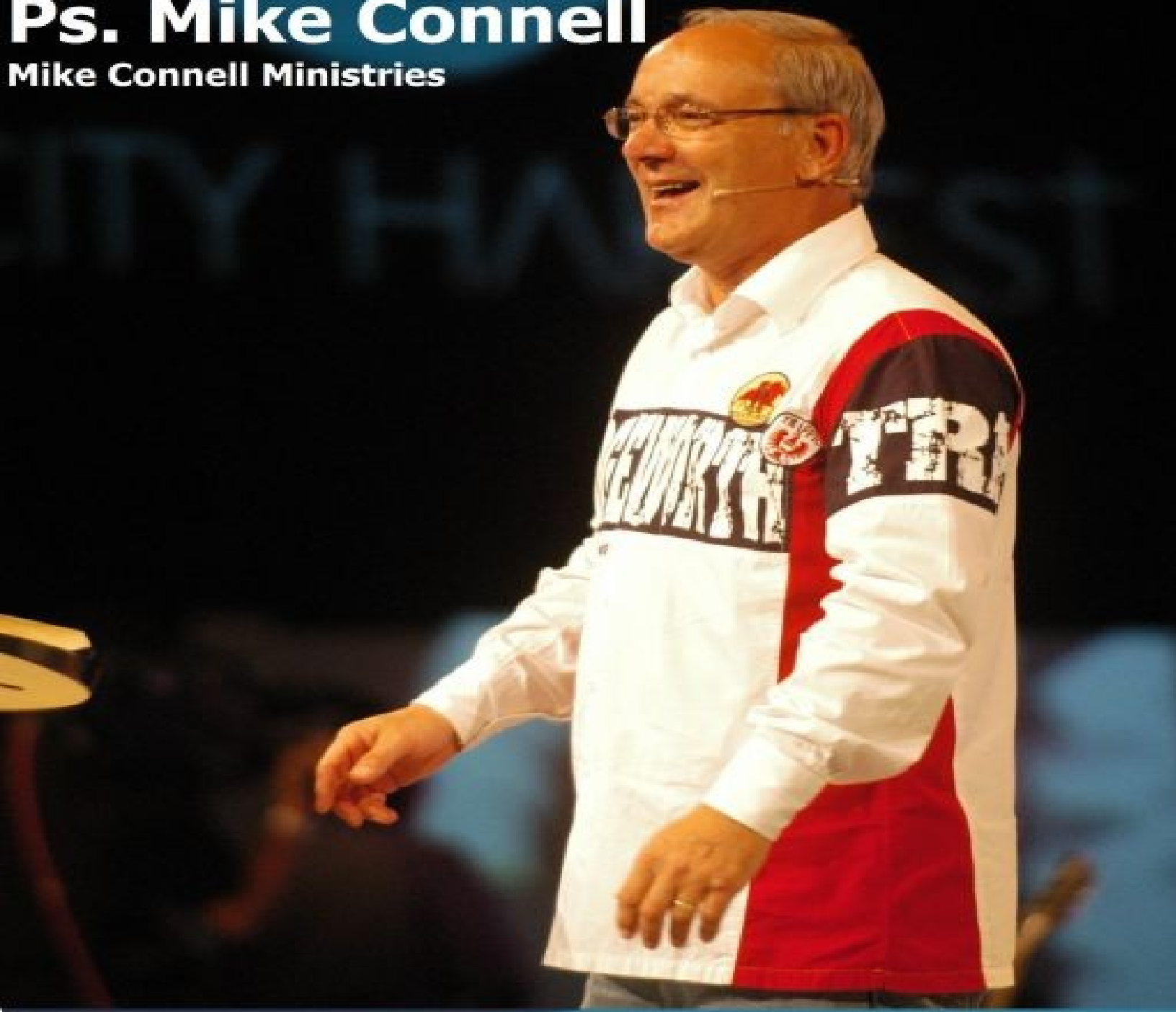
Foundations for Fruit-bearing

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CONNELL MINISTRIES 2012 Sermon

Foundations for Fruit-bearing

 Audio Transcript of a Regular Sunday Sermon

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Summary: *This is about people who are walking with God, moving in the supernatural, but there's something really missing in what they do and how they do it. It's not that they aren't seeing results - they're seeing people healed, delivered, touched by the presence or power of God, but there's something missing at the core of their being. Notice what He says: 1) I didn't know you; 2) you did your own thing*



Foundations for Fruit Bearing

Sun 6 May 2012 AM

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Okay, just let's open our Bible in Titus, Chapter 2 again; and we're doing a series we started last week, and it was Zealous for Good Works [Sun 29 Apr 2012 AM]. I want to go back to the key verse on this. We'll just keep repeating the key verse, and God wants you to be productive with your life. One of the greatest concerns to me as a Pastor is, over the years, to watch people fritter away their life. You've only got one life to live and there's so much at stake; so for the first term we were sharing, giving an eternal perspective, and what's at stake for you; to live your life powerfully now, and to live it for God.

