

Forerunners Proclaiming the Coming of Jesus

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

Proclaiming the coming of the Lord. We'll spend maybe three or four minutes on that and then I'll leave the session for you to read on your own if you feel the call to the forerunner ministry, and I believe many of you do. Then we'll spend the majority of this session on the seven commitments. After that we'll take a break, come back, and spend the next session on the seven commitments of a forerunner. I trust it will be practical and give you some assistance in knowing what you're to do in your everyday life.

Top of page thirty-five. For those who are joining us over the webstream, these notes are on the website. This is one of the most important subjects to me in my particular ministry. My primary subject is to proclaim Jesus so that people get saved and grow in the love of God. Apart from that general calling that every one of us has as our first calling, there's a secondary call to raise up forerunners: first being a forerunner, and then raising up forerunners. This is the topic I want to spend the most time on, but I'm going to skip this session and leave it to you to study on your own. I'm only going to make a few points to stir up your appetite. For those of you who have never heard of the forerunner ministry, and yet, at the same time, you have that calling and you don't even know it—I want to stir you up a little.

DON'T RECEIVE ANYTHING YOU CAN'T FIND IN THE BIBLE

First, though, I want to give you a challenge. We give this challenge to our Bible students and our interns on a regular basis. Here is the challenge: Don't receive anything from my ministry or any person on this platform that you don't see with your own eyes in your own Bible. I don't care how persuasive, how convincing it sounds from a pulpit; don't believe it until you see it with your eyes in your Bible. I teach our young people, in a spirit of humility, to challenge everything we say. Don't challenge it with a bad spirit—challenge it with humility—but challenge it. If you want to be loyal to Jesus, if you want to be faithful even in our midst when you're here, then make sure what's being said can be found in the Bible. We encourage our young people to be thinkers. I'm not looking for a bunch of people who are enthusiastic and then run and jump off a cliff. I want people who think critically, who think deeply, who put a premium on understanding, not just on feeling.

Having said that, I love to feel. I love to feel the presence of God, but I want to think clearly from a biblical point of view. Whatever I say in this session and in all the others, if some of you come to this Bible school or take it online, I challenge you to challenge everything we say. I love it. I have young people come to me and say, "Mike, I can't see that in the Bible." I blow them a kiss, give them a five-dollar bill and say, "I love that." That's not rebellion; that's a lover of truth.

THESE MAY BE THE EARLY DAYS OF THE LORD'S RETURN

Paragraph A. I'll spend four or five minutes on this session, and then I'll move on. I'll grit my teeth and move on to the practical stuff, which is the next session where we'll develop the notes. Now, in my opinion, we're in the early days of the generation of the Lord's return. We're in the early days. I believe there are people in this room who will see the Lord's return in their lifetime. I don't know when; I don't know whom. It might be the twenty-year olds; it might be the two-year olds. No one knows the day or the hour. In this session, which I won't cover, Jesus gave prophetic signs which would be clear to the generation in which He returned. Many of those signs are unfolding and increasing on a global level for the first time, together, and increasing on a global

level right now in these days. I believe in the next ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years—it may be longer, and it may be shorter—those signs are going to come into fullness and the Lord is going to return.

THE UNIQUE GENERATION OF THE LORD'S RETURN

If this is true, there will be very unique dynamics in your lifetime if you're one of those who will see his return. The good will get really good and the bad will get really bad in a way that has no comparison with any time of history. It's very dramatic, very powerful, very glorious, very dangerous, and very unique in many ways. The Lord's answer in mercy is to raise up forerunners ahead of time, several decades ahead of time, who gain understanding of those unique dynamics from the Bible. They begin to make them known to people, to believers and unbelievers. They begin to preach from the Bible, the written Word, saying, "This is what's going to happen," so that when it happens, people aren't confused or surprised. It may not happen for a few decades, but they proclaim it faithfully. When it does happen, believers and unbelievers alike will say, "This is what we've heard about for many years. This makes more sense because they've been preaching it for years."

I believe there are millions, not billions. I don't know the number. It's more than thousands, but it's still a small percent. I believe everyone can have that calling if they want it. I don't believe it's a calling for some elite group. Anyone who wants to say 'yes' to this can have that calling. I believe the Lord is raising up a lot of people in their twenties, and in their teens. In my opinion, they'll be at the front of the line, ten, twenty, thirty, forty years from now—at the front line of God's purpose. In other words, the unbelievers are going to be in trouble while the forerunners are giving answers and manifesting power. I believe God is raising up these forerunners in all the different streams and in all the different denominations in the Body of Christ.

