and a plan to use you, and you need to understand this, this is the reality of the Christian life. Just as God has a plan and a purpose to use you, the devil's got a plan to stop you and destroy you. That's just what it is. We try to make this thing so complicated, it's not. God has a plan that He wants to enact in your life. He has a purpose for you. The devil looks at it and says, "I'm going to try to do everything I can to cancel that out of that person's life." The worst thing in the world will be an ineffective child of God who has lost these five areas. Now they just exist. They're not, I'll say it again, they're not bad people. They're good people. The real tragedy in them is the potential you'll see in them that'll never come to the front.

There are several ways this will happen. If you work with people at any length of time with me in the ministry, I've seen it all my 50-plus years in the ministry. I see it all the time. Remember

now, perspective will be your understanding of who you really are and then the work that God has for you, your purpose. Satan will work 24/7 to take that from you.

Sometimes we come out of a life that there were a lot of bad things in it. Some of us were addicted to drugs. Some of us were addicted to alcohol. Some of us had some stronghold in our lives that really controlled you. God, one day in your life, allows you to see the glorious light of the Gospel and the love of God, and you truly got saved. But you're going to find this is true: sometimes old habits die hard. Many times the biggest issue a person will have before salvation will be the biggest issue you have after salvation.

I hope that's not an indication it doesn't like my preaching. Love those little kids, man. They're the sweetest on the planet. You see, this is why it's better for you when you're a young teenager not to get into the things of the world. Now we've got camp coming up here, and my goal every year for camp is to get as many of those young kids as you can on the right track. Because what happens is when you don't get on the right track at 15, 16, 17, 18, and you spend the next 20, 30 years of your life feeding that flesh, and then suddenly you come to the place in your life when you get saved and you think you're going to make the break, and you do with salvation. But I'm going to tell you something: your old flesh has been trained for 20, 30 years to live one way. Now suddenly you're going to change gears and move it another direction. Well, praise the Lord, I'm glad you are. But he's going to give you fits. Many times your struggle in your Christian life starts right there. This is the warfare of the believer he talks about in Ephesians 5 and 6. This is where you have to fight every day. This is where you have to, as a soldier of Jesus Christ, you never surrender.

I was reading a documentary book the other day on the Japanese in World War II. They were fanatical in their warfare techniques. I mean, they made, Americans were dedicated. These guys, for them it was an honor to die. They were absolutely fanatical. The war was over in August 1945. You know that there were some Japanese soldiers on Okinawa that hid in the hills until 1949 and would not surrender. They didn't have any guns left. They didn't have any ammo left. All they had was bamboo sticks. But for almost five years after the war was over, they wouldn't quit. They finally had to find out what outfit they were with during World War II. Praise the Lord, the commanding officer was still alive. They flew him all the way to Okinawa. He had to go up in the hills and order them to surrender. For four, almost five years, they didn't have any food. They didn't have any weapons. But they had a determination of a cause. I look at things like that and I think to myself, now there's a Japanese soldier for four, almost five years, lived in the mountains off of rats and bugs and everything else because he wouldn't quit. And God's people will get saved and have one little thing and they just give up and surrender. It's unbelievable. And those guys died and went to hell.

Sometimes you get saved and then out of nowhere, pops up some old boyfriend or some old girlfriend or some old friend, somebody you had a relationship with, not necessarily in a romantic way, or sometimes maybe even your job. Many times you get saved and bang, there'll come someone out of the past and you'll struggle with that old relationship. They'll say, "Hey, it's good to see you. Come on, let's go do this and do that." And you're torn between that. Sometimes you'll get saved and you'll really start to get in, and then the devil will pop you a job offer

someplace in a place in the country where there's no church whatsoever. All to entice us back to the world. All because once you get saved, God has something in your life that He wants you to do for Him that requires perception and purpose and passion right on down the line. The devil works 24/7 to take it from you.

Oh, how many times have I seen this one? A new boyfriend or a new girlfriend. It's a proven fact, folks, especially for you young people, you can't build two intimate relationships at the same time. Now, if you find some guy and some gal in a church and you're both in ministry and serving the Lord and you've grown for a while and you're doing well, okay, that's one thing. But I'm not talking about that. I had a kid one time, this has been several years ago. He was probably one of the best young men I had ever had in my ministry. He had a desire to preach. He had at a young age, 17 or 18, a lot of natural ability. I looked at that kid and I saw endless potential in him. I saw a kid that God could have used greatly and mightily. I saw a guy that had all the raw material to really be fine-tuned into something that would really make an impact for God.