But then it raises the practical thing; well we're called to do something, not just come to meetings. And meetings are great, but that's not what Christian life is about. Meetings are to build you, so you can live out the Christian life; and the Christian life is about doing the works of Christ. Today I want to share with you just what I call Foundations for Fruitbearing. Foundations for fruitbearing - and then in another session I'll begin to show you how you can identify what Jesus has called you specifically to do, but as you'll see in this, all of us are called to do this, and this is a key to be actually effective. So let's just look at a couple of scriptures where we were, then we'll give you something new today.

So have a look in Titus 2 verse 14, and it says: Looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing, of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every inequity, or all inequity; and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Jesus gave His life for a purpose. It was not just to get you to Heaven. If you think in those terms, you miss that His message was about the kingdom. The purpose of God originally, for man, was to be His representative on earth, and advance His kingdom in the earth - to bring Heaven to earth. It has not changed.

In Revelation we see people, and they are reigning on earth. You have to get a perspective, you're called to change this world we live in, not run away from it. We're called to influence it. We're called to bring the kingdom of Heaven to it, and that's not something about praying for revival. This is about you engaging with God personally, and expressing His life through the things you do, the works you do. And so the question then comes up: well what does God want me to do? We'll address that in another session. This is a foundation to it.

Let's have a look in Matthew Chapter 7. Go back to there where we were; Matthew, Chapter 7 - because we saw that the difficulty was, when you just end up running around being busy, doing all of this and all of that; God is - His purpose is, that we be passionate and active advancing His kingdom; but one of the key things that we saw last time, was that intimacy with the Lord is crucial to knowing what He wants you to do. No one can tell you what He wants you to do. You've got to discover it for yourself.

The second thing we saw, was that the way you go about doing what you do, is also very important. In other words, not just go out and do your own thing. There's an alignment with Heaven that's important, so let's have a look in Matthew 7 verse 21. Not everyone who says: 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. He that does the will of my Father in Heaven; for many will say in that day, speaking of the coming day of judgement, day of the Lord, that: we prophesied, and we cast out demons. Wow, we worked some great miracles. Yay, He said. I declare to you: I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice inequity.

This is an incredibly serious passage, so if you interpret that this is about people being saved or not saved - you've missed it. This is about people who are walking with God, moving in the supernatural, but there's something really missing in what they do, and how they do it. It's not that they aren't seeing results. They are seeing people healed, they are seeing people delivered, they are seeing people touched by the presence or power of God, but there's something missing at the core of their being. Notice what He says: two things; one, I didn't know you; and two, you did your own thing. To work inequity is to just do your own thing; whatever's

in your life, do what you feel to do, what you think to do. There's a core of lawlessness around that.

So if we just go back and look at the big picture, Jesus is talking - this is the end of a message. Now notice this. In Matthew, Chapter 5, 6 and 7, it's all one block of teaching. This is the end of it; and so things usually progress from an introduction to a finale, so the introduction is: Blessed are the poor in Spirit; so the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount are the core attitudes and values of the kingdom, that we need to welcome and cultivate in our life. Secondly, He begins to talk about doing works. He says: let your light so shine before men, that they see your good works, and that they glorify your Father in Heaven. So He moves from: having the values of the kingdom; to doing the works of the kingdom. Then He comes to the very final conclusion and He says that: not all of those works will be of great value. Actually, I'm going to look over all you do, and I'll be looking: did this come out of intimacy, and relationship, and alignment with my will?

So in the very final part of this, first He starts: you need to build kingdom perspectives and thinking in your life. Secondly: get engaged doing something productive for the kingdom; and thirdly: align your life with the will of the Father. Don't just do your own thing. Not everyone that says 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of Heaven; its speaking of coming into the realms of glory in this coming kingdom. He said: no. He said: those who do the will of my Father; and then He tells a story, and it's all about hearing and doing. So we see then God wants you to have kingdom values and thinking in your life. In other words, the core value system shifted; secondly, to be productive, and active in doing things; but thirdly, to ensure your life is aligned with what God has for you, and we need to learn how to align it.