This session gives details and definition. It's only an introductory session. For those who have heard what I just said and are saying in your hearts, "I think that's me. I don't understand what it is, but I think it might be me," or you're saying, "I know that's my calling. I've been aware of this for awhile now," then I want to urge you to read this, not in the conference, but when you go home in the next few weeks. Take some time and study through this session the basic, basic, basic ideas of what the forerunner ministry is.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CALLING THE WHOLE BODY OF CHRIST

With great pain, I'm done with this session. Ouch! I really want to go into it, but I will move on. Turn to page forty-seven. I believe many of you in this room are forerunners from many different streams in the Body of Christ. It's not about being connected to IHOP-KC. One man said, "You think IHOP-KC is leading the way with forerunners."

I said, "That's absolutely absurd." God is raising up forerunners in all the streams of the Body of Christ because Jesus is preparing His Church for His return. It's not you or them or us or them. It's the whole Body of Christ whom the Holy Spirit is calling into this awareness in the years to come. I believe some will be pastors, some will be evangelists, some will be media missionaries, some will be in the arts, some will be in the marketplace, and some will be home-schooling moms. I really believe this. Some of the most dynamic forerunners will be home-schooling moms training their children. There will be singers, musicians, writers, and actors—all the many expressions. There will be many forerunners working in the field of technology.

YOU WANT TO BE A FORERUNNER?

Page forty-seven. “So, you want to be a forerunner?” I have here seven commitments that I believe are necessary to be prepared to prepare others. We have to be prepared if we’re going to prepare. How can I prepare you if I don’t prepare myself first? These seven commitments aren’t comprehensive. There are other things involved besides these seven. However, these seven commitments will give you a general road map. If you do these seven, plus some other things the Lord shows you personally that are biblical truths, I believe you’ll be on the path of being prepared to prepare others. We’ll finish this practical session, take a break, and then come back and finish it after the break. There are two sessions in this one set of notes here.

COMMITMENT NUMBER ONE: PRAY DAILY

Number one commitment: pray daily. I’m going skip this one because I plan to cover this one in depth tomorrow. Tomorrow I want to talk about how people like you and me, who don’t by nature like prayer, can come to love prayer. I told you yesterday, when God began to call me to prayer, I didn’t like prayer at all. Prayer was boring, the Bible was boring, I hated fasting, and I hated witnessing—even though I did it. I did a lot of witnessing, and I liked it sometimes and a lot of times I didn’t. Sometimes I would say, “Oh, man, I have to witness,” and other times I really liked it. I was a mess. I loved God, but I didn’t like prayer, fasting, Bible study, or witnessing. Like I said, I liked meetings; I loved to go to meetings. But prayer is essential. It’s the heart connection with God. I’ll skip that one today because we’ll look at it tomorrow and get some practical steps. Some of them are in the notes, but I’ll cover some things that aren’t in the notes that I think will be helpful for you in your development.

COMMITMENT NUMBER TWO: FAST WEEKLY

Roman numeral two: fast weekly. Pray daily and fast weekly. Wes Martin did a superb teaching about fasting. It was superb. We embrace voluntary weakness so that we can live by the strength of Another. His name is Jesus. Fasting is important. I’m going to comment for a moment or two on this.

Paragraph B. Matthew 6. Jesus said, “When you fast, your Father will reward you” (Mt. 6:17-18, paraphrased).

Paragraph C. The fact that God rewards fasting tells you how important fasting is. Would the Father reward something that wasn’t important from His point of view? No, He wouldn’t. Jesus said, “When you fast”—not “if,” but “when.” In other words, He was telling the apostles, “This will be a regular part of your life.” The idea that God rewards fasting tells us how important it is to God. Some of those rewards are external. The power of God breaks forth in circumstances, but some of those rewards from God are internal. Your heart becomes tenderized. As I’ve taught about fasting over the years, most people are aware of some of the external rewards. The power of God breaks in and things change.

THE INTERNAL REWARDS OF FASTING: AN ENLARGED CAPACITY, A TENDER HEART

I often run into people who never thought about the internal rewards of fasting: that it changes them, tenderizes them, and enlarges their capacity to feel the presence of God and to receive understanding of God’s heart. When I began to understand that fasting changed me on the inside, I don’t mean that it made me a better person, though that’s a good point. I mean that it enlarged my capacity to feel God more. How many of you want to feel God more? I certainly do. I love to feel the presence of God; I love it. Over the forty years I’ve been walking

with the Lord, I've had seasons where I fasted very regularly, and I had seasons where I didn't. Then I had seasons where I did half and half.

