

Encountering the Magnificence of Jesus (Prov. 2:1-5)

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

Father, we come before You. We ask for the spirit of wisdom and revelation and for the manifestation of Your Son's glory to touch our hearts. In Jesus' name, amen.

Well this is session 1 of a series on Jesus, our magnificent obsession. Now that is the goal of our lives, that we would be obsessed with this man, and the reason that that is our goal is because He is worth it. His worth demands this kind of response, but that is not so obvious to the people of the Lord. He is the most unique being, fully God, fully man, and He longs to reveal Himself to us in a way that touches our spirit. I don't mean just to reveal His forgiveness or His healing power or provide for us economically—certainly those things, but He wants us to encounter the awestruck wonder and fascination with who He is.

Paragraph A. Now the term “magnificent obsession” is an oxymoron. It is a contradiction of terms, and the reason is because almost every obsession of the human heart is very destructive; it causes pain and grief and loss. However, there is one obsession, with one man, that liberates us, that brings us into our destiny; that fills us with spiritual pleasure, and crowns us with glory. That obsession with this most unique man, again, fully God, fully man—however, so much of the Church is so distant from this lifestyle and this kind of reality. The challenge is that so many, when they think of Jesus, think of Him in terms of the One that forgave them. And He did. The One who stamped their passport, so to speak, so now they go to heaven instead of hell.

That is awesome. I love being forgiven and I love going to heaven instead of hell, but that is how they have heard Him preached and presented, and then some groups add a little bit to it. They say, “Hey, He does more than forgive. He actually heals, He provides, He guides. He blesses your circumstances. He is a God that does things for you,” and that is awesome. I love when God gives me supernatural provision economically. I love healing. I love prophetic direction, but Beloved, there is so much more to this man than that. Jesus is not just a means to an end. He is the way, the source of so many blessings, but He is much more than that. He is the most indescribable man, filled with splendor, magnificent in His being, magnificent in who He is, and He longs to share this with us, but He will only give it, this insight of Himself, progressively, to people who hunger for it.

With so much of the Church, it isn't that they are disinterested, they don't even think about it. They have never heard of the Jesus who is more than Forgiver and Healer, the Magnificent One. He is the best-kept secret in the Church. So few are focused on it in preaching, and so few are focused on it in their personal lives, but we want this secret to be made known; we want people to consider it normative that they are going after the encounter of His heart, not just the blessing

in their circumstance, but we don't have to give up one to have the other, we can have them both.

THE REVELATION OF GOD CHANGES US

Paragraph C. The premise of this class and even of this message today is that there is no aspect of the grace of God—that powerfully transforms the heart or satisfies the heart, like the revelation of God revealing God to the human spirit, there is nothing that changes our emotions from boredom and depression and guilt and compromise, more than when God reveals God to our spirit. It does something to us. It shifts our emotional chemistry. It changes the way we feel on the inside, when God the Holy Spirit reveals God the Father or God the Holy Spirit to us.

Paragraph D. Philippians 3:8, Paul is the premier example of this, of this premise. Paul's testimony of why He was so dedicated, He gives us in Philippians 3. He tells us why He gave up everything so gladly. He said, "I count everything loss. I gave up everything. I gave up many legitimate things that were not in themselves harmful or at all sinful, because I wanted a life of radical focus and pursuit of this man," and he tells us why. He says, "I gave it up. I sacrificed many things because of the excellence of the knowledge of this man; because of the magnificence of who He is."

Paul said, "I am awestruck about what I see about Him." I have told the Lord over the years as a prayer—I said, "Lord, let me see what Paul saw and I will be able to live like he lived," because there is a direct correspondence between what we see in Jesus and how we respond to Him. The great lack of response in the Body of Christ to Jesus is a symptom of the low view and the low amount of revelation that the Body of Christ has of Jesus. If we would see more, we would respond more. The not responding is a symptom of not seeing.

He is indescribable in who He is. Beloved, there is no one like Him. I am so looking forward to this class, to take week after week, focusing on these unique dimensions of His personhood. Not just what He does, but who He is. I am by no means minimizing what He did for us and what He does for us; I love that. I love that part of His leadership. That is part of who He is, but I love to be lost in the splendor of this man. I mean, just infinite love and wisdom and power. He is so interesting. He is so dynamic. He is so intriguing. He is much, much more than that. He didn't just stamp my passport. He will fascinate us forever, but I don't want to wait for the resurrection. I want that to grow in my experience even now.

1 Corinthians 2:10-12, Paul says, "The Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God's heart." The Holy Spirit discerns the deep things of the Father's heart and the deep things of Jesus, and what He does is He gives these deep things to us. He offers Himself as an escort to us into the deep things of God's heart. I picture Him going along and grabbing me by the arm and saying,

“I will escort you to a place you cannot go without Me; I will escort you to the place you long most for. If only you would encounter it, you would want more of it.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL TEACH US THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS

Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit as an escort. He is the guide; He will take us step by step, but not only will He show us the way, He will empower us to see and feel the truth about Jesus. Because we cannot see or feel the truth, I mean more than the forgiveness, more than the healing, more the economic breakthrough.