Along the line someplace, he got lonely. I understand that. He wasn't willing to let God be God and in time understand that God knows everything he wants, everything he needs, but put it in God's hands and just let God develop it and work on the things where he's at, what God is doing. God will give you the desires of your heart. But he couldn't do that. He was a great kid. So he wound up, found some gal, a nice gal, and got involved with her to the point where they got in a serious relationship. Quit coming to church. Obviously went to her church. Her church did not have a Bible. Her church didn't have anything biblical. It was one of those halftime show, raw-raw things that you see. I bumped into him, oh, I don't know, four or five years ago at a wedding. I got to talk with him and got to meet her, nice girl. But at this point in his life, he's given up everything that God had for him. He'll never preach another sermon. He has no purpose in his life except her. He goes to a church now where they have no Bible. There's no training. There's anything. He lost every purpose and passion that he had. He was one young, passionate young man. The devil, when you get into that situation that you're not willing to wait on God and for God to put everything in your life in the right order that He wants, on the right side of the boat, the devil makes sure that as in his life, he lost his Bible. He lost his church. And out you go, right back down into the Neo-Christian world.

The next thing that will mess people up will be negative people in your life. They'll come saved and unsaved. The old saying is misery loves company. The Bible talks about birds of a feather flock together. You will find people who lose their perspective and then their purpose and their passion. They always begin, and I don't care what church you're in anywhere in this country, probably the world, then they begin to start criticizing everything that goes on in the church. They don't like this. They don't like that. They don't like this. They don't like the pastor. They don't like the sermon. They don't like this. They don't like that. When you hang out with them long enough, you too lose your way and start being critical of what God is doing.

For a while, I worked as an electrician. I was not very good. In many cases, it was a shocking experience. But I learned a great truth that I want to give you today. When you wire a house, wire anything, you bring the wires in. You have a white wire and a black wire. The white wire is your neutral. The black wire is the hot wire, is your power. Say all the lights are on in the place

and these wires are all hooked up and you're going to put this receptacle together and you keep your white wire and your black wire separate. The moment you touch the positive wire with a negative wire, you blow a fuse and the lights go out. The moment in your Christian life when you take the things in your life that are positive and start hanging them out with something that's negative, your lights are going out. You'll lose your perspective. Once you lose your perspective, you'll lose your purpose.

Sometimes it's a failure in your own life that you can't get past. I call these things mental attitude sins. You had a sinful life where you did some things that you're not proud of, and then you got saved and God wiped the slate clean. God has completely forgotten all of that, but you can't. I don't care what you've done in life. If you're saved, it's under the blood. If it's under the blood, brother, it's under the blood. God will forgive you, but many times God's people can't forgive themselves. No matter what your failure is, I want you to know that there's a way past that for you to get back to God, and no matter what you did, there's a way for you to become blameless, that nobody can ever blame you for it again. That's the beauty.

But what happens is somebody gets caught up in their own emotions and their feelings, and their guilt for what they did overwhelms them to the place that they just can't see the hand of God in their life. I knew a lady back years and years and years ago, and she was one of those ladies, and she was a rare case. She struggled with everything. Every time there was an invitation, she'd come forward. Finally, the preacher, he tried to talk to her and nothing got through. An evangelist came one time and he preached, and sure enough, she came down. In fact, he preached four or five nights. She came down every night. The pastor clued him in because he's wondering, "This is the greatest convert I ever had." He's wondering what's going on. So she came down the last night, and afterwards he pulls her aside, and she told him what the problem was and what she did and everything. He says, "Are you truly saved?" She says, "Oh, I'm saved. I'm saved." He says, "Well, let me tell you this. Here's the problem. I've got some really bad news for you." She says, "Oh, I want..." And she says, "When the rapture comes and you get to heaven, I guarantee you, you've come down every night. The first thing you're going to do is run up to Jesus and you're going to say, 'Lord, I'm so sorry. Before I was saved, I did this and I did that and I got into this and I did that. I just, I'm just, I'm just so sorry, Lord, that I did this and I did that. Now I just, you know, I was in it for years and I didn't know. I'm just so sorry. I'm just so sorry.'" Now, the Lord's going to look down at you and He's going to say, "Hmm, you did all those things?" She's going to say, "Yeah." And then He's going to look at her and say, "Hmm, I forgot all that."