FORGET THE FAILURES AND KEEP ON RUNNING

I love what Wes said: "Everyone who fasts blows it many times." That's really right. I tell people to push delete and jump right back in the race. Don't wallow around in how badly you blew it. "I blew it, I'm signing back up, I'm pushing delete, and I'll never talk about it again. Jesus, You love me and I love You. I'm Your favorite one, here I am, so let's do it." That's the way to live. Forget yesterday's failures. Forget this morning's failures. Push delete, move on with a heart engaged with Him, and be in confidence that He enjoys you.

I've fasted, again, for the last forty years. I'm an old man. I've done this for forty years, but in my teen years I thought, "Well, I don't know..." My leaders started telling me about it and I said, "I don't know about this fasting thing." Then I dabbled with it, did it, did it regularly, quit doing it, did it regularly, quit doing it, did it regularly, but failed. I've had lots of seasons. I want to tell you this, for sure. The seasons when I was consistent with fasting—I'm not talking about for a week or a month—God tenderized my heart. In other words, I would do my once-a-week, two-days-a-week fasting when I would stick with it for a number of years in a row. Sticking with it doesn't mean I did it 100%; it means I was doing about 80% of what I committed to do. That's what I mean by sticking with it. I did it for two or three years in a row, and I could discern a marked, radically different tenderization on the inside of me.

ASK JESUS FOR THE GRACE TO FAST AND JESUS WILL HELP YOU

When I quit doing it, I get busy, or I get tired, that tenderness doesn't go away completely, but it diminishes. I then say, "Oh, man, I want that tenderizing!" I get so addicted to feeling His presence that I can't live without it. I don't want to fast, but I want His presence. I want to feel it more. When I fast, not just once for one week in a row, nor even one month in a row, but for a number of months, that tenderizing begins to happen. If you ask Jesus for the grace to fast, He will help you.

I pray that prayer many times, even when I'm in a really faithful season of fasting. That means I'm doing it one, two, three times a week—for months and months and months. I still ask Him each time, "Help me fast today. Help me." I don't ever take it for granted. I need help to fast. I call on Him and He helps me. That doesn't mean it's easy, but it means the 'yes' in my spirit is stronger than the 'no' in my flesh. My flesh says, "No, no, no! Stop it! You're killing yourself!" But, in my spirit I say, "That might be true, but the 'yes' is bigger." That's what I mean by, "He helps me." The 'yes' is bigger than the 'no.' The 'no' doesn't go away; I still want to break my fast every hour, but the 'yes' is bigger. That's what I mean by *help*.

The reason I say that is because one man says, "If I get grace to fast, I won't be hungry?"

I say, "I've never had that kind of grace."

"If I get grace to fast, I won't be tired?"

"I never had that either."

"If I get grace to fast, that means the temptation goes away?"

“I never had that either.”

I’ve heard people talk about the grace of fasting and I say, “I don’t know what planet you’re living on, but I feel hungry, tired, and tempted throughout the fast.” The ‘yes’ in my spirit is bigger than the ‘no’ in my flesh and I stay with it. I don’t normally feel tender while I’m fasting. I feel tender in the days afterward or as the weeks unfold. The tenderizing doesn’t necessarily happen during the fast. Some people have the idea that if they’re fasting, they’re feeling God. No, I’m feeling rotten. Your body is in detox.

They ask, “How are you feeling? How is your fast going?”

I say, “As usual: rotten.” Sometimes I get that swoosh of God that surprises me, but mostly I don’t try to measure where I’m at in the fast. I quit doing that a long time ago. I try to measure it over one and two years to see where there’s a new tenderizing in my spirit. That’s what I care about.

PRAYER AND FASTING: BASIC CHRISTIANITY

Some people think that fasting is what radical Christians do. I talked to some guys who would visit us at IHOP–KC and say, “You guys are so radical. You fast and pray!”

I say, “That’s not radical. That’s normal Christianity. Read the Bible. That’s not what fanatics do; that’s what born-again believers do.”

They said, “I’m a born-again believer.”

I said, “I’m not going to comment about you; that’s not my point.” That’s basic Bible. It’s not like the really intense women and men of God are fasting and all the rest of us are just hanging out and watching them. No, this is basic Christianity.