I am talking about the truth of who He is and the richness of His being; we cannot experience it in a way that moves us without the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit. John 16, Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit with great confidence. He said, “Let me tell you something about Him. I have known Him from eternity past. He will guide you. He will escort you. He likes this. This is what He longs to do, but He will only escort you into the truth to the degree that you are hungry for truth. If you are satisfied with the assurance of forgiveness, then that is all you will understand. If you are satisfied with healing, some prophetic direction, a little bit of anointing for ministry, then that is all He will give you, if that is all you want, but He is coming to take all that is in My heart and give it to you. Not just a part of what is in my heart; He is coming to take all of what is in My heart to give to you.”

Beloved, the Holy Spirit knows more about Jesus than we can imagine. The Holy Spirit longs to bring us on this lifelong treasure hunt into the riches of Christ Jesus. Jesus said in John 16:14, “He will glorify Me. He is coming to glorify Me.” Now the way that the Spirit glorifies Jesus is by revealing Jesus’ heart to us so that we are awestruck; we are filled with wonder, we are stunned by it. Now there are a number of different ways that God is glorified (by biblical definition), and one of the ways is when the human heart is awestruck and stunned by the wonder and fascination of who He is, and that is how Jesus describes it here, “He will glorify Me by taking the things about Me and absolutely blowing your mind with them, if you want them,” but He will glorify Jesus in another way: He will make Jesus the centerpiece of our heart and our life, if we want Him to be.

The Holy Spirit will use His power to give us the ability to lock into Jesus in this way, to put Him center stage in our life. Well, that is what He is doing in the Church. There is a great shaking going on in the Church right now. Two things are happening. The Holy Spirit is wrestling with the leaders of the Church to put Jesus center stage, and the devil, the evil one, is coming to assault Jesus, even through the leaders of the Church.

TODAY’S BATTLEFRONT: THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS

Paragraph G. There is a great battlefront in the kingdom right now, and that battlefront is the truth about Jesus. The Holy Spirit is contending, He is wrestling with the leadership of the Church—“Make Jesus the magnificent obsession of your life and of the people you are connected to. Present Him in this way,” though you don’t have to use those terms. He is raising up a people that will have allegiance and loyalty to Him, but not just loyalty—they will be absolutely fascinated and obsessed by Him. The enemy is waging war against that; there is a counterfeit Jesus, the Jesus of the American culture, which is not the true Jesus at all. That is the Jesus that is preached most in our nation, right now.

In 2 Corinthians 11:4, Paul said that in his day there were preachers that preached another Jesus. These were men in the church preaching another Jesus that was not the real Jesus. They said a number of nice things and accurate things about Him, but they were not presenting the real Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible, and in our nation, there is this outcry against the real Jesus within the Church. More and more leaders are abdicating the truth, drawing back, and actually denying the claims of Jesus. It is an overt attack, but there is even something equally troubling; it is a passive attack. People are just ignoring Jesus in the Church and trying to figure out how to make life happier and easier and sprinkle Jesus in the midst of it, if they have to make it work and make their church grow.

It is almost as troubling as the overt denying; it is the just ignoring that is far more widespread. The counterfeit Jesus of the American culture has no power to transform the heart, that is why there are so many believers, three or four decades in the faith, that are still in bondage to so many things, because their heart has not ever experienced power, because the Jesus that they know is limited to forgiving them and providing a few things to help their circumstances. They know nothing of an awestruck life or heart with this glorious man; they know nothing of this Jesus, they have never heard of Him. They have not discovered Him themselves in their own Bible.

The state of the Church in America—so much of it is a therapeutic, self-help, bless-me club. It is a group, not a church. There are individuals that are born-again in the group, but it is not Jesus-focused. It is a therapeutic, self-help group that is looking to make life easier and happier and it will just mention Jesus a little bit along the way. The Holy Spirit is saying, “That is not what I am after.”

PROCLAIMING THE REAL JESUS

Man was made in God’s image, but now, man is presenting a god after man’s own image. It is a Jesus made in the image of the American culture. It is not the true One, and there is no power in the heart with this kind of Jesus. It does not move us. It does not change us. It is so difficult to

overcome sin when our spirit is dull and we are spiritually bored with Jesus. It is very difficult to say “no” to darkness when we are dull and are bored in our walk with God. We need the real Jesus. Will the real Jesus please stand up? And it is though the Holy Spirit is saying, “If My people will proclaim Him, I will bear witness to Him,” and I am not talking about me. I am talking about millions of us; all the different streams of the Body of Christ, proclaiming the real Jesus. The Spirit will bear witness to Him when He is proclaimed, whether in song, declaration, testimony, the arts and technology, all different ways that He is proclaimed. Many people want a domesticated Jesus, one they can manage; one that makes no demands on their time and money, on their words, their sexuality. They want a Jesus that makes no demands on those parts of their life. “I will go to a few meetings a week, make one of them a prayer meeting if I need to, go to a home Bible study, and go to an outreach, but the rest of the week is mine. My words are mine, my attitudes are mine, and my sexuality is mine. Don’t intrude on those areas. I will go do those other things.”

JESUS IS THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

Beloved, we cannot domesticate the real Jesus. He refuses to be tamed by His people. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He roars. The Body of Christ has such a lame and tame version. It is as though they are coming to this roaring lion and saying, “Here, kitty, kitty, kitty! Come on in and get in your place.” Yes, He forgave us. Yes, He heals and yes, He blesses. Yes, He provides and yes, He directs, but He is so much more than that.

