

Missions and Your Family

Clearcreek Chapel 2008

By Paul Washer

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Grace Community Church
P.O. Box 10608
San Antonio, TX 78210

Website: www.gccsatx.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/gcc

Often in evangelism we are all about reaching person x and we will jump over absolutely everybody with whom we have a relationship in order to reach that person. We will neglect our duties that are clearly set before us with those who are nearest to us in order to reach person x. And in doing so, we think ourselves expanding and advancing the kingdom of Christ.

We are talking about missions here tonight, about doing missions around the world. And there is great need of doing missions around the world, but disobedient people cannot do missions around the world. And so we are now going to jump from our epicenter, ourself to person x. We are going to see not just about foreign missions, but we are going to see about being people on mission in advancing, in doing the will of God.

So let's read our text, Genesis chapter one verse 26.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’

Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you.’¹

Now, I want us to look at several very important things. This message is going to be to everyone, but it is going to seem as though it is first and foremost directed to the men in this congregation, to the heads of households.

Gentlemen, our country is not failing because of liberal politicians. It is failing because

¹ Genesis 1:26-29.

of preachers who are no longer doing what they are called to do, who have substituted psychology, anthropology and sociology for the infallibility and all sufficiency of Scripture rather than being men of God who dwell with God and study God's Word. They have turned to carnal humanistic means to do the work of God and, of course, it cannot be done that way.

So we see that when the leaders, the very leaders of the Church are not doing what they are supposed to be doing, then everything in the Church just goes bad. Well, gentlemen, the same thing can be said for the family.

I want you to raise your hand if you are a husband. Just raise your hand. Are you a husband, a leader of a family? I want to talk to you tonight about doing missions. But in order to do that we must go back to the foundational truth of manhood, of what our existence is all about because I don't want to come in here and get everyone excited about missions and then three weeks later it all dies down. I don't want people to be thinking about the overseas work and yet the very work closest to them is wrong.

There is a solidity and a strength and a wholeness to Christianity that we are missing because we are not settled in on the foundational duties of what it means to be a man and a woman before God. And that is what I want to look at, but primarily to the men.

Now, first of all, I want us to look at something. God made man to do what? What is the purpose of this male, of this Adam? He has a purpose. He is to advance the will of God in the world. That is his purpose. He is to bring everything into subjection to the will of God. He is to rule over the creation that God has made. Everything in his is directed to the fact that he is one thing, a steward, a man constantly looking to God, a man on command, a servant under God. That is what he is. He doesn't belong to anyone else. He belongs to God. His principle obligation is not to others. It is to God. No matter the differences in his personality, no matter the differences in his vocation, calling, occupation, he is first and foremost a man who is driven to only one thing, thy name be sanctified, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. It is the focus of his life. It consumes him. It literally consumes him so that everyone who looks at him has no doubt whatsoever the purpose of his life.

Now we see that with Adam it did not come out that way. Adam dropped the ball so to speak. He became dislocated. Although knowing God, he did not glorify God. Although understanding his purpose, he wrenched himself out of that purpose and we can see the result of that, can't we? An absolutely chaotic, many times hopeless and often times an existence without a purpose. This man created in the image of God becomes something like a hamster going around in a wheel, not even knowing what he is doing or why he is doing it.

But we see Christ, this one greater than Adam, this second Adam come from heaven.

A body was prepared for the Son of God. He came to earth to do thy will oh God. The one thing that marked Christ above everything else was the doing of the will of his Father. It was his food.

I have food to eat that you know not of.

Isn't it true today, men, that if you go into these Christian book stores, most of them, 75 percent of the books are written about either explaining or trying to help this one great problem that we all seem to have. Why are we so empty? We are the fullest, richest, most protected Christians on the face of the earth and yet most Christian literature deals with how empty we are. And why are we empty, men? We are empty for the very reason Jesus never was empty. He had food to eat that we know not of. His food was to do the will of his Father.

Gentlemen, that is why you were made. And unless you get that in focus, you give yourself to that, you train yourself for that purpose, nothing else works, not the Great Commission, not a missions program in the Church, nothing, not even your family. Nothing works.

You were called to be a man who stands there with his heart burning, his mind fixed on the goal that God's name be glorified in everything, that his kingdom comes, advances in everything, that his will be done in everything.