So what I want to do is, to look at what I consider essential foundations; and they're found in one passage of scripture. It's very, very interesting that when Jesus was in the Last Supper, remember at the Last Supper it says this; it says: Jesus, knowing where He came from - in other words knowing He was from above, knowing His origins were Heaven, and knowing that He went back to Heaven - it says: and knowing the Father had given everything into His hands. In other words, He knew His

identity. He knew His destiny, He knew what He was called to do, and it says: He girded Himself, and He served; and He served in the lowest role, as a servant.

He was not worried about what anyone thought about Him. He has eternity in mind. I know where I've come from, I know where I'm going, and because of that, I'm committed totally to serve the Father's purpose. There's nothing too low or too small for me to do, and the Bible says to have that same kind of thinking. What you do, flows out of who you are. If you're mean, you'll do mean things. If you're angry, you'll do angry things. If you're selfish, you'll do selfish things; so in other words, what he's saying is: out of what you are, flows the flavour of what you do.

Remember Jesus spoke of the Pharisees in Matthew 6, and He warned His disciples. He said: listen, when you pray, do your praying in secret. Why? Because the Pharisees pray out openly. Their whole agenda is to be seen by men. No reward for them in Heaven. When you give, don't let people see what you're giving. Do it in secret. He's saying this is about the whole motivation. The Pharisees were full of pride, and so pride flowed in what they did. You can't stop what you are coming through in what you do, and that's got a plus side and a minus side. The plus side is, be yourself and enjoy what God has gifted you with, and express it fully in light. The other side is, if there are character issues, they will come out as well; and so we want to look at that now, and I want to show you something that's actually full of promises. This is amazing scripture.

Look with me in 2 Timothy, Chapter 1. So we're called to be ambassadors. We're not just called to fulfil a destiny and have self-fulfilment. See, people who coach you, or life coaches, will talk all about your desires, your dreams and your destiny; but if you contact the Holy Spirit who's the best life coach of all, He'll talk about the will of the Father, and they don't always line up unfortunately.

There's a thing called the cross; about learning to walk in what God wants for you; so we have a real danger, if we look to the world to direct how we run our life, we'll end up missing what God has purposed for us. Now let's come to 2 Peter, Chapter 1. Here it is: Now Simon - Verse 1 - Simon Peter, a bond servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, said: those

who've obtained, like precious faith with us, by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ - that's us. See, Peter the apostle, speaking to us, who have got like faith. We believe in Jesus, okay? Verse 2: Grace and peace be multiplied to you, through the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ; and then He says: as this divine power given to us, everything that pertains to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him, who called us by glory and virtue, by whom we've been given exceeding great and precious promise, that through these you may become partakers of His divine nature, having escaped the corruption that's in the world through lust.

So he's saying: this is a message for believers. This is for people who've been born again. This is a message for people who are coming to grow in their knowledge of God. He says: I want you to notice very carefully what I have to say to you. He says this in Verse 5 through to 11: Also for this very reason, because of what you're called to be and do, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, perseverance to Godliness, Godliness to brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness, love.

Now, He tells us to add something into your life. These are all qualities of character. This is about the kind of person you are. Then He says: for - and He gives reasons for it - if these things are yours, and abound in you - now notice this - they will ensure you are not barren or unfruitful. Now if I could say to you: listen, I can guarantee to you, that you will be not barren and unfruitful; neither will you fail and fall, if you put certain things into your life; you would want to do those things. Well He's listed them here, so they're not so hard to understand. So here it is - and you notice there's some things that He tells us about it: to make sure that you'll neither be barren or unfruitful, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who lacks these things is short-sighted, and even to blindness; has forgotten he's cleansed from his old sins; so be diligent - there's the word diligent again. Verse 5 - diligent. Verse 10 - diligent.

Why should you be diligent to put them in? Because it's all about the call of God, and His selection for the kingdom, so He says: really be diligent. Twice He tells you: be diligent; and then He says: be diligent to make your calling election sure; if you do these things, you'll never stumble,

and an abundant entrance will be supplied to you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. He goes on to describe what that will be like a little later. Let's pick the passage up now.

So notice what he's saying here: add - or the word literally, add; be diligent to add to yourself. Now that word means to thoroughly furnish your house, so can you imagine having an empty house. Empty house is not a very great place to live in. You know, you've got a hard floor, you've got nothing to eat with; and he's saying: furnish your house thoroughly. Now you are the house, and he's saying: furnish it with certain kinds of things. Then He lists the things to furnish it with, and let's have a look what you are called to furnish your life with - and every one of us is called to do this. He says: add to your faith.