GOAL 1: THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS POWERFUL

Paragraph H. Here are the goals that I have in this class: to convince people that Jesus, or the knowledge of God, is the most powerful and pleasurable reality that anyone can experience.

GOAL 2: IT IS COSTLY TO GROW IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Number two: to convince people that to gain depth in the knowledge of God is the most costly thing you will ever be involved in; it will cost you everything. Not to be forgiven, that is free, but to go somewhere in God will cost you everything. To go a little ways, not so costly, but I mean to have the deep things of His heart, but it will be the most valuable and lasting treasure you will ever experience.

GOAL 3: THE MOST NEGLECTED ISSUE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS GOD

Number three: to convince people that the most neglected issue in the kingdom of God, is God. The most neglected issue is God in the kingdom of God.

We talk about everything besides God, unless we are talking about getting forgiveness. The reason we need to know that it is the most neglected theme—God, the knowledge of God—is because if you think it is well-accepted and well understood, when you begin to pursue it in a

new way, you will find hostility within the Church. They will be utterly perplexed by what you are doing. They don't mind forgiveness, they don't mind blessing, but many believers, even, don't want to connect with people who are obsessed with Jesus. They say, "That is too intense. Let's dial down. Let's get into the grace of God." Beloved, I submit to you that the grace of God will empower you to be obsessed, not talk you out of it.

THE TRUTH OF JESUS IS BEING ATTACHED WITHIN THE CHURCH

Number 4. The thing I want to convince people of—this is the most attacked truth, the truth of Jesus, again, overtly attacked within the Church. I don't mean secular society—within the Church, the pulpits, the leaders, attacking, denying the claims of Jesus. Equally dangerous is the passive neglect, becoming familiar with business as usual, without encountering Jesus; building large ministries without even figuring Jesus into the relationship, encountering Him in this way, and it being normative and okay with every one. It is not okay with the Holy Spirit. He has so much more.

Let's go to page 2. Matthew 16:13-19—now this is one of the most significant passages in the Bible on the Church, how it functions, its inevitable victory, and what its foundation is. This is the first teaching in the Bible on the Church and it is from the lips of Jesus. It is focused on Jesus asking the leaders of the early Church the most important question—and it is the most important question today in the Church—not just to the leaders, but if the leaders get it right, the people will follow suit. There is no question that is more important, and when I say leaders in the Church, I mean leaders in the kingdom. It is whatever your assignment is; you don't have to have an assignment in the pulpit. Your assignment may be in the marketplace, in media, in education, at the university, wherever your assignment is, that is your kingdom ministry. I am talking about leadership in those ways.

“WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?”

I'm not talking just about preachers; I'm talking about everybody in this room. Let's look at it—verse 13, Matthew 16:13. I picture them around the campfire one night after a busy day, and Jesus asked the disciples. He says, "I have got a very important question." Jesus knows He has got to talk about the Church, and He knows He is laying the foundation for a victorious Church that moves in power. What He is saying is dynamically connected to the church walking in victory and moving in power. He said, "Here is My question." Verse 13. "Who do they say that I am?" Verse 14. Again, I picture the twelve around the fire. One of them speaks up and says, "They think you are John the Baptist," because John the Baptist had just been killed by Herod. And Jesus (I am making up the conversation) says, "Well, why do they think that I am John the Baptist?"

“Well, they see You as a holiness preacher who is deeply dedicated to God and You speak the truth in such a fearless way. You are fearless like John was.” And Jesus could say, “Well, you know I am a holiness preacher. I am very dedicated to God and I am fearless in what I say.” One of the other guys interrupts and says, “No, the people I talked to, they don’t think you are a holiness preacher, they think You are Elijah, a supernatural prophet that confronts the powers of darkness aggressively,” like Elijah took on the demonic priesthood in Israel. In 1 Kings 18 on Mt. Carmel, all the priests of Baal met him in one big showdown; he called fire down from heaven, confronted them, and killed them all. I mean it was amazing. “When they look at You they see a supernatural prophet with power over nature. You calm the storms. You raise the dead. You are Elijah-like. You confront demons. You cast demons out everywhere You go. You are very much like Elijah, not like John the Baptist.”

Jesus said, “Yes, I do confront demons. I do move in power, you’re right, but I am more than that.” One guy interrupts and says, “Well, the people I talk to think You are Jeremiah. Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet, the prophet of compassion. They saw how you dealt so tenderly with the woman caught in adultery in John 8.” Here is a group of hostile, religious men ready to condemn this woman and break her. Jesus intervenes, turns the whole thing around, rescues her and then connects her to God and gives her confidence in the grace of God with such tenderness. There are so many dimensions of what He did in that scene in John 8 that had so much tenderness.