You look in your own personal life and that is the prayer, that is the heart cry of your life. You see, you can't start over here in China somewhere. You start with you and it is this thing, this thing that you breathe.

"Oh God, thy name be sanctified in me. Thy kingdom advance in me. Thy will be done in me."

And then the rest of your life, every aspect of your life is geared toward that one thing. You look at your wife and she is no longer an extension of you to serve your purposes. You look at her and your passion about her is, "Oh, God, your name be sanctified in this individual who also stands before you. Your kingdom come in her. You will be done in her."

And then you look at your children and you are not thinking about them becoming successes in this temporal world. You are not thinking about them becoming this or that, but this one thing, "Oh, God, that your name be sanctified in these children, that your kingdom come in these children, that your will be done in their lives," because everything is vanity but the one, the man who does the will of God remains forever.

And then you look at your church. You have only one passion for the Church and that is, "Oh, God, in this church thy name be sanctified, thy name be esteemed as of greater worth than all things combined and infinitely more. Thy kingdom advance in this church. Thy will be done in this church."

Oh, leaders and pastors, we will not ask you has it ever been done before? We will not ask you what it does for us. We will only ask you: Is it biblical? Does it advance his cause? Because we are men given to that one thing.

And then you look at your own life, your job, your work, everything about you. You no longer go to the factory just to make cars. You no longer go to the plant just to build circuitry. You no longer build houses just for someone to have a warm place to live. Everything you do, every nail you drive, every screw you turn, every thing you fix, ever problem you solve, it is only for one reason. Oh, God, in this vocation that you have given me, let your name be sanctified that your kingdom come and let your will be done, a godward life, that everything now becomes holy. Everything is sacred for you now.

You see, we do not carry with us this Catholic idea of a separation of things. There is not this line in our life that divides the secular from the sacred. The Christian has nothing secular in their life, nothing.

If I fast, it is spiritual. If I read the Word and memorize, it is spiritual. If I wrestle with my boys or dance across the kitchen with my wife like a mad man, it is spiritual. Everything for him, everything to advance his cause, everything for his glory.

Even in my own personal life, as well as yours, these preachers today with all their messages about prosperity and healing and this and that, although there is a biblical doctrine of God's prospering of his people, although there is a biblical doctrine of God healing his people, it must be understood always in the context of what? Thy name be sanctified, thy kingdom come, thy will be done so that you are a man who stands there and you say, "Oh God, if your kingdom will come and your will be done and your name will be sanctified by prospering me financially, then so do it. But if through my poverty your kingdom will come and your will will be done and your name will be sanctified, then poverty I choose. God, if through health and strength your kingdom comes and your will be done, then give me health and strength. But, Lord, if you can get glory out of me by breaking me into a million pieces, then in a million pieces I want to be broken.

That is what it is about and that is the gear of our life and that is what we are to be turned towards as men.

Now notice here. I didn't say men of God. I just said men. That is true manhood. It is not some... it is not some Alan Alda type. It is not some on the other side John Wayne type. It is a man before God whose passion and the reality of his life, the desire of his heart is this: Thy name be sanctified, thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

Young man, how do you know when you have entered from boyhood into manhood? It is when you can leave your father and mother and stand alone no longer needing their help and say as a man by himself, "I am given and will not waver for this one thing. Thy name be sanctified, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. I stand alone now. I have appreciated and I have been blessed by the... my father carrying me, my father teaching

me to walk, my father supporting me and aiding me and feeding me and leading me and teaching me, but now I have become a man and I can stand alone in the face of peer pressure, in the face of a culture who hates my God. It does not matter. I now stand alone and begin a new family.”

That is manhood. That is manhood.

Now, wives, submit to your husbands as unto the Lord.

Look at Genesis chapter two verse 18.

“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him,’”² or corresponding to him.

Now, we talk about purpose. Some of you will hate what I say. Where does the woman find her purpose? In joining this man and giving herself in service to him so that he can fulfill this thing of working and fighting and struggling and wrestling and even dying that God’s name be sanctified, that God’s kingdom come and that God’s will be done.