You can't put these things into your life by attending a prayer meeting. You can't put these things into your life by attending a Bible Study. You can only put these things in your life, as you do what God called you to do. They are things you develop in your life, that ensure what you're doing is productive and fruitful, and qualifies for reward; so all that God calls us to do, and whatever we're going to be doing, here's a grid to look at and see: how am I operating? What is showing up in my life, as I do these things? And you'll see they're quite easy to look at, quite easy to deal with. Nothing in God is complicated, so let's see what we're called to add, or develop, as we serve people.

It always comes down to serving people. It always comes down to a person, that you will help them in life. It's always going to come to that; and if we avoid connecting and engaging with people in life, we are never going to fulfil all of these things, it just isn't possible. It requires an engagement with people; so here it goes. Let's have a look at it. Add to your - giving all diligence, or being really passionate and zealous about this, add to your faith. So you've come to believe in Jesus Christ. Now he's saying: add to your faith virtue, so I looked up the meaning of the word virtue. The word virtue means these two things: it means excellence; or purity. So we'll just stick with the word purity.

Purity has to do with the motivations of your heart, and has to do with also sexual cleanness, because sexual uncleanness defiles our capacity

to love God, and to love people. It builds walls in our heart, and hardens our heart from being loving people; so what he's saying is then: as you work, as you serve, check out the motivations of your heart; and check out the purity of your life, what kinds of things you're looking at, what kinds of things you're touching, what kinds of things you're involved with. What is operating in your life as you serve?

He's saying: add to your faith purity, because God is separating for Himself, or calling on people to be clean. It's not going to mean, we're not going to have wrong motives at times, or we're not going to have sexual temptations. What it means, He's saying: be diligent to work on your life, so these areas clean up as you journey with God; and you may have, or have come into your Christian life with, areas where there's been major sexual sin, major bondage of sin. Then make it a point of focus for your life, that you will address these hidden bondages that keep defiling your life, and you begin to work to develop cleanness and purity. Courses are run in the church. These things can help you to address those areas of your life.

So He says: add to you; so it's obvious, it must be possible to add to us, and the Holy Ghost will continually work on you to challenge your motives, and also to point out where what you're doing is actually defiling your relationship with God. So be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and be aware of His promptings: hey, your motivation in that wasn't so good, or there was uncleanness in your thinking. There was uncleanness in your heart, or you're entertaining things in your heart. So He said: make it your pursuit, you will separate yourself from the defiling influence of sexual sin in the world.

Now listen young people, it just comes at you left, right and centre; like a bombardment comes. It comes through the media, it comes through the school, it comes through the culture; and what He's saying is: if you're going to be fruitful you've got to add purity to your life. You've got to actually be committed to sexual purity, to purity on the inside, and in your relationships. Why? Because you can never represent Christ well, if sexual sin is operating in your life. It brings a condemnation, and it steals your testimony with those who know what you've been doing.

So what he's saying is: clean up your act, begin to commit to sexual purity. Why? Because He said: God will deal with all of this thing, this defiles people, and stops them engaging in intimacy in all levels of life. So there's Verse 1: add into your life; so that's a bit of a journey. How many say that's a bit of journey? All of those over 60 would say: yes, it doesn't go away. Doesn't go away until after you die. You've still got to push against this thing, and maintain purity in your life; otherwise it just will keep coming in, and when it comes in, it will steal intimacy with God, and it will steal out your testimony.

You ever noticed, no matter how great people have come into governmental office, if they fail sexually, somehow it disqualifies them out of the office? Doesn't matter how big it is. You know, the President of the United States failed sexually; he's out of office. Great giftings, great charisma, great potential, did a lot of great work; but fell out of office through just this whole area, didn't deal with this thing in His life. Number one, sexual purity. Okay, number two: I said add to purity, add to purity knowledge. That's word is experiential knowledge you've got, in other words, commit to growing in knowledge, spiritual knowledge, and spiritual understanding; so we need to apply ourself to learning from God.

You need to apply yourself to that. If you cry for understanding, you lift up your voice for knowledge, the Holy Spirit will teach you; but to do that, you've got to want to, and put yourself reading the word of God. You see, there are many different kinds of knowledge, and let me just give you a scripture in Colossians 1, Verse 9 and 10. It says: be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. So God wants you to know what His will is. How am I going to find out? I'll give you it in more detail, because you can't find the will of God and be filled with knowledge and understanding, except you pursue Him, and get to know Him better; study the life of Jesus, study what He taught, begin to start to apply what He taught to your life. Hunger for the Holy Spirit to show you things, and He will begin to increase your knowledge of God, and your spiritual understanding.

A lot of people seek for - now there's wisdom in the world. There is a lot of wisdom to be found in secular society, but you will not find the wisdom of God there. You'll find the wisdom of God in the word of God, and with

the Holy Ghost; so ensure that in all you're seeking, that you place wisdom of God in relationship to life at the highest level. You can be helped or coached in this and that, but if you lose spiritual wisdom and understanding of where God is wanting you to direct your life, all of that will actually count for nothing in the long term of eternity.