Jesus said, “Yes, I am that tender Shepherd, I am a holiness preacher like John, and I am a supernatural prophet like Elijah. I am a tender person who cares for the hurting people, to recover them in God.” Verse 15. Here is the key verse. You want to circle verse 15. Jesus looks them right in the eyes. He says, “Here is the real issue that I am building up to.” The whole Church is built on this one question to the leadership—“Who do You think I am? Not only what do I do, but who I am.” The number one question of the hour in any generation of the church—it is so the important question right now for the Body of Christ, for the leadership in the Church; again, whatever assignment you have in the kingdom, whether in a pulpit or in a boardroom, whatever assignment you have, this is the premier issue—Who do you think He is?

Peter speaks up, verse 16, “You are the Christ.” Now the word *Christ* is Greek. In Hebrew He is *the Messiah* or *the Anointed One*. You are the “Anointed One.” At a first reading, you might say Peter was only saying, “You are the One who forgives the people for their sins.” Peter is not saying, “You are the forgiver of their sins.” That is not what He is saying. He says, “You are the culmination of all the Old Testament prophecies about somebody who is fully human, who is fully God, who is Bridegroom, King and Judge. It is all coming together in one man. You are that man.” I mean, this was the hugest statement that he made. Again, we could read it just from a superficial point of view and think Peter said, “You are the One that forgives us from our

sins,” but that is not at all that Peter was saying. I am thinking of Daniel 7, the Son of Man. I am thinking of Isaiah 2, Isaiah 9, Isaiah 11—I mean, so many dynamic passages. And Micah 4, Micah 5, there is One who is described.

Peter said, “You are the One. And to be the One, You have to be fully God, fully man, is the implication, because the Christ has a full range of definitions relating to His deity and relating to His range of descriptions related to His humanity.

And He says, “You are that man. The only One.” Jesus said, “You are right, Peter,” (verse 17), “flesh and blood did not reveal this to you.” Meaning, you did not hear this at a Bible study where somebody pointed it out. A man did not teach this to you. You did not have a discussion over there and you figured it out. This was a supernatural revelation. Beloved, let me say this. It is a supernatural revelation to grow in knowledge of the Christ. The fullness of who He is as God and the fullness of who He is as man—the combination of the two of them in fullness. It takes a Holy Spirit escort.

Verse 18. Jesus says this, “It is on this rock.” On the truth of who I am as fully God, fully man. On the truth of the magnificence and the majesty of who I am, the greatness of who I am, on that truth, I will build My church.”

Beloved, the Church is only built in a sound way on the whole truth of who Jesus is—not on the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, that is critical, but there is so much more to the foundation of the Church; not on healing, on economic provision, or prophetic direction. I love those things, I am not remotely minimizing them. I love those things. But the Church is built on more than that. It is built on an ongoing encounter with this man who has the unique ability to fascinate us forever and forever, to be the One we are obsessed with by the grace of God.

Jesus goes on and says, “The way you answer the question as to who I am, that is the truth of who I am; it is the rock of truth on which the Church is built.” And the reason the church of America is so weak today—the numbers are larger than ever, but the spiritual vibrancy is so weak—is because the church is not being built upon the truth of Jesus. It is being built upon much of the truth, but not all of it.

There are glorious exceptions. There may be a few thousand groups, maybe a few more. Hopefully there are tens of thousands, but there are hundreds of thousands that are not in this direction. They got forgiveness right. They really get that right. But the great error is that part of the truth is passed off as the whole truth. It is only the introduction to who He is. He went on to say that the gates of hell (or the “authority”—“gates” and “authority” is the same concept), the authority of hell (Hades and hell is the same thing)—the power of Satan is what He is talking

about—it will not defeat you, is what He is saying. In other words, you are going to be victorious.

That victory is in fullness in the age to come, but, beloved, there are substantial advances and gains in victory that are available right now that the Church is not walking in. Some people say, “Do not put the victory off until the age to come.” There is so much advance of victory that God wants to give the Church that we are not walking in. We do not even have to worry about the victory in the age to come. There is too much more to lay hold of even now in this age.

Then, verse 19: He tells them the way to victory. He says, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom.” He is talking about intercession. He says, “You will bind, or stop, the demonic. You will stop the negative. You will bind it. You will stop it. But not only will you bind the negative, you will loose, or release, the blessing of God. You will do it by your words. I will give you keys and you will talk to Me and bind darkness and release blessing. And the Church will walk in victory. But the whole thing is built upon the rock of knowing the truth about Me.” If you get that wrong, you will not have victory and you will not bind and loose with authority or with right motive or with a right spirit.

Now, many people lock into verse 19 and they want to focus on binding and loosing, without a connection or a growth in truth about who He is in verses 15, 16, and 17. Others preach verse 18, the victory. But they have a victory disconnected from the truth of the man Christ Jesus. I mean, again, they get a little bit of the truth. But I am talking about the whole array of truth the Spirit wants us to lay hold of. And as a people, we need so much more. As a man, I need so much more of this, but this is where we are focused, this is where we are locked in.

Let’s go to the middle of page 2. Paragraph F. When I was about eighteen years old (that was almost forty years ago, not quite, but getting close), my youth pastor, Richard, knew that I wanted to be on fire for God and so He would disciple me. He said, “Here is what you need to do. You need to grow in the knowledge of God.”

I said, “Okay. What is that?” That was a strange phrase to me—the knowledge of God. He told me to read a book by a man I had never of, A. W. Tozer. I said, “Who is A. W. Tozer?” He said, “Don’t worry about who He is. Read the book. It will change your life.”