Men, do you know what it is like? You don’t, neither do I. But do you have any idea what it is like for a woman to be asked to submit to her husband when the focus of that husband’s life is himself, to ask her to be biblical to a man who is so far off center and so filled with self? Do you know how much bitterness that can bring into the heart of a woman?

“I am called to help this man fulfill all his self centered desires, his own plans, his own dreams, his own hopes.

That will do nothing but create bitterness in the heart of a woman and will send the family flying off center into death.

Do you know how easy it is for a Christ like woman to join a man when she sees this man is dedicated to one thing, that God’s name be glorified, that God’s kingdom advance, that his will be done. He is selfless. He is sacrificial. He dies to self.

“I am not merely an extension of him nor have... does he expect me to help him fulfill all his dreams. That man is about one thing: God’s will, God’s glory and the advancement of God’s reign.”

A woman can join herself to a man like that.

Men who take seriously this admonition, “My wife ought to submit to me,” have no idea that the greater task lay on them and not on their wives.

Now, some of you may be saying right now, “That’s right. A man needs to go out there

² Genesis 2:18.

and he needs to advance God's kingdom in the world. He needs to advance God's kingdom in China and all these places. He needs to fight against the increasing secularization of our country and he needs to be a warrior outside there outside of the home and his wife needs to help him do that."

No, because after dealing with himself, discipling himself, disciplining himself toward godliness, his next focus of mission is not the foreign field, it is his wife. She may be called to honor him. He is called to die for her. Authority in... and if the secular world understood this about preachers like me when we preached this, there would be a lot more harmony.

You see, when we talk about men having authority in the home, people automatically interpret that as a Caesar type authority as an authority that is found in Rome. Authority is power to serve one's self. But Christ, knowing where he came from and where he was going, he dressed himself in a towel like a servant and he washed his disciples' feet.

So, you see, my kingdom work begins with my wife and it doesn't begin with lecturing her or making her sit through an hour long boring Bible study taught by me. It starts by me dying to myself and delivering myself over to her.

So we want to talk about mission? This is where we are going to have to start. We can't go to the Great Commission. There is too much mess in the way, because we will just go over there and teach them to be two fold sons of hell like ourselves.

Let's just look for a moment about this authority that we men have in Ephesians.

Verse 25 of chapter five.

"Husbands, love your wives."³

How? How should I love my wife?

"Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."⁴

It is a dying to self. She does not exist to serve my purposes. She exists to help me carry out the will of God. And the first aspect of the will of God in my life as a married man to turn right back around and give my life away to her.

I am on a plane. Someone asked me, "What do you do?"

I say, "Oh, I am a husband."

"Well, what else do you do?"

³ Ephesians 5:25.

⁴ Ibid.

‘Well, I am a dad.’

“Well, what else do you do?”

“Well, if I have any time left over I preach some.”

The most important ministry in your life is your wife. God doesn't need you in the ministry. He does desire that you be obedient. The most important ministry is your wife. And how does that ministry start? As I said, not with a lecture, but with laying down your life, dying, dying, dying, dying.

Do you know most guys marry their mom? I mean, really. Your mom just wiped your nose and everything else about you, did everything for you and everything and you married someone to do the same thing.

“Well, honey, I come in and I work hard all day and you need to take care of me.”

I'm sorry. That is not the way it works in the kingdom of God. You come home and after working all day, well, suck it up, because now your work has just begun.

You say, “Well, I don't like that.”

Well, then change genders.

This is what it means to be a man before God.

We have a rule in my home. The boys and the... my little girl which is the most beautiful girl in the world, they belong to my wife until I get home. And then they are mine until they go to bed. They are mine in the bathtub. They are mine with the dirty diapers. They are mine.

You say, “Well, I am wore out.”

I am sorry.

And then it is my obligation to put them to bed. If she want to join in that, fine. It is my obligation to turn my attention toward her. When she is taken care of I can go to sleep.

You will sure watch a lot less television if you get biblical. You won't have time for it.

Man, if you have done the will of God during the day, the only thing you are going to want at the end of the day is to go to bed. And that will keep you out of a lot of trouble.

You see, it is to lay down your life for her.