But it gets you. I know it does. I've dealt with it many, many times. When a Christian gets into that state of mind, they too lose sight of, as we saw in John 21:4, they're in the boat. The boat's a picture of ministry. They're trying to fish, and there Jesus is standing on the seashore watching them do that. None of them could recognize Him except John. When you get in that state of mind in your life, He's standing right on the shore watching everything you're doing. But you know what? You get so far out of it, you can't even recognize Him anymore right there in your life. I understand. I get it. I sympathize with you. You're not a bad person. You're not somebody that's out in sin and hates God and hates the Bible. You're a really good person who got saved, but you

get caught up in the fact that God has a plan and a purpose for you and a work for you. He wants to build you to do it. The devil wants to take it away. And he has. And you're miserable today.

When you get like that, you could be in a church that's winning a thousand people a day to Christ. And you can't see anything God's doing. All you see is your own misery. You could be in a church where hundreds of people are being trained and going all over the world. And all you can see is the black hole you live in. You cannot see the hand of God in anything anymore because the hand of God is out of your life. Something or somebody has taken it from you. You're now saved on your way to heaven, but you're adrift on the sea of life. That's never good. But my dear friend, it happens to good people. Like in our story, Jesus is standing on the shore, but you just don't recognize Him anymore.

Now, there may be those of you here today that you find yourself in that exact same situation as Peter did. As we close out the book of John, God again reaches out to you through the story of Peter for you to get back all that you have lost when you lost your perspective. Like we saw in the book of Revelation, he just couldn't close the book until he gave man one more chance to get saved. In John, the greatest book about the Son of God, he can't close the book without giving us, as God's people, one more chance to make it right and get back with God.

V. The Path to Restoration: Honesty and Redefining Love

John's an incredible book. John Chapter 20, we saw salvation. John Chapter 21, how to be fishers of men. John Chapter 21, and where we're at today, how men like Peter, how women like Peter, who have lost their way, can get back to God. Now, the Holy Spirit opens up in our story here, where Peter is at after his denial, and as the Bible says in Mark 16:7, after he loses his discipleship. Now we see in this story what it will take for him and yet each one of us to get back.

The first thing, we have to be honest with ourselves. I think the number one thing that when we get into that mindset, I think the number one thing we all fall into is we no longer are honest with ourselves. We have a tendency, and this is true of every one of us, if you don't keep a handle on it, we have a tendency of blaming everybody else for our problems. Once you get honest with yourself, then you quit finding fault with the very things God gave you that can help you.

The greatest trick of the devil, and you know this is true, we've all been here, you work with people like this. The greatest trick of the devil is when somebody loses their perspective, loses their purpose, loses their passion, right on down the line, they start immediately taking the things out of their lives that are the very things that can keep them and help them. They quit reading their Bible. They separate themselves from other Christians. They quit coming to church. All of the things that God put in their life that they need to have to get back are the very first things that they take out. Now, that's by design. The devil knows if you lose your perspective and your passion and your purpose, you've got to get back into the book, you've got to get back where you lost it, was where you found it. He knows the great principle that iron sharpens iron, but you take those very people out of your life that once you were close to fellowship with, now you look at them with suspicion. You look at the very church God gave you, wherever you're at across this

country. The very church that you got saved in, the very church that disciplined you, the very church that gave you the foundation. Now, that church is the bad guy, see? The odds are not in your favor. You take a church of 500 people, 600 people, and here's the odds: 599 people are wrong, I'm right. It doesn't work that way. The very things God gave us are the first things that these people want to get away from. I understand. I say it again, you're not a bad person, you just are not being honest with yourself.

The second thing, if you have gotten bad advice from people who told you and have a negative spirit, then you need to separate yourself from them. You're in the mess you're in because of the bad choices you made, and you don't want to continue to make them. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says that evil communications will corrupt good manners. Your problem is not complicated, you lost your perspective and then your purpose, and now you have to get it back. As I told you, my little electricity, negative will never produce anything positive, it just keeps blowing the fuses.