And I have, I have been talking about this book for almost forty years. I am a satisfied customer. I have promoted it at many conferences. You can get it at our bookstore, you can get it online in many places I am sure, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. It is a little one hundred-page book. So I read this book and honestly, at age eighteen, I did not get much out of it. But what got my attention is that my youth pastor told me I needed to get a lot out of it, so I stayed with

it. I said, “I do not really know what this book is about, but I know the guy I trust tells me I do not have a future unless I know this stuff.”

There are about twenty chapters. They are all about two or three pages only. But my favorite part of the book is the introduction, and I read it over and over. Here are just a few ideas from it. These are not direct quotes, but I am accurately telling some of the things he taught. Tozer said this, “What we think about God is the most important thing about us.” That was an interesting idea, what we think about God.

And I thought, “I think that He made the sky and He forgave me of my sin, and every now and then He gives me money. I do not think that much about God. I mean I worship Him in the worship meetings—what you think about God is the most important thing—I do not think that much.”

He went on to say, “The most revealing thing about the Church is her ideas about God,”—I want to say, her ideas about Jesus. The Church’s most significant message is what she says about Him or what she leaves unsaid about Him. Tozer says that a hundred lesser evils are caused in the Church and in our lives because of this one great lack of the knowledge of God, that we cannot refuse temptation when our spirit is dull and we are spiritually bored—we cannot consistently refuse temptation.

And so we think we have got to try harder. But the truth is, we need to see more clearly. We need to see more, not just try harder. Because when our spirit is invigorated, when our spirit is touched by who this man is—not just the assurance that we are forgiven, but by *who* this man is, not just that we are going to be blessed and life is going to be a little bit easier, but by who He *is*—there is something about a vibrant spirit that gives us a very different approach to temptation.

I tell you, a man or a woman with a vibrant spirit can look at immorality, they can look at bitterness, they can look at covetousness, they can look at complaining, they can look at boredom right in the eye and say no to it. They have a little bit of that vibrancy in their spirit and that is all about the knowledge of God. Like I said, “Lord, if I can see what Paul saw, I can live like Paul lived.” It is an issue of seeing, because there is a dynamic connection between seeing and responding.

Paragraph G. The most important question in your life, the most important question in your ministry is: “Who do you say I am?”

The question is not “Do you like Him?” Yes, you like Him. That is why you are here. I like Jesus. Jesus says, “I know that.” That is not necessarily going to transform you in the way you want to be transformed. It is a beginning. It is good. You need to know who it is you are encountering, even a little bit. What do you imagine Him to be like when it is just you and Him, in your own private thoughts. What do you see? What do you think about in detail? And again, most people would say they do not think that much; we do not think that deeply. Our thoughts are too few and our thoughts are too low.

I am not saying that as a rebuke. I am saying let’s make a determination in the grace of God that our thoughts would be much and our thoughts would be deep. In the next ten years, let’s correct it in our life. It will not be corrected in a weekend, or a month, or a semester at the Bible school. A low view of Jesus keeps us in bondage, keeps our spirit dull. But listen, a low view of Jesus keeps us trapped in spiritual boredom.

Top of page 3. In Ephesians 4:11-13 Paul gives a very interesting prophecy. He is talking about the end-time Church. He is describing how the Church functions throughout two thousand years of church history, but He is actually going to the end, the levels the Church is going to attain to. This is not describing the Church in heaven. This is describing the Church on earth. He gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. And He anoints men and women in the Church for this reason—to equip and help believers.

To help believers do what? Verse 13: “till they come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God.” That is the phrase I want to look at. Wait a second. Why do believers need to come to the knowledge of Jesus? I thought believers had the knowledge of Jesus or they could not be a believer. Paul is not talking about apostles and prophets helping the Church to be assured they are forgiven. He is not talking about forgiveness. He is saying that God is going to anoint the Church to convince the people about the splendor of the man Jesus, so that they are filled with the knowledge of Him.” This is talking about intimacy. It is not talking about the initial entrance into the kingdom. The greatest need in the Church is that we would connect with the knowledge of the Son of God.

Paragraph B. God is raising up ministries. Again, whether the marketplace, the government, education, the pulpit, the classroom, the boardroom, the warehouse, wherever it is, the sports arena—determine that you are going to preach—not yourself—you are going to preach the unsearchable riches of that Man (Eph. 3:8). This is what the Holy Spirit is wanting to anoint. He is waiting for people to say it, sing it, show it forth in drama, in many ways, through technology. God is saying, “Make known the Man and I will anoint it.” But there are so few making known this Man.

God is asking us to talk about the unsearchable wealth and the glory of the Man. So we determine today: I am going to preach this. But it is not enough to speak it, because it has to come out of our spirit. We have to encounter Him. If we speak words only, we are just an echo. A sermon born in the mind will only reach the mind. A sermon born in the heart, meaning that we do it in our private life, will move the hearts of others. I determined that as an organization we must preach the unsearchable riches of this Man. We want Jesus to be the magnificent obsession of our lives. Yes, we are going to talk about forgiveness as part of the riches. We are going to talk about prophetic direction. We are going to talk about physical healing. We are going to talk about many facets of His riches. But more than all, we want to talk about the wealth of who He is. Not just what He does, though of course what He does is an expression of who He is; but there is more about Him that we want to touch.