Young people come here and say, “Our church never taught fasting.”

I say, “I don’t want to comment on that.” I don’t want to comment on your church or your group. That’s none of my business. Jesus taught fasting; that’s all I care about. If it’s in the Bible, I want to do it and I want to teach it. End of story. Basic Christianity. Granted, there are qualifications if you’re pregnant or sick in your body. For our minors, we’ve worked out very carefully those important qualifications. We have those on our website and I encourage people to pay attention to them.

SEVEN TYPES OF FASTING IN THE BIBLE

Top of page forty-nine. I have here seven types of fasts that are in the Bible. Paragraph A. Fast to experience the power of God in your ministry. That’s the fast that most people usually think about, and that’s good. That’s a good fast. I want to fast to flow in the power of God in a greater way. You can move in the power of God without fasting, because it’s by the grace of God and the anointing of the Spirit. But if you fast, there will be a sensitivity in you, and the power will increase in your experience. Paragraph A is the type of fasting most people who fast are aware of.

Paragraph B. Daniel fasted to get prophetic insight into the end-time plan of God. That's a new one for some people.

Paragraph C. We fast to pray for the release of God's purpose for your family, your city, and your nation. This is different than just power in your own individual ministry. It's for the purposes of God in your city, your family, and your nation. Fasting goes along with prayer, and more happens.

Paragraph D. Fasting to stop a crisis.

Paragraph E. For protection.

Paragraph F. For direction.

Paragraph G. This is my favorite one, the one that Wes spent some time on in the morning session: fasting to grow in intimacy with God. It's for the internal reward He gives you when you feel His presence; you receive His love in a faster way and in greater measures. Fasting doesn't earn you anything; it positions you to receive more and to receive it faster. It's still a free gift of God. You don't earn it by fasting. You put yourself in the way of a catalytic increase. You receive more and you receive it faster.

WE DON'T FAST TO MOVE GOD'S HEART, BUT OUR OWN

Paragraph H. We don't fast to motivate God to love us. He loves us. We don't fast to move His heart in this way. We fast to move our own heart. I'm talking about the type of fast that's related to intimacy with God. Fasting is important. I encourage the vast majority of people who don't have health problems, who don't have an eating disorder, to fast one day a week. Someone says, "You mean until six o'clock at night, or do we fast to the next morning?" I encourage them to fast until the next morning, but six o'clock that night is a good beginning. I encourage you to fast until the next day. Just give it a shot.

I encourage you also, and this won't hurt your health if you're a normal, healthy person, to do it two days a week. Many groups throughout history have done this two days a week. It won't hurt you. As a matter of fact, it will make you healthier.

Wes Martin was radical. He said, "Do them two days in a row, back to back!"

I said, "Intense!" I like to slip a little eat-day in between sometimes. There you go. You can see I won the vote there. That back-to-back is good. Again, you don't earn it, but more will happen the more you do it. I was back there listening to Wes saying, "Go, man of God, go. That's right!" I've done that a number of times for some years. Then I slipped a day in between, and then I dropped one day off, and oops! Then I got that day back on. You understand how that goes.

NUMBER THREE: LIVE A HOLILY

Top of page fifty-one. Forerunners don't just pray daily and fast weekly. They live holily. When I talk about living holily, I like to talk about living fascinated in the pleasure of loving God. I wrote a book called, *The Pleasure of Loving God*. I've had comments through the years on that book. They said, "The pleasure of loving God? I thought that it was, 'Grit your teeth and pay the price.'"

I said, “Sometimes you do grit your teeth and pay the price. There’s a dimension of that, but that’s not the only dimension.” We can get in a place before the Lord where He begins to fascinate our spirit. We feel pleasure in this exciting understanding. I don’t mean it has to be some bizarre new idea, but just simple truths making a new impact on our hearts. Jesus says, “I love You,” but it hits us in a new way. We say, “Wait a second, the eternal God who never was created, who forever was God, who created Genesis 1, who became a human, was crushed by the wrath of God—He likes me? Whoa!” That’s a simple idea, but it has layers and levels of impact on your spirit when it hits you. There’s nothing more exciting and mysterious than that point. He’s the Genesis 1 God, Jesus. Jesus spoke and created the heavens and the earth. He was uncreated—never was there a day He did not exist; He became human. Beloved, He didn’t become human to die for us and then went back to heaven and said, “Whoa, that was intense! Here, Father, take that human thing and take it back. That was too intense!” When He put on the garments of humanity, He’s human forever. Billions and billions of years from now, He will still be human. That’s intense. Fully God, but human. The Father and the Spirit will never be human. There’s a unique dimension of Jesus’ relationship to us because He became human. What that means in reality is fascinating. But that’s not the only part that’s fascinating. I just can’t get over that. If you read the book of Revelation where forever we’ll say, “Worthy is the Lamb!” it’s clear: we’ll never get over this. Never. A million years from now we’ll still be awestruck by what I just said. We’ll have a lot more understanding than we do now.