Here's the next thing He says: so add to your pursuit of purity, add knowledge. Then the third one says: add to knowledge. Oh, I've got to add some more things! Self-control. Oh my! That means control yourself, manage yourself. So what is that? Let's just give it really clearly, really simple: He's saying: do not let anything get a hold of your life; so that there's a part of your life in bondage. So in other words, control your tongue. Stop gossiping, stop cutting people down, stop backbiting, stop bickering, control your tongue. Control your body. Don't eat until your body is so big, you're going to have a heart attack. Don't leave your body so neglected, that it now can no longer carry you through the course God wants you to toe. Deal with your soul. Manage your soul. Deal with anger issues in your heart. Anger's a big issue for people today, a lot of angry people around. Doesn't take much to fire up - someone cuts across in front of them. Next minute they're yelling [speaks loudly - blah, blah, blah, blah, blah!] And that's just on the way to church you know...

Congregation: [Laughter]

...and then they're going to come and hold their hands, and you know [laughs] Jesus, I love you, you know? Jesus says: I saw what you did down the road. I was watching, see. So self-control, managing your emotional life, managing the areas of your inner life. That's not controlling everything, suppressing. It's actually developing healthy emotions, and learning how to address issues of anger, and various other things that come up in our emotional life and physical life. Okay, self-control. There we go, managing your money, managing addictions or dealing with addictions in your life; addictions to food, addictions to internet, addictions to anything. Anything that's got control over your life, deal with it. It's about bringing balance to your life. Get the idea? Bringing balance round your life: managing your money.

Okay, next one, so add to self-control, got to add something else. Add to self-control perseverance. Now that word perseverance, literally it means to maintain a positive attitude during setbacks and disappointments. Now how do you develop that? You actually develop it in life. You know one of the areas you most have to develop perseverance? That's being involved as a leader, in a small group. Anyone committed to discipling people, anyone's who's serious about the great commission, that gets involved with people - perseverance is a must. People do stuff. That's why self-control is needed, because you get angry, take it personally and think you're rejected by them. No, they're just doing stuff.

But in order to fulfil the great commission, be fruitful and work with people, we have to manage our emotions; we have to also develop the ability to stay on task, don't quit, don't complain, don't feel sorry for yourself, don't whine, and don't run things down. In other words, it's saying: keep a joyful attitude in tough times, because they won't last; but if you've got a great attitude, God will come into that, and it'll work out somehow for you good at the end of it. Well, how many people just quit before they produce fruit? Ah, just kind of quit, gave up on that, gave up on this, gave up on that, gave up on that, and actually where they were bearing fruit, they actually stop bearing fruit any more.

I think God always leads you from one fruit bearing thing to another; and sometimes people quit, because they're just weary and tired. The Bible says in Galatians 6: don't be weary in well doing. So it tells us that, because you get tired doing good. You get tired working with people, you get tired discipling people. You get tired trying to help them sort out their problems. You get tired with the silly stuff they get caught up in, you get tired with the smallness. All of these things are very tiring, so you've got to develop a good attitude inside, that you persevere; because this is about the kingdom, it's about the business of Almighty God, and this is important business, the business of working with people.

It's very easy to withdraw from that, and engage in something that you feel good with; but the work of the Gospel is a work discipling people, and all are called to do it in some way or another, and you want to try and find ways that you can get engaged and get involved in that, but everyone is called. That is the mandate given to the church. Everything serves that

mandate. Everything we do is to serve this purpose of discipling people to be followers of Christ; and if you've ever worked with a new Christian, you'll realise how much energy and effort is needed, how much persistence is needed. I think of the teams that are out on the street, the teams that go to the prisons, the teams who work with - people who work in the small groups. This is a work that requires perseverance; and here's the great thing: if you commit to the work, you develop the perseverance. [Laughs] There's no way you'll develop perseverance without giving yourself to something; and this is God, be positive!

Okay, then the next thing is this: add to your perseverance godliness. Oh! After all this, you've got to add something else! That word godliness means literally respect, or reverence to God, so what it's saying then is, develop constantly respect for God. I could spend a lot of time talking about respect for God, but here's the thing; familiarity breeds disrespect in every area of life, and disrespect separates you from what you're disrespecting. Disrespect money, and you'll be in debt. It'll flee from you. Disrespect a relationship, and it will break down. Disrespect God, and you'll find yourself religious, and not full of the Holy Ghost. He will not be disrespected. You've got to understand that. It's not that we can't disrespect God. It's just He won't be defiled by that. He'll just draw back from you, and this is the dilemma.