Paragraph C. I said it already, but I will say it again. We must focus on the Person in our ministry, but we have to get familiar with the Person in our private life. Because if we do not touch intimacy with God in our private life, then it is just something we learn to say—it is rhetoric and it does not move anybody. The most neglected subject in the kingdom of God is God Himself. We talk about relationship skills, leadership skills, economic principles, ministry skills; we tell people how to be happier, how to make life easier, but we rarely talk about God except when we are offering forgiveness. Habakkuk 2:14 says that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God.” It is the knowledge of who Jesus is that will fill the earth. That is the ultimate place this is going. He will fill the earth. I want to get in line with the Holy Spirit. I want to be on His team. I want to focus on what He is focusing on in my private life and in my ministry.

Roman numeral IV. We are briefly going to look at the five conditions for cultivating the knowledge of God. I have a personal story that I have told over the years and I am going to tell it again. So, I am eighteen years old, nineteen years old, my youth pastor tells me I have to get this Tozer book, learn it, to get the knowledge of God.

I said, “OK.” So I go to the University of Missouri, you know, a big university, thirty thousand students, a whole lot going on there. And I start a Bible study. And we have got one or two hundred students coming to it. There are several hundred of us involved in it. Now, here is the problem. I have got one or two hundred students coming. I do not have any sermons. I mean I have none. So I have got a Bible study every Tuesday night and I do not have a message. It is a dilemma.

So I said, “Well, my youth leader told me Tozer is what *I* need, so maybe that is what *they* need.” So I took this couple hundred-page book and started memorizing it. I do not mean word

for word, but idea for idea. I wrote it all down and I would go with like twenty-five pages of notes to preach from.

And I would just basically read the Tozer book from my notes, nearly. I just memorized it. It went terribly. I did not feel it. None of them felt it. A guy asked me afterwards, “What did you mean by that point?”

I said, “I do not know.”

“Page 53, you know, what do you think it means?”

“Your guess is as good as mine.”

I was just echoing it. But it was all a divine set-up because I began to get troubled because I was teaching it. I had never taught a Bible study like this, and I was struck by the fact that I knew nothing about God besides the fact that He forgave me and He liked me.

Those are really good facts. But I didn’t know anything and I didn’t know that I didn’t know anything. I assumed I knew something until I had to say it. Then I began to get really troubled and I said, “God, I do not know you at all! I don’t have anything to say unless I memorize a book. I don’t even know who You are. I mean I know I am born again. I know You love me. I mean, come on! Let’s make this work.”

So I began to ask everybody, “How do you know the knowledge of God like Tozer says?” But everybody said, “What are you talking about?” People did not have an answer. Most of them were completely perplexed by the question. I was in serious desperation for about six months. I mean it bothered me so much. I had this sick, depressed, ugly feeling inside—of emptiness. I hate the memory of it. I would read biographies all the time. I was always reading biographies of godly men and women. And I would tell biography stories. I could not talk about God, but I could talk about people who knew God.

Then I determined one day. I said, “Do you know what?” I remember. I slammed my hand down on the table. I was by myself. I said, “I want to know God like these people in the biographies. I am not content to know a man who knows God or to know about a man in a biography who knows God. I want to know God.”

It was a glorious and terrifying decision because what if it doesn’t work? Or what if it does work and He demands everything out of me like the biography people. I loved to tell their story from the safe place of my comfort zone. I would say, “These guys were really sacrificial.”

So I was excited because maybe it would work. But what if it did and it cost me everything. I was excited with an asterisk—terrified, troubled, nervous—but I was serious. I was about eighteen, nineteen years old. I determined I was going to pursue this. I was going to know God. I was going to ask everyone I could find: “How do you get the knowledge of God?” But nobody could give me an answer, because most people were perplexed by the question. Tozer got me into it, without him I would not even have thought of it. Well, it was not really Tozer; it was the Bible study where I taught on Tozer and it went so terribly. That is what got me into it. That is when I understood I had nothing to say. Because until I started saying it, I imagined I knew it. Until I had to say it, I had nothing to say. I concluded, “Ah, I know nothing.”

Paragraph B. Proverbs 2:1-5. We were at a college retreat, a ski retreat. We took the whole Bible study—about one or two hundred, we all went to Colorado. I went over Christmas break. We had Bible studies every night. In the morning I would get up and have my prayer time and my Bible reading. Somebody had told me—Bill Gothard, actually, I heard him say it—if you read one proverb every single day, you will go through the book of Proverbs every month. I said, “I can do that.” One of the big reasons I did not read the Bible, besides the fact that it was boring like crazy was because I did not know where to start. I go, “I can do that.” Because one of the big reasons I did not read the Bible besides it was boring, like crazy, so boring. I did not know where to start. Now isn’t that a crazy reason not to read the Bible? I did not know where to start. So I said, “Well, I know where to start. Whatever day it is, I will just read that Proverb. Sounds cool.” I recommend that by the way. I did that for a number of years. I thought it was profound.

So this young believer at the retreat asked me, “Hey, how do you do your Bible study?” He is sitting there before he went skiing that day. We were there by the fireplace, and He said, “How do you do this?”