Again, I can understand why people hear this thing about wives should honor and submit to their husband and husbands have authority. I can understand why some people just bristle all up and hate that, because they are always interpreting authority in light of the Roman Empire instead of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Look at this.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”⁵

Now, is he giving himself up for her just kind of, “Honey, anything you want. Here is the credit card. Go spend 10,000 dollars at the mall. You know, whatever you want, honey. Honey, just do anything you want because I am laying down my life for you”?

No.

Why did Christ lay down his life? To sanctify her. He lays down his life so that she will be more godly, so that she will be more Christ like, promoting her spiritual growth, promoting her spiritual care, her spiritual health. He doesn't do it by lording over her and legalistically demanding things from her, but nurturing her and cherishing her and setting an example for her and loving her unconditionally.

And you say, “Well, you don't know your wife.”

Let me share with you something about marriage.

You say, “I thought this was on missions.”

It is. We are going to get to that in about three hours. Just hang on. I want you to think about something.

These e-harmony things and Christian dating services and everything that search out a mate for you that is compatible. They are worthless and unbiblical. Why? It is usually not the will of God to give you a mate that is compatible. It is usually the will of God to give you a mate that is totally incompatible.

And you say, “Why?”

Because God hates you.

No, that is not the reason.

The reason is this. When you talk about Jesus, what do you talk about. You sing about, you know, the wrath of Jesus, the justice of Jesus.

⁵ Ibid.

No, you usually sing about the unconditional love of Jesus, the mercy of Jesus and the grace of Jesus.

Now, God has given you a wife that is strong in all the areas where you must be strong so that you are not tempted beyond what you can bear. But he has also given you a wife and he has keenly orchestrated her weaknesses. She will be weak in many of the areas where you most do not want her to be weak. She will be incompatible in some of the areas where before you got married you were dreaming to have a wife that was compatible in those very areas. And when you married her she found out you weren't compatible. And many of the things that you most hoped for you didn't get.

And why is that? It is God's doing. Why? How can you ever learn to love unconditionally if he gives you a person who meets all the conditions?

You see, heaven, the purpose of it is not bliss on earth even though heaven can... even though marriage can be a blessing on earth. The purpose of marriage is the purpose of everything else, to conform you to the image of Christ. So if you have a wife that just does everything right, glory to God, if you have a wife that is not compatible with you in the areas where you most want her to be compatible and she seems to be quite difficult in her character in the areas where you most want her to be easy, it is God.

It does not mean you married the wrong person. It does not mean that you should suffer through life with no purpose at all because your felt needs didn't get met. It means God is concerned about what he says he is concerned about, that you become conformed to the image of Christ, that you learn to show mercy and grace and to love a person unconditionally who doesn't meet all the conditions.

I can swap this thing around and say the same thing to the women, because your husband, neither does he meet all the conditions.

But that is the purpose of marriage.

But here is the problem. Most Christians don't want what God wants. They don't want conformity. They would rather have all their felt needs met. They don't want to learn to love unconditionally. They would rather remain loving in some humanistic, self centered, egotistical, carnal sort of way.

Am I being clear enough?

And so when we talk about mission and we talk about advancing the kingdom the first thing it is in our wives. And look what he says.

“So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”⁶

⁶ Ephesians 5:26.

It is not the responsibility of your wife to have your house filled with the Word of God. It is yours.

As a matter of fact, you will increase the bitterness in your wife by laying upon her the burdens that God gave you, gentlemen. To wash her with the Word, “That he might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”⁷

Why is he working?

Now gentlemen listen to this. Why is Christ working to sanctify his Church, his bride? So that one day he can present his bride to him, she be perfectly pleasing.

Now let me submit something to you. If after about 10 years of marriage—now there are exceptions and I don’t want to make a hard, fast rule. You may have an unconverted wife or you may have an unconverted husband. There may be circumstances I don’t understand. But just in the general rule, gentlemen, if after 10 years of marriage your wife doesn’t please you, whose fault is that?

You say, “Well, my wife doesn’t please me.”

Let me ask you the question. Have you laid down your life as Christ laid down his life for the Church? Have you worked to sanctify her through intercessory prayer and washing her through the Word? If she is not pleasing to you, maybe you have not been working and praying.

You say, “Well, what about her?”

But we are not talking about her. We are talking about the head of the home tonight.