HOLINESS EQUIPS US FOR DELIGHTING IN GOD

Paragraph A. Holiness equips us to enjoy life with God. The reason I say that is that some people have this approach to holiness that’s negative. When they hear holiness, they say, “Oh no, holiness!” When I hear the word *holiness*, it’s a call to what I call the superior pleasures of being fascinated by God. The call to holiness is a call to live equipped, in agreement with God, and feeling the presence of the power of God because we’re living in agreement with Him. He empowers us to love Him more, to feel Him more, and to agree with Him more. That’s called obedience.

THE REVELATION OF GRACE IS THE CALL TO HOLINESS

We won’t be able to spend much time on this one, holiness. I’m just giving a quick overview in this session on these seven commitments. On page seventy-three—don’t look at it now, just note it—I have a lengthy teaching called, “The Revelation of Grace.” The revelation of grace is really the call to holiness. In that teaching, “Revelation of Grace,” I take many of these ideas and expand them. We want to understand the revelation of grace. We want to walk holily because that’s where our spirit is liberated—we feel more—and it’s exciting to live when we live holily. When we live in sin and compromise, it’s not that God doesn’t love us. When we repent, He even enjoys us while we’re growing.

Isn’t that exciting? He doesn’t just enjoy you after you mature; He actually enjoys you while you’re maturing. I love that. I love being enjoyed, but I don’t just want to be enjoyed through the lens of forgiveness. I want the defilement and the dullness of sin out of my emotions. I don’t just want the assurance that I sinned, that I repented, and then He says, “I believe you, My blood covers you, I enjoy you, you’re My man, and I love you”—yet I still feel defiled and dull. I don’t want to live dully; I want to live brightly in my spirit. I want to feel God. I want to feel God at night when I go to bed. I don’t mean I feel God all day long, every day, but I want to feel God in the mornings. I want to feel God’s presence. I don’t want to just live constantly in forgiveness, knowing that God enjoys me. I want that defiling thing out of my spirit, that power. We’ll always

struggle with sin, but as we mature, that defiling presence has less hold on us. We feel more of the brightness and the tenderness and our spirit is excited.

THE DREAM OF OUR HEARTS IS TO CONNECT WITH GOD

Beloved, I love living excited on the inside. I don't just mean excited by my ministry: "My ministry is growing! Isn't that exciting?" That's cool, but that's not what excites me. My dream of life isn't that IHOP-KC, my ministry, would grow. My dream is that my heart would grow and I would connect with Him. That's my dream.

Back in 1983 the Lord spoke audibly and told us to do twenty-four hour prayer. I've said that through the years. He spoke audibly. We put a sign on the wall that said, "Twenty-four Hour Prayer with Singers and Musicians"—meaning, in the spirit of the tabernacle of David. For sixteen years, people would come to our church and ask, "What's that sign, "Twenty-four Hour Prayer?"

I said, "I don't know. I think it means twenty-four hour prayer."

They said, "When are you going to do it?"

I said, "I don't know."

"How are you going to do it?"

"I don't know."

"What's it going to look like?"

"I don't have a clue." For sixteen years, I really didn't; I just had that sign.

"IHOP-KC ISN'T MY DREAM; IT'S MY ASSIGNMENT"

Then, twelve years ago in 1999, IHOP-KC began. Twelve years ago next month is when we announced and began to proclaim it: "IHOP-KC is beginning!" Twelve years ago we started, but for sixteen years we waited.

As the years have gone by, some of my friends from around the nation have come and visited IHOP-KC and have seen the growth. They said, "This is your dream. For sixteen years you dreamed about this, and it happened."

I said, "IHOP-KC isn't my dream; IHOP-KC is my assignment. I'm happy to do IHOP-KC—not always—but most of the time. I'm happy to do IHOP-KC, but IHOP-KC isn't my dream."

They said, "What do you mean? You talked about it for years."