In John 21:7, when Peter lost his perception, and he looks now because John tells him, John says, "It's the Lord." He jumps immediately out of the boat. That tells me he's not ready to get honest yet. That tells me that because of his denial, because he's lost his discipleship, he certainly lost his perspective. He's running from God. I always thought this was interesting, he's naked in the boat. But when he jumps out of the boat, he takes a garment with him, and the garment is called in your Bible, a fisherman's coat. Somebody says, "That's a strange passage." Not really. Not if you understand and you have any time working with people. You see, Peter's problem is that he is naked. Hebrews 4:13 says that all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. So when he's in that boat, he's naked, that's a picture of his spiritual condition. Not only does the Lord understand that, everybody in the boat knows that he's naked. Let me tell you something. You get out of, one of the reasons why you quit coming to church, one of the reasons why you get out of ministry, one of the reasons why you do this, is because everybody knows now and sees that you're naked. So he jumped ship, you jump church. That's complicated. That's the easiest thing in the world.

But then later on, oh, I've got to love this, in John 21:11-12, he's got his fisherman's coat on. Now you're going to find in some cases that even though he's lost his discipleship, he can't recognize who Christ is. He wants to pretend he's with everybody else. Now he's dragging in the net with the fish. Now he's got his fisherman's coat on. Now he's hanging out with the other eleven, pretending, "I'm okay." All right, human nature never changes. But you've got to be able to read it when you deal with people. This is perception.

But then you know what happens. In spite of him jumping out of the boat, in spite of him being naked, taking his coat with him, now he's hanging out with everybody like he's one of them. He knows he's not and the Lord knows he's not. So in John 21:15, it says, "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter..." Oh boy, here it comes. The Lord asked him the same question three times. The Lord didn't get into a great philosophical, you know, "Let's talk about, you know, lay on the couch and tell me what you're feeling, what's your favorite color." He just asked him one question. But he asked him the same question three times because this was his problem. This will be my problem and this will be your problem if we can ever get honest with ourselves.

You see, once you get honest with yourself, this is where Peter is heading now, then you need to get honest with God. The next step in this rebooting your Christian life will be to redefine that you really do love Him above everything else because that's where it all starts. You lost your passion. He lost his passion for the things of God. I gave it to you last week in 2 Corinthians 8:8 when it says, "prove the sincerity of your love." I gave it to you last week in Malachi 3 when it talked about proving your relationship with God. Loving the things of God, loving the Word of God, loving the people of God. Somebody or something took your love for God away and you lost your perspective. Then you lost your purpose and now here you are, you have no passion. So where does it begin for us to get back with God? It begins where it started. "For God so loved the world." "For God commended his love toward us." So when I have to get back, when you have to get back, you know where we start? Where Peter started. He says, "Peter, do you really love me?" Second time he says, "Peter, do you love me?" Third time he says to Peter, "Do you love me?" And every time he asked that, Peter says yes, then he puts him back on track to what the mission is. "Then if you do, feed my lambs, feed my sheep, feed my sheep."

Then he goes into the great dissertation after Peter reconfirms his love. It tells, Peter knew exactly what he was doing because the last time the Bible says when he asked Peter, "Do you love me?" the Bible says, "it grieved Peter." You see, the Lord has a way when He deals with us. You may turn my preaching off, you may close your Bible and not read it. But if you're truly saved, you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you. When the time comes, you won't turn Him off. Boy, Peter's grieved in his heart. Because Peter knows that he loves Him, but he knows he's lost that passion. Peter's in a situation we all find ourselves in at one time or the other. The real question is not beating you up because you were ever there or I was ever there. The real question is, are we ever going to get back? That's the real question.

Then he tells Peter after the third time, "Look Peter, you need to grow up. Peter, I saved you for a purpose. And I saved you for a work. And something or somebody took that from you. And now you have lost with me everything that you had. But Peter, I'm going to tell you something, even though you have lost everything that you had with me, I'm willing to give it all back to you. But we're not going to do it your way, Peter. We're going to do it on the right side of the boat."

Now, getting honest and refining our love for God? It's not just making a verbal statement. "Oh, I love you. I love you God. I love you." Talk is so cheap. No, no, no. When you get back to your Bible, redefining and getting honest with our love will simply be getting back to loving the things that God loves. In your Bible, there are seven of them. When you define your real love for Him, then you define them through these seven things.