I can almost assure that I won’t going to get asked back because husbands are going to want me to come back and say, “Well, talk something about my wife. What is she supposed to do?”

Let’s not worry about that.

You say, “Why are you talking about this? We are talking about missions.”

What kind of mission can we have if our families are just like the world? What kind of mission can we have if everything we do is just like the world except baptized? We are to be completely different than the world.

And he goes on.

⁷ Ephesians 5:27.

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.⁸

Marriage is a picture of Christ loving the Church. We are to be... our children are to be able to understand the love of Christ for his people by looking at you, dad. He is able to look and say, "Man, this is incredible. Christ loves the Church. I mean, you know, sometimes the Church is like she has got four thumbs that she can't walk two steps forward without going four steps back, that she is cumbersome, she is burdensome, she is broken, she doesn't always do right, she goes astray and everything. But, boy, I know Christ loves the Church."

"How do you know that, son?"

"By watching my dad with my mom."

It is amazing, isn't it?

Look in verse 23.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."⁹

There is a sense in which the husband should be the Savior of the wife. Now we are not talking about redemption here from sin or anything else, but we are talking about this. Because of the relationship that woman has with this man, because of this man the salvation of God is more apparent in her life. She is prospering. She is whole. She is strengthened.

You can pretty much tell a marriage by looking a while at the wife. The same with a flower. Pick a flower and put it away in the darkness. Bring the thing out. It is withered, bent over. The whole countenance drops.

You see women like that everywhere. But a woman who is loved...

Let me show you the difference, men. You take two women and they are very, very dedicated to their husbands, extremely dedicated. But one woman is filled with joy and the other one is filled with bitterness. And what is the difference? The one woman serves her husband so that he will love her. The other woman serves the husband because he does love her.

She has nothing to gain by the service. If she were to drop the ball, the love is still there. If she were to fail, the love is still there.

⁸ Ephesians 5:28-29.

⁹ Ephesians 5:23.

Men, it doesn't mean you are Christ like because you become a missionary. As a matter of fact, I was a missionary for years before I was saved and I looked so spiritual. I was a missionary for years before I was married and I looked so spiritual until I got married. Then I didn't look very spiritual anymore because the real Paul Washer, the self centered me and my ministry just sprung out all over the place.

Another thing. Look in chapter six verse four.

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”¹⁰

Your mission field? Bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. That does not mean that you make sure they are in Sunday school. That means that you, you pour out your life into them. Whatever life is left after pouring it into your wife, you pour it into your children.

And I want to say this. Your children are not more important than your wife.

Let me put it this way. If you were in a boat with your wife and two children and you were the only one who could swim and the boat was sinking, you would be obligated if you could save only one, gentlemen, to save your wife, to save your wife. She is the only one with whom you are one flesh.

And you say, “Well, the children...”

I want to tell you something. If I love my wife first above every other person on the face of the earth, my children are going to be the happiest children on the face of the earth. They are going to know this home is solid as a rock. Daddy is not going anywhere.

Have you ever heard there is no love like a mother's love? That is not really biblical.

Now, I am going to say something and it is going to make... please, some of you larger men, when the women come forward with claws and horns about ready to tear me apart, jump up and do something. But let me share with you something. I have no doubt that there is a special love between women and their children. But one of the reasons why children are so precious to their mothers, one of the reasons—and I am going to say something very hard, but it is for the purpose of you understanding—it is because the mother feeding off those children like a parasite. Yes. Her husband is not providing her with the emotional care and love, nurturing, cherishing, holding, caring for her. And she feels barren and she is getting, taking from her children the love she is not getting from her husband. She must be loved. She must be held. She must be cared for. And so she creates a bond with her children because there is no bond with her man.

¹⁰ Ephesians 6:4.

Now those are hard things to say if you think about it. She has to get from her children. And children can become greatly embittered when they are demanded to take on roles that they were never called to take.

You see, gentlemen, when we drop the ball the whole thing falls apart. The whole thing falls apart.

Nurture and cherish and your children need to know that the most important person on the face of the earth to you is your mother, is their mother and your wife. And if they know that, they will be the happiest, most secure children on the face of the earth. And if they know that, then your sons will learn how to love a woman by looking at you and your daughter will not fall for every 18 year old screwball that comes by because she will go, "I have seen what a man looks like in my dad and you don't look like him. I have seen the way a man is supposed to love a woman, and you do not love that way, you snotty nosed little boy."