I want to be quite practical about this. I want you to think about the Sunday meeting we're in now. Is this a Sunday Church Meeting, or is this a meeting with God? You've got to decide that. If it's a meeting with God, respect Him, and turn up on time. Respect the people who are here to start on time, and be there on time. Respect by participating, and being involved and engaging; rather than chattering and making everyone's job really hard. This is respect. That's what it looks like, and it's not only respect for God. It's impossible to respect Him, without giving respect to His people. Jesus, when Paul was persecuting the church, Jesus said: why do you persecute me? Jesus says: you did this to the least of my brethren, you did it to me. Now that - you can't get clearer than that, so one thing is to respect God, and to show reverence to Him, and to show honour to Him in our heart attitude, and the way we treat Him.

We show respect for His person. We show respect for His presence, and we show respect for His words; when you listen to His words, take in His words, you're showing respect for His words. I'll challenge on something else now. I want you to have a think about this. On the internet you can go and you can search for messages all over the world, and there's many preachers, and there's great preachers, and they're all over the world. But there's not many are here in this house that are telling you what God's saying to us at this time, so the words are important. If you go out - and I'm not saying not look around and feed off some things, but what you've got to realise is, God talks to us as a community. He talks to us about what He's wanting US to come into. Often it's parallel with what He's saying around the world, or in certain areas, or to prophetic people; but many times it's actually quite specific and relevant to us; and so when God is speaking to us, the messages He's bringing prophetically comes to actually instruct us on what He's wanting us to grow into. It's important you get the messages, and see what God is saying, and how He wants to apply it to your life, otherwise you just have a disrespect for it; and then what happens is, you're disrespecting the one who's sent the message.

I wait every week for what God wants to say to the church. See, if I wanted to get an easier way of doing that, I'd just copy someone's message. I need to know what God is saying to us; and He's right through this year, speaking on a whole number of areas: eternal perspective; and now he's talking for us on becoming productive with the Gospel in the community. He's trying to shift the whole church, but we need to understand that if I respect Jesus, I respect what He's saying, and He can speak to you through many different ways. I'm only one of that ways. He'll speak to you through other areas of life, other ways in life but I need to be open to what God is saying; and respect his words by taking them in, thinking about them, and looking how they would apply to my life. Add to your life godliness, respect for God, and His word, and for His people.

I have found that anyone who disrespects the people of God, and the house of God, generally they're not in a good shape with God himself. They're usually in a state of deception; so just look around. Around you is

Christ, in a human form. We say: I can love you Jesus, but oh, that person next to me, I don't - they give me the creeps.

Congregation: [Laughter]

Well they may well do, and there may be some junk and baggage they're carrying, but that doesn't mean you should disrespect them, or speak negatively about them, or treat them badly, or cut them out of your life by cold love, and being cold to them. That totally misrepresents Christ, who shows cold love to no one; shows rather warm, loving, acceptance to people of all kinds. That's partly why we get you up, and get you around - to get connecting; and I'm always watching where this is an overflow of the heart, that just wants to love people - people are interesting. There are all these interesting people, interesting stories and testimonies, but this is it. This is what the word's - it's all about. Notice what this leads on to.

The next one, add to godliness, brotherly kindness. Oh my! He's spelt it out. That's a shame. Now I've just put it down here as kindness to Christians. Kindness to Christians. Kindness to Christians. You want to count how many times the Bible says: love one another, forgive one another, be kind to one another, considerate, patient with one another, long-suffering with one another; oh my goodness, there's lots of one-another's, over 30 of them. Here's the good thing about that. It does require you engage with another Christian, for you to do it. You see there's no such thing in the Bible as 'solo' Christianity. It's always about community. It's always about a body of people; and within the body or family of people, that's where you work out. You see, if Jesus tells me: I want you to love one another, as I've loved you; forgive one another, as I've forgiven you; and I see someone I don't like, just turn up my nose, and go I'll go over here.

Now listen: you aren't growing in brotherly kindness that way. It's when you see the person you've got the issue with and whatever, and you can go and demonstrate kindness to them anyway, you are growing in brotherly kindness. See, that's why I say: you can't work this out without people; and it's interesting. The first place He wants us to do it in is in the church, God's own family. Jesus said: by this they'll know you're my

followers, you love one another. So start to re-think your attitude to the local family of God. Has it got shortcomings? Of course! Are there things not right and not perfect? Oh, there's heaps of them - more than you could count. But are there people there who are part of the family of God, that I'm called to love? Yes, there's at least 30 commandments I have, towards each one of you.