“Well, I am about to read Proverbs 2.”

He said, “Why?”

I said, “You know, it is January 2, so Proverbs 2.”

He said, “Wow. That’s heavy.”

I said, “Yeah, it is pretty cool.”

Well, he was impressed. He really was. He said, “That is cool.”

I said, “Oh yeah, I have been doing this for a while, you know.” So I said to him, “Let’s do it.”

So there I am in the total teacher mode. I am about to get the ambush of my life, and I do not know that it’s coming. I said, “Okay, Proverbs 2, verse 1, ‘If you receive My words and treasure My commands.’” I said, “Now,”—here I am in the waxing, eloquent teacher mode—“Now, if you see an ‘if’ that is a condition. And eventually you are going to have a ‘then.’” And the guy said, “Man, you know the Bible.” I said, “Well, yes I have been around. Four years, I have been doing this for a while!”

“Verse 3, ‘If you cry for discernment. If you seek for it as silver.’” I stopped again and said, “There are three ‘ifs’ in a row. This is going to be big. I have not even read verse 5, but it is going to be big. Three ‘ifs’ means good news.” And this guy was so impressed, and I was so impressed with how he was so impressed. I said, “Verse 5, ‘Then.’” I said, “Here it is.” I actually said, “Then,” and looked up and said, “Here it is.”

A life-changing moment is about to touch me. I have been asking everyone, “How do you know the knowledge of God?” And nobody could tell me an answer. I could only sit and read more Tozer books. It was the best I knew.

Then I read, “Then you will understand the fear of the Lord,”—here it is—“*and you will find the knowledge of God.*” And it just hit me! It was the first time I ever felt any emotion about the subject of the knowledge of God. Tears began to well up in my eyes. And you know, the new believer, he looks at me and says, “Is something wrong?” He said, “What happened?”

I said, “You know, I need to excuse myself for a minute.” I went over to the side and said to God, “God, You are really going to tell me how to do this?” I said to myself, “I can know the knowledge. Oh my!” So I said to the group, “You guys just all go. I have to stay here for a while.”

Paragraph C. We will look at each condition. Just thirty seconds. Because you can read the texts—it is all in the notes. Condition 1: “Receive My sayings. Do not refuse them. Do not ignore them. Receive them.” That means obedience. Obedience is essential.

Paragraph D. “If you treasure My commands.” In the Old Testament the words *commands*, *precepts*, *statutes*, are often just another way of saying “the Word of God.”

“If you will treasure the word.” In other words, you meditate on it. Do not read it like a grocery list, but actually talk to God while you are reading the Word. Treasure it.

They are big subjects but we have talked about them many times and today I want to give you the overview. Meditation on the Word, indispensable; a spirit of obedience, indispensable; some people go short on obedience and they just kind of amp up or ramp up their prayer and fasting: “Lord, I will pray more and fast more if You can let me sin and we will just call it even.” Prayer is no substitute for obedience. You cannot disobey the Spirit and then even the score by going to more prayer meetings and throwing in fasting, unless you are praying and fasting to get free from the thing you are doing. Then it is good, but only if you have the intent to break your agreement with it.

Top of page 4. Paragraph F. The third condition: if you have a teachable spirit. Proverbs says, “If you incline your ear.” You approach it like a child, each passage. You commit yourself to learn whatever the passage says, not your predisposed ideas, not your biases that you grew up with, and not limiting it to the one little facet of the diamond that you understand.

You pray: Jesus, show me more about this verse that I do not know about.” So we go with a child’s heart, a learner’s heart. You may know the truth about a verse, but I assure you, there are many facets to that diamond of truth in that verse, and you will learning that verse a million years from now in the age to come. You will never exhaust that verse, whatever verse it is. That is how the whole Bible is.

Paragraph G. The fourth condition: “Cry out for discernment.” This is not just taking a minute before your prayer time and saying, “Lord, give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation.” Yes, we do have to ask for that. But I am talking about when you are actually reading, you know, chapter 8, verse 3, you are looking at a verse and you stop and ask for insight on that verse. Not just a general prayer, “Give me more wisdom, Lord,” and then you think, “OK, I have got that one off the list. Move on.” No, as you are reading the Word, you are talking and asking for understanding all the way through it. Many people do not actually ask that question. They read the word, they underline it, they tell their friends, and they are done with it. They do not meditate on it. They do not come like a child, eagerly asking the Holy Spirit for guidance throughout the reading of the Scripture. These are things that the Scripture says. I found these things invaluable, as simple as they are.

Paragraph H. The fifth and final condition: “Seek for it like silver. Search for it like hidden treasure.” Search for it. Be diligent. Pay any price. It is going to take long hours. I do not mean a day. I am talking about committing the next decade and then the decade after that. Not a summer, not a month. I am talking about making decade-long commitments. It takes long hours.

I remember talking to a pastor once. And he said the most amazing to me. And he thought what I said was amazing. He came to me and he said, “When I hear you talk I sometimes have this

idea that you think there is a correlation between how much time you spend with God and how much God gives you.”

I said, “I do not understand the question.”

He said, “It sounds like you are saying that if you pray and read the Bible more, you get more from God.”