I am teaching my daughter to talk like that. And both of her brother are in wrestling class, too. And I figured out I can get off 21 rounds before he makes it down my road. I have got this thing figured out.

So when we talk about missions... and then your children. Years ago, because the Lord always looks for the weakest person to work through. I call it the Gideon's call. He called me to start a mission that supports missionaries all over the world now. But those missionaries are not the arrows in my quiver. The arrows in my quiver are in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. One is six, one is four and one is eight months. And did I mention she is the most beautiful girl on the face of the earth?

They are the ones that must be shot forth.

What does it matter if a man gain the whole world and lose his children? What does it matter if a man wins the whole world or starts churches all over the world and loses his children?

Gentlemen, it is hard to be a man. It is difficult to be a man. It is tiresome to be a man. But to be a man means to give and to give and to give and to give.

You say, "What about me?"

There is your problem. That is never the question.

Well, I have got to love myself to be able to love others.

That is not what Jesus meant when he said that. When Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and we have taken that and twisted it into the most ridiculous... oh, I have got to love me before I can love anybody else.

No. That is now that Jesus is saying. God never says that we don't love ourselves enough. He says you love yourself too much. Now love your neighbor that way.

Freudian psychology and everything else has crept into the Church. It is horrible.

You are to pour out your life for them. And in that you will find joy. You will. And you will find something spectacular that instead of sneaking off with your golf clubs, being willing to bear the wrath of your wife when you come home, instead of sneaking out the door with your hunting boots and bow and arrows thinking maybe I can catch a few minutes before she comes back, you will find that if you give yourself to her, she will say to you, every once in a while, "Honey, here is your bow. Here is your arrows."

That is what my wife does. "Here is your bow. Here is your arrows. Now go be revived in the Lord by killing something."

One time I was going out. I am not kidding. I had my bow and everything and I am going out and I turned around and I looked at my wife and I said, "Honey," I said, "You know, I have... this year... just pray and ask God to let me kill something."

And I turned around and she goes, "What kind of prayer is that?"

But you will find her reciprocating. And if she doesn't, that is not why you are doing it. You are doing it in obedience to God and to be able to bring people into your home and when they look at your home you evangelize them without saying a word. People come into your home and they are evangelized by the love they find there.

You see, men, there is a big world out there that doesn't know Jesus. But one of the greatest problems has not been the lack of American missions going abroad. One of the greatest problems to the missionary endeavor in the world is that American missions have gone aboard and they have brought with them the same malady that we find here, superficial Christianity. Prayer a prayer, go to church, little or no transformation or transformation in the individual, but not transformation collectively as a body, as a family or as a church.

And so we begin there with our families.

Now, but now we are going to take another step into the local church. Now I want to share with you something because men are going to do this. I know you.

You are going to say, "Well, you know, pastor, I can't do as much in the church because I really need to concentrate on my wife and my children."

Well, maybe you are terribly busy doing too many things in the church and maybe that is true. As a matter of fact, the church is burdened down with doing so many things it was never called to do because men aren't doing what they were called to do in the family that the Church can't do what it is called to do which is the Great Commission.

But, gentlemen, be very careful about this: when the church is the first thing that you cut out of your life.

“Oh, you know, my family is so important, my wife and my children. I have learned that. It is a wonderful teaching. And I have got to do that and I have got to draw back from church.”

But why is church always the first thing you always draw back from and not your extra curricular activities?

Those go first, not ministry among the body of Christ.

If we were something of Pentecostal or something I could do this illustration tonight, but I would be afraid to do it here lest I offend someone. Sometimes I will ask a young man. I will say, “Come up to the front.” And he will come up to the front. And I say, “I want you to run to those back doors as fast as you can and run back,” and they do.

And then I tell them. I say, “Now, I want you to pick up one leg in your hand, cuff it with your hand and I want you to do the same thing.”

And so they take off very slowly hopping back sweating, struggling, looking rather foolish and taking four times the time.

And then I will tell him, “Now grab the other leg.” And sometimes they try to do that.

What do they teach kids today in school?