We've all got to think about this. If we're serious about walking with God, serious about eternal things, you've got to start to apply what God says: love one another, be kind to one another, caring for one another, building up one another, encouraging one another, ministering the gifts to one another. There's a whole number of things that are called to be part of our journey with God, so one of the first things to learn to do is, you might not be able to see God, but that brother next to you, you can see and He will flush up in you, where you really live with God. That brings you back nearer to the Lord, to help Him deal with the lack of love, lack of passion or negative things in the heart.

It's a great thing working with people. That's why one of the things I found early in life, if you want to really grow as a Christian, get engaged working with people. Here's the last one that it says: add to this - after adding all of those, add - and I've called it practical love. Practical love. Add to your life practical love. In case the others were too spiritual for you, add practical love. Practical love means: meeting needs, helping people out, showing kindness, doing things that'll help people, seeing people who have a need, and stepping up and being engaged and involved with them. Showing kindness of God in very simple ways. Never minimise the simple kind act. It is the way that you represent Christ to people.

Okay then. So now it tells us, why do all these things? Here it is, three negative reasons: Because if you don't have these in your life, you're blind. Hello! Can't see. Or like me, short-sighted; so the word blind means - and I love this - the original words are great. They're more graphic than the word blind. I think blind, you think of someone who can't see at all. Actually the word in the Bible means - it's the word tooposs, meaning smoky; or putting it this way, you're surrounded in a cloud of smoke. So it says: if you haven't got these things growing in your life, it's

like you're living surrounded by a cloud of smoke; and you're coughing, and can't see where you're going.

The second thing He says: and you're short-sighted. You've got no vision for eternity. You're living just out of what's in front of you. God help me meet this need today. These are pretty serious things aren't they? And notice this. The third one that comes up in here: and you've got a memory loss. You've forgotten that you've been forgiven. So you've got memory loss, blind, and short-sighted. It's not too good is it aye? Covered in smoke, can't see very far; and actually you've forgotten. What have you forgotten? You've forgotten why you were saved. You've forgotten what it cost to save you?

You've forgotten Jesus gave His life! He didn't give his life for nothing! He gave it for a people who'd be passionate for Him. He gave it for His people that would represent him, that would be His hands and eyes and ears and mouth and voice, and bring Him to the world. That's what He did it for. That's what He did it for. Have you forgotten? It's why we have communion, to remember, remember! Remember - I was lost. I'm saved just by the grace of God; and I've got a purpose. First I'll be grateful to Him. Then it says: now if you do these things - so it's interesting, He's trying to get the message through. He says: there's three negatives - that should motivate you; but here's three that'll motivate you. He said: they ensure you won't be barren or unfruitful. Secondly, they'll make sure that you never stumble or fail, or fall or backslide; and third, an abundant entrance will be given into the kingdom of Heaven. Not everyone is promised an abundant entrance. That means if the Bible tells us, that I could do things that will bring me an abundant entrance into the coming kingdom; that means there must be an average and ordinary entrance as well; and there must be entrances which are full of glory and shouts of triumph; and entrances which are ooh, you're still smelling of smoke. You've just made it!

And we saw that in the other scripture, in 1 Corinthians 3, where the works are tested; and if they're burnt up, the person is saved yet by fire. They come into Heaven, they come into eternity with the Lord; but all that God had prepared them for, they haven't qualified for. This is so distressing. What an amazing thing, to have an abundant entrance; and I

don't think it's just in eternity, and in the millennial. It actually starts to happen now. You start to access God. You start to see His presence in your life. You start to begin to feel Him around your life. You have divine connections take place. You start to see blessings happening in your business, in your personal life. Around your life, God begins to start to make His presence manifest. The kingdom is coming near to you, and you know that one day, an abundant entrance will be given for you, into that place.

So your life is set. I will give myself passionately for works of serving God. I'm zealous that Jesus name be honoured, so I will let my light shine before all men, that they see what I do, and know there's no way it could be anything except: God is working in that person. Now does that mean it's all about supernatural things? No. I tell you something: when you see an unselfish act of kindness, even an unsaved person's got to say: I never seen anything like that. God is in that. Think of Mother Theresa, whatever you think of her, unsaved people said: God - we saw God in those acts of kindness.