I said, “I am. I do not... I am confused.”

“Well,” he said, “that is legalism. That is not the grace of God.”

I said, “What do you think?”

He said, “I just think you kind of go on with life and it kind of drops into your spirit and it is grace.”

I said, “You are so confused. There is a deep correlation between how much time you spend and how far you go, a deep, a deep correlation, a very dynamic correlation.”

He said, “I thought you kind of bebopped around life and revelation dropped in your spirit along the way.”

I said, “That happens a little bit, but there is a direct correlation between the measure of your encounter and the time you spend in prayer and the Word over years, absolutely.”

So I tell our IHOPU students (there are a thousand new students and interns the last week or two that have landed here) to draw back from some of the socializing. I think socializing is important. It is important to have some kingdom relationships. But there is so much playing around and goofing off in the kingdom, young and old alike, so much waste of time and so little pursuit of God, but all under the banner of pursuing God. It is just all rhetoric. It is not real. I told our students, “You have got four years. Go deep in God before you are committed to being popular. Go deep. Be popular second. Be the most hungry, not the most liked. And if they like you, that is cool. Don’t make it your big thing. And take those smart phones and put them under the category of the fasted lifestyle. I am serious. The amount of social media and texting—people are changing subjects every sixty seconds, every two minutes, a different dialogue with another person and another person. And studying their Bible, listening to a class, dialoguing, every sixty seconds changing subjects. I am not joking when I am saying this. They have a self-induced ADD syndrome that they created themselves. I mean, for real. They actually train

themselves to be ADD. They were not born with it. They actually train themselves, just like you can get addicted to alcohol if you want to. They are actually addicted to changing the subject every thirty to sixty to ninety seconds. They cannot think about anything with any kind of clarity, and they are wrecking their soul and losing their inheritance. You think, “Well, I just want to be up to date and want to be...”

Forget all of that stuff. It has its place, but way down the list. Go deep in God. Have a vision for your life. I talked to one young guy and told him this, and he said, “Well, you are an old guy.”

I said, “That I am.”

I said, “I don’t not do that social networking and texting just because I am an old guy. It is because I have a vision for my life. I turn down many social things, many ministry opportunities, many issues where I could make money—many, many things for thirty years—and I do not regret it at all.” I want to go deep in God. I am not trying to become more popular, have a bigger ministry, and become richer. I am trying to go deep. That is my point. I said, “You have got to make real decisions about your time or you are going to go nowhere.” We must “seek for it as hidden treasure.”

Imagine that this building is empty. I come up to you and say, “You have a year. I have buried a million dollars worth of gold somewhere in this building, maybe a foot under the concrete somewhere. The building is empty. Here is your tool. Jackhammers, anything you want. You can have the gold if you find it. You have a year.” I guarantee many of you would be here night and day, tearing up, pulling off things on the wall. You would be searching for it as hidden treasure. Is not Jesus a more worthy treasure? I am serious. Isn’t He worth turning away some socializing, turning away a little popularity, turning away a little ministry opportunity, turning away a little money-making opportunity?

I am not talking to people who are living on economic fumes, who have so little. Go ahead and take the opportunity. Pay your bills. I am not talking to that group. I am aware that some of you are not making it. So, work and pay your bills. I am talking about when I had a chance to make so much more money in my ministry for twenty, thirty years. But I said, “No, I do not want to go out. I want to go deep.” I have got a vision. I am going somewhere in God, not just growing something for man. I do not do it as well as I want to. But what I am saying is this: do less social networking, texting, media, talking, chatting, goofing off, chilling, hanging out. Get a vision and go deep and search for treasure. Don’t come up with some ridiculous grace of God doctrine to back up laziness and passivity and aimlessness in your life and call it the grace of God. That is not the grace of God. That is called immaturity and selfishness. The grace of God

will empower you to be dedicated, to go deep, and, when we fail, which we do many times, to get forgiveness and to get a new beginning with confidence within twenty-four hours.

Every day God’s mercy is new. That is what grace gives you—the ability to start new every day with confidence and the ability to go deep and to be dedicated. It does not empower us to live in laziness and sloppiness, just aimless, like so many are talking about the grace of God. It is a lie. It is a lie that is stealing souls. We have people at the house of prayer—they could have been here five or ten years—and their soul is in a worse condition than when they came, because they are going nowhere in God. They are just hanging and bebopping around this ministry. Even our worship teams, some are making zero advance in God.

Paragraph K. I have got to really end this. I am way over time. Paragraph K. Proverbs 25:2. “It is the glory of God to hide a matter and it is the glory of a king to search it.” Beloved, there is a kingly spirit about searching this out. Search Him out. He says, “Forgiveness is free, but the deep things of My heart will cost you everything you have. If I am valuable to you, come after Me. If I am not, I will see you in heaven and I will love you every step there, but you will not encounter Me.” Search it out with a kingly spirit.

And then paragraph L. The promise: you will understand the fear of God. The fear of God will not be confusing. The fear of God to many believers is intrusive. It is weird. It is confusing. It is perplexing. You will understand it. You will have an awe of God in your spirit, a brightness. It will make sense and appear valuable. And you will progressively have more and more knowledge of God that will change your life. Amen. Let’s stand.