6. God loves truth. So the first thing you've got to get back into your life is the Word of God. You can't run from it anymore. You cannot not read it anymore. That's a trick of the devil. You can't. You've got to put that back into your life first.
7. God loves righteousness. Then you've got to change your thinking pattern. You've got to change your process. In Philippians 4:8, we are told that we are to think on six things: whatever is true, whatever is honest, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of a good report. Those are the things that we are to think about instead of the negative things that have filled us up.

8. God loves the souls of men. Because He's called us to be fishers of men. He wants us to do the work now. We've seen it in John that He started, but we're going to finish.
9. God loves the church. The Bible says that Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it. You've got to start loving the institution God created for you. You need to realize that that's your accountability. When you start to lose your perspective, you don't want any accountability. So you start blaming all your problems on somebody or something else.
10. God loves His Son. There's our fellowship. In truth, what you really have with Him and you're walking every day.
11. God loves Israel.
12. God loves Jerusalem. That's God's overall plan.

The real irony of this is the fact that these are the seven things that God loves. But in Proverbs 6:16, you find the seven things that God hates. The irony and a tragedy of it is that most of the things that God's people love are found in Proverbs 6:16 that are the very same things that God hates. Then we wonder why we lose what we have. We have to get rid of the mindset you've allowed to come in and then replace it with the right mindset, the mind of Christ.

Peter tried to run from his problem. He tried to jump ship. I've known Christians all my many, many, many years that go from one church to another. They're okay in one church for a while until the preaching gets a little too hot. They don't want to fix the things that are wrong. Their kids are little at the time, and then they grow up and they get mad at the preacher, mad at somebody, mad at this, mad at that. So they go to another church and then they get the same process. By the time the kids get 18 or 19, they've seen the phoniness of all that. Their kids want nothing to do with church or Christianity. Then you know what? Those same parents will blame the church that they're in then for losing their kids. They try to blend in and say everything is okay, but all things are naked.

That teaches a great truth that most of God's people never learn when they're in the middle of issues and problems. They forsake the things that can help them: the Bible, the church, the people in the church, the pastor. They forsake all of the things that God gave them, but they think like Peter, jumping ship and going from boat to boat to boat, is okay. But the great principle that you better learn is changing geographical locations never solves spiritual problems. Because the real issue will always be us. When we run from it, jump ship, we just take them with us.

I had a guy one time say, "Bob," he preached this, I heard him preach that to say that. He says, "Bob, I want to tell you that is so true." He says, "I lost my wife and daughter when I was, you know, about four or five years ago in a car wreck." He said, "I never grieved so much in all my life." He said, "And I didn't do what was right biblically with it. I didn't do the process that I should have in biblical grieving." He said, "I thought that I..." He says, "So what I did," he says, "I quit my job. I sold everything." He says, "I always wanted to go to, I don't know, the Swiss Alps or someplace over in Europe." He said, "You know what? I sold everything I had. And I went over there and I sat in those mountains with the fresh air and the flowers blooming and the clear mountains all around me." He said, "It was the most unbelievable thing I had ever been in my life. But all I could think about was my wife and daughter were gone." Changing geographical locations does not solve your problems. We think they do. We pretend they do.

Now, if a man or a woman is truly saved and they're not dealing with their true issues, it's always going to end one of two ways for us. It's either going to end like it does in John Chapter 21, where the Lord comes to Peter and deals with him face to face. Or it's going to be like when the Lord came to Jacob back in Genesis Chapter 32 and dealt with him face to face. I call both those events, I have a note in my Bible in both places, simply under the heading or the title of "The Day God Gets You Alone."

You see, you only go so far, so long. You may display to everybody else how happy you are and laugh and joke and fool around, but you're miserable on the inside. If you're really saved, you grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Sooner or later, sooner or later, God's going to get you alone. When He gets you alone, you're going to react one or two ways. Peter, he responds immediately. Once he is confronted with his real issue, he gets honest with himself. He gets honest with God. He's grieved in his heart and he gets back. Jacob, read the account. He wrestles with God. He fights God every inch of the way. He wants God to bless him when he's living his life way outside of the parameters of what his life should be. Where Peter immediately gets honest and gets right, Jacob, God has to come down and touch him where he limps for the rest of his life. You do not want to go the second route. Not when it's so easy to take the Peter route. The Jacob route will cause you a limp. Read it for the rest of your life. Simply because we wanted to wrestle with God instead of do what was right. Simply because we wanted to do it our way instead of the right side of the boat. Simply because we wanted to blame everybody else for our problem. But at the end of the day, look where you're at. Look what you have. No hand of God in your life. If this is a game show up here, take behind door number one, not door number two.