I'll just finish with this quick story. We were in a very difficult season in our life, and we faced many pressures at work, and many pressures at home, many pressures in the ministry as well. Just there were lots of pressures, and we were really quite tired, and it was early days of serving a ministry, and financially we had no money. I'd taken a pay cut from about - that day it was about $24,000; and I went down to $6,000 to serve the Lord. It was quite stressful for us, with a family of four; and so we had to lean and depend on the Lord constantly for our provision. We were at a place we were quite emotionally and spiritually drained, and tired, and we needed a break. Someone offered us a place up in another city, up in the north, where we could be looked after as a family for three weeks, and have a break, which was wonderful. It wouldn't cost us anything. All we had to do was get there, and I checked out the money we had. I had enough money to get there, and not enough money to get back, so I said: well this is very good - so Lord, I'm leaving in this car to go there. If you want me back you'll have to provide [Laughter], and I'm not going to tell anyone. I'm not going to tell anyone. No one will know my need, except you.

And so we went on that, and we were there, and had quite a nice time of break; and one evening, one of our friends said: we'd like to invite you out for a meal. I said that'd be wonderful. We'd love to go out for a meal; and so they invited us for a meal. When we got there they said: no, actually it's not with us. It's a special surprise, and they said we've got a map for you. We want you go to this address, and the surprise is there, which was quite unusual. So we drove around the streets, and there's a house there with the lights on, and the door is open. There's a big sign up: Welcome Mike and Joy, and so we went inside and there's no one in the house. The house has got beautiful candles. It's lit up. The lounge is lit up with candlelight and they've got candles around the room and candles on the table and the table is set for a course, about a five course meal and all the meal was laid out there before us. There's beautiful Christian music playing; and anyway, there was a note to us, that said: our ministry is to express the love of Christ to people, and we will come and serve you coffee at the end of this meal. So we sat down, and they had a scripture for us.

I can remember the love of God to this day, that I felt when two people I didn't even know showed the love of God. I can still feel what I felt then, the gratitude to God, for the kindness shown in such a practical way, to people who really needed it. They later came round and gave us coffee, and they said: this was our ministry. We ask only one thing: that you never tell anyone who we are. To this day, I've never told anyone who the people are, and they've continued. They said: we've had all these people come through our house, and we've had marriages restored. We've had lives restored, just through the simple act of making a home available, to show kindness to people.

You see, the love they had showed through the act. You couldn't hide it. We couldn't do anything but feel it. There was absolutely no selfish gain in it. There was no way that they wanted to draw attention to themselves. It was just a genuine, authentic act of love; of making a meal, and it changed our lives. See, it's not in the big ministry things that the most powerful impact is made. It's in the simple acts of love, coming out of a character that's aligned with 2 Peter 1: acts of kindness; out of a motive just to honour Jesus Christ.

That day I can tell you this; I'm thankful to the people, but God will reward them. I'm mostly thankful to the Lord, who showed such kindness through these people. I was left impressed with what God had done for us, not with what they had done, and that shows that flowing through it was the spirit of love. That's why we need to grow in love, so that whatever we do, and however we express the life of God, through whatever gifts and whatever acts of kindness; and they're limited only to your creativity what you could do; that in them, the love of God touches lives.

Father, we just honour you and thank you. We thank you for your presence here today. We are feeling so challenged in our hearts that our lives would count; they would count for eternity, and they would count now. I'm asking Lord, that there be a stirring within the whole spirit of Bay City, to begin to start to consider how our lives can be adjusted, and grow to enjoy your love in a greater level, and to express it; love is around us. I'm asking for release of creativity of ideas, and how to bring the love of God to people. I'm asking Lord for an increase of your anointing, that through simple acts of kindness and love, that people's hearts will be transformed. I'm asking Lord that you change Bay City, that you shift us into all the new things you have for us, and that the community be blessed because we are here. Father, we give you all the honour and all the glory.

There may be someone here who doesn't know Jesus. It'd be a great day to receive Him as your saviour. If you would just like to make your way to the front, I'd love to pray with you to receive Jesus, become a Christian who'd respond to Jesus. Believe He died on the cross for you, and to actually actually open your life to partnership with Him, to walk with Him by faith, a great journey, a wonderful journey.

If anyone here is at that place right now, just raise your hand. I'd love to pray with you, love to bless you and help you in your journey spiritually. The others here perhaps today, and God is really speaking to your heart about actually giving yourself to the work of the Lord. God is not unrighteous, to forget your work of love; and that you minister to his people, and continually minister to the people you meet. God wants you to do these things. If God spoke with you today in some way, would you

like to just raise your hand so help God speak? God bless, God bless, God bless.

What is in your hand, take it and use it to make Jesus known to people, even if it's just a simple of kindness in some way. Use it to make manifest the reality of God's love. Lets just finish up, we just won't have a big song or anything. Just there's a great atmosphere here. Why not just pray with the person next to you, that God will give great opportunities in this week, to express the love of God in a very practical way.

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