But I... the point that I try to make with that is I removed one member from your body and it could no longer function except to hop and skip and struggle and sweat and make almost no progress at all by removing one member from your body.

How much does this church struggle and languish because you believe that membership just means you attend here on Sunday? You have not identified your gifts. You are not exercising them in the body. You just come and think you are a good Christian because you are faithful, to sing collectively and listen to a sermon.

Isn't it amazing? The church is the only place where the workers are doing their job if the only thing they do is eat and get fed. It is to be a part of a body.

Several years ago Bill Clinton came up with the idea that the way to really get elected would be to say, “It is the economy, stupid.”

My pastor back home, Jeff Noblett, he said one time he wanted to make t-shirts and said, “It is the church, stupid.”

We have no idea how important the local church is for God as his bride. It is the thing that Christ gave his life for. People have no loyalty today, collective loyalty to the body. And so don't think about doing missions unless you are thinking about doing missions through a local community that you don't come to or skip to every once in a while, but that you are dedicated to, that you are practically serving.

Now, I know I am going a little long, but don't worry about me. I am not tired.

Now I want you to think about something. I want to show you how twisted we can twist Scripture and also how important love in the body, practical, hard working love is in the body of Christ.

Ok. So we have got sheep, goats and they are divided and Jesus gives the reason for their division. "I was in prison and you didn't visit me. I was hungry and you didn't feed me. I was naked. You didn't clothe me." On and on and on.

And so we take this text and say, "This is a basis... this right here proves that we need to have a prison ministry. This right here proves that we need to feed the poor."

It does no such thing, sir. That is not what that text is about.

Now, we need to have prison ministries and we need to feed the poor, but that is not what Jesus is talking about and when we think it is, the text loses all its power. Jesus is not saying, "I was a pedophile in prison and you didn't visit me."

That is not what he is saying. What is he saying?

Well, let's just put it in an illustration. Let's say that this is first century Christianity. We have all met in the catacombs one night and we dismiss after our service, after our little church service and as we are making our way back one of the elders is caught by the Roman guard, thrown off into prison.

Now, I learned a lot when I was in the third world. One thing you need to know about the third world is the prisons are different. There were prisons where if you were thrown into that prison, if someone from the outside of that prison did not bring you water, food and clothing you were going to die because you didn't get those things in that prison.

Now, so we find out one of the elders or just let's say a brand new believer in Christ that is not an elder has just been caught as a Christian and thrown into that prison. And we come together that night, call an emergency meeting and we say, "Look, he was beaten terribly. He has got wounds. He is going to get infected. He is going to die. He doesn't have anything to drink. He has no clothing. They ripped it off of him. Somebody has got to go. We have got to go.

And so one man says, "I'll go. Just give me the stuff and I'll go."

And someone says, “Yeah, but if you go and are identified with him, they are going to throw you in prison, too. They are going to kill you, too.”

“Yeah, but that is not the question, is it? It is my brother and I love him and I have got to go. I don’t have an option. I am sorry. The other option is not to go and prove that I have never been regenerated, that I am a goat who does not love the people of God. I have no choice.”

He is saying there ... he is not saying that the sheep have saved themselves because of their love for the other sheep. He is saying that the sheep have shown themselves to be sheep by the love they manifested in the community of faith, by the practical, real love they manifested in the community, that they were willing to lay down their life for another brother in that small community.

And you say, “Well, when that happens, I will do it.”

It may not every happen. But you have countless opportunities every day to lay down your life in practical service for the community and if you are just someone who comes to church, worships a bit, listens to a sermon and goes home, you may be a goat. If you are useless to the body of Christ you may be reprobate because Romans chapter three says one of the descriptions of the reprobate, those disapproved of God is that they have all gone astray. Together they have become useless.

Are you useless to the will of God? Are you useless to the body of Christ? What do you do? What do you contribute? How do you serve? How do you love? How do you care?

Oh, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.

Did anyone ever read the other part? It is not to listen just to sermons and sing. It is to encourage. It is to stimulate one another, especially as the day draws near.

Missions? You want to do missions? We have got some housecleaning to do.