VI. The Unwavering Love of God and the Call to Return

When you lose your perspective, then your purpose and your passion, another thing that we all lose at that point in time is the truth of how special we really are to God. How special it is to God, you and me, that the great God of the universe, the Creator of planets, galaxies, other worlds, God whose plans span the expanse of eternity, whose hand created the earth and the stars and the rivers and the trees and the plants and the universe and the angels and the cherubim and the seraphim. Then the Bible says that He made man a little lower than the angels. That in all that, God would look down and see my struggles and see your struggles. In all of that that God was going to do, He put a little parenthesis in dealing with it and wanted to make sure that Peter got back.

I'm telling you right now, if you're truly saved today, with all that God is doing, sooner or later He'll put that little parenthesis and He'll stop the time and He'll come and ask you the questions. You have two options, only two. That in all of that, He would see us in our struggles and come after us, come after me. Are you kidding me? The only thing that's more ridiculous than Him coming after me is Him coming after you. He loves us that much. He's never that busy to stop and see our struggles. He's never too busy to listen to what you want to say to Him about your struggles. Like Peter, I'm telling you, when He's standing on the shore and He sees them fishing, He's thinking about Peter. When they're at the shore and He's cooking dinner for them, He may be talking and laughing, but with one eye He watched Peter pulling in that net full of fish. While

they're all sitting there and eating, everybody's slapping everybody on the back and praising the Lord and that's going to be good again, He's thinking about Peter. In life, no matter what God is doing, what great revival, what He's building in people's lives, He's thinking about you today if you're not where you need to be. He loves you that much.

Listen, God's number one desire is to save you and then fellowship with you. Through that, reach men and make us fishers of men, all because of how important we really are to His plan, to His purpose, His underlying love for you and for me. That for all eternity He wants to be with you by His side, ruling and reigning with Him, His bride, the church that He loves. I know we struggle. I know we go through tough times. I know we have our ups and downs. I get it. I understand. But one thing you cannot ever lose sight of that will help keep those five things in your perspective and everything the way it needs to be is that great verse in Romans 8:18 that says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

You know what the key word is there? Compare. There's Haggai 2:3. They had nothing to compare the real deal with. Today in God's people, when we lose all those things, we look at that verse and it doesn't mean anything anymore because we lost our comparison of what the world has for us and what that day is going to have for us. It will be an incredible day, and all the things we struggle with, all the things that we stumble over, all the stupid things that we let get in our way. When you see the comparison of the glory that will be revealed in us, nothing can compare to that. But we lose sight of that when you lose your purpose, your perspective.

As he closes the book, John Chapter 20, we saw salvation. John Chapter 21, we saw the action, the performance of us being fishers of men. Then at the end of Chapter 21, the last invitation in the book of John for us, His people, to get back where we need to be. God's call for His children to come back to Him in the last moments of time. Not the time to lose your purpose and your perspective and your passion. We're almost there. We're almost home. We're almost at the end. This is not the time to quit. So one last time, He gives that invitation. Come back to Him.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus. We love you. We thank you for all you do for us and all that you've given us. We thank you for the good people here today. Lord, they're good people. They're not bad people. That happens to God's people who are good people, saved, and they just lose their way. Lord, I thank you for the fact that in this great book that is so focused on man's salvation and how the model of how I'm to be a fisher of men is so clear. But then just like in Revelation, when He gives the last invitation to an unsaved man to find God's salvation, here in John, He gives man, His children, the invitation to get right and come back with God. Thank you, Father. Thank you for loving us when we're unlovable. Thank you for putting up with us when nobody else could. Thank you for being there for us and being patient when our patience is long gone. We love you, Father. Thank you and help this message today resonate in the hearts of your people. We'll thank you and praise you in Jesus' name for our sake. We ask it. Amen.

You're dismissed. Hey, make sure you sign up for Memorial Day picnic. If you haven't yet, pick up whatever stuff you need. There are flyers over here for the picnic or the application. God bless

you. You're dismissed. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you.