Now, gentlemen, I don’t want to comfort you at all. That is why I very rarely preach. When I am pointing out sin I very rarely say we, because I don’t want you to feel like you are in a group of sinners and therefore can gain comfort by it. I just want to say you, you, you, you. Put the spotlight on you, make you feel horrible. It is my gift.

But I want to tell you this. Everything I am preaching here—and draw no comfort from this and do not use it as an excuse. Do you think these are not struggles in my own life? Do you think it is hard to preach? I mean, that is not hard. Do you think it is hard to serve on the mission field? I mean, I don’t want to take anything away from missionaries. I was a missionary. But that hasn’t been the hardest thing I have ever had to do. The hardest thing I have ever had to do was obey God in these things that somehow seem not to be so important to us.

It is not difficult, really, to obey God in big things. I mean, a guy put a gun to your head and a special grace comes upon you and you look at it and go, "Well, this is interesting." But you don't fall away. God just does something to you. But it is the daily struggles of being obedient so that there is real Christianity in my home, real Christianity in my life.

I am capable of any heinous crime. I am. We all know that. But to be barely honest with you I do not struggle. I will not struggle tonight with should I go out to a tavern. I won't. My struggle in the faith is not, you know, these horrid, big sins that can so ruin a man's life. I weep over my inability to love my wife as Christ loves the Church. I weep over my self centeredness. It pulls me away from my children. I weep over the desire to build a kingdom. I don't want to be a great preacher. I don't want to have a great mission. I just want to be biblical in little things.

People always ask me: What can we pray for?

Well, I am going to tell every one of you so you don't have to ask me that question. Here is what you need to pray for. Pray that I will be a godly husband. That is the only thing you need to pray for me about.

Why? Because if I can do that, everything else will fall in place.

I am pleading with you to be mission minded, but to do missions with a life, with a life, with a life, you see.

Just to close: what is the great need on the mission field? Truth, not money, not clothing, truth. It is the only thing we have. It is the only thing that can fix your life and fix whatever out there is broken. Truth. You will know the truth and it would set you free.

You have sat under godly teaching in this place. You have heard things about family. There is counseling here. There is all sorts of things and you still see how much you struggle? Now imagine being a Christian in a far off land like Lebanon where no one has ever even heard a teaching like this on the family. They need truth. They need expository preaching. They need systematic theology. They need real, genuine, not fake, biblical counseling.

I have to say that because what is called biblical counseling today is nothing more usually than baptized psychology. They need real counseling to know how to do it, that the Scriptures are sufficient. They need... fathers need to know how much their daughters need them. They need to know what their sons are expecting from them, not from some statistic or latest psychological fad, from Scripture.

Men need to know what their wives desire, not because they are ungodly desires, but because God built them a certain way. In them it is a holistic, real Christianity.

I was amazed when I started finding out these things. I had preached the gospel in parks. I have been bombed out and bullets and everything else you can imagine. But still there

was something in my life that said Christianity has to be something more. It just doesn't seem that solid.

And then I began to meet men who were serious about Scripture, serious about the sufficiency of Scripture, that is in the Christian life there can be a solidity, a realness. I don't feel that realness just because I jump up on a park bench and begin to preach. But when I die to self and love my wife as I am supposed to I walk away feeling like this is a rock. This is real. This is something that can be shown to someone else, you see.

Just as a recommendation—and all you men will hate me for this, I assure you. Stuart Scott's book *Exemplary Husband* will beat you to death if you read it correctly. Read it. Read it and ponder it.

Men, we need to go to the world. But we can't jump over everything else and neglect the most important Scriptures and commands in order to do so.

Let's pray.

Father, I need so much grace. Let it never be thought that I am lecturing men as an expert. It is the Word of God and it breaks my heart into a million pieces as much as anyone else here tonight. Oh, that we might be truly conformed to Christ.

Oh God, help the men in this church to take their place as men, to encourage one another as men, to strive to laying down their lives for their wives and then for their children, to hold one another accountable. Oh God, I thank you for the men that you have put in my life to hold me accountable. One man who just calls me just once a week asking this question over the answering machine. Paul, have you taken your wife out on a date this week? If not, you are in sin, repent. Oh, God, thank you for him.

Oh, Lord, let us live. Give us grace that our Christianity be real and worthy of taking to the nations. In Jesus' name. Amen.