I said, "It's not my dream; it's my assignment. My dream is the anointing to love God, to feel God, and the power to give myself. That's my dream. IHOP-KC can't touch my dream." I said, "IHOP-KC might grow

really big. My dream isn't helped at all by IHOP–KC growing. IHOP–KC might just fall apart; my dream won't be touched either way. No one can touch my dream. No one can. It's between me and Him."

That's what holiness is, the power to feel that—the power to close your eyes and be in a conscious communion with the transcendent God who is outside of time. He's before and after anything that has ever happened. He's eternal. That's our dream. He loves us. He wants to bring our hearts into unity with Him. Beloved, that's awesome. That's called holiness. That's not negative. That's really, really good.

HOLINESS IS LIBERTY ON THE INSIDE

Someone says, "I don't have to do holiness. There's the grace of God!"

I say, "You're so confused. Holiness is liberty on the inside."

When I talk about holiness—which I won't do much right now because of time, and I want to note it to you so you can get your mind around it—I present two foundational truths and three principles. I've summarized it in a very simple presentation. I don't mean that holiness is simple. It's within the reach of everyone, but it's not so mysterious, it's not so confusing.

REMOVING THE CONFUSION AND MOVING FORWARD

Again, I can't really cover it but for a few minutes right now. On page seventy-three I talk a little more about it. I have a teaching series called "The Revelation of Grace" where I develop these ideas. Check it out if this interests you. My vision isn't just that you would receive this, but that you would tell people about it—I don't mean about my stuff—but that it would get into your heart, into your mouth, and that you would tell them from your heart how to live holily.

One of the greatest gifts you can give anyone is removing the confusion of how they can go forward at the heart level. If you help two or three or four or ten people in a small group ministry to go forward in holiness so that their heart becomes liberated, then I tell you, you have given them the greatest gift you can give them. I urge you to study this. Make it your own. Turn it into your own language, use these ideas and teach others. Teach them in twos and threes; teach them in tens and twenties. You don't have to wait until you have a big public ministry. Start teaching people now. Invite three people over to your home and start working on these principles. You don't need anyone's permission; just invite them over.

Maybe you say, "No one told me to invite them over!" I'm telling you right now to invite them over.

You say, "I'm waiting for permission."

Throw that broken idea out the window. You don't need permission. You have an open Bible, you have a powerful Holy Spirit, and you have a city with millions of people in it; so go and invite three of them to your house. Start teaching them how to connect with God. You're in the ministry. Bring them to your dorm room; start your ministry now. Don't wait for some leader to recognize you and say, "Yea, says the Lord, thou art called to the ministry."

Say, “Yay, I’ve finally arrived!”

Forget all that. Just invite three people to your dorm room, meet every Wednesday night, and you’re in the ministry. Don’t wait for anyone to tell you to do it; just start now. That’s how I did it. I’m getting ahead of myself because that’s two or three points away from here.

PREOCCUPIED WITH THE SUPERIOR PLEASURE OF THE REVELATION OF GOD

Paragraph B. Holiness. Two foundational truths. Foundational truth number one. This is critical. Holiness doesn’t work well without this principle. You don’t have to say it like I say it. You can use different terms, different ideas, but it’s the same truth. We must be preoccupied with what I call the superior pleasure of the revelation of God—the superior pleasure of the gospel touching our heart. The idea of God and pleasure is a new idea to some people. Again, I wrote a whole book on it called, *The Pleasure of Loving God*. There are other books out on the market. John Piper has a book called, *The Pleasure of God*. It’s dynamic; I want to encourage you to check that out. There are other books like that all over the Body of Christ. Become preoccupied with understanding how pleasure, the Holy Spirit and God relate to your heart. Don’t think of holiness as negative. Think of holiness as exhilarating and liberating and exciting—to live with that brightness of God in your inner man.

GOD IS THE AUTHOR OF PLEASURE

This is a new idea to some people. Did you know that God is the author of holiness? I said it wrong. That’s a true statement, but what I meant to say is, “God is the author of pleasure.” Did you know that God is the author of pleasure? The Devil didn’t create pleasure. He counterfeits pleasure; he didn’t create it. The Devil sees how effective pleasure is, so he gives a counterfeit because pleasure is so powerful in motivating people who touch it. He gives the counterfeit. The counterfeit is only real because the original, the authentic exists first.

YOU WERE CREATED TO ENJOY PLEASURE FOREVER

God is the author of pleasure. He created you to enjoy physical pleasure. The reason you feel physical pleasure is because you were created in the genius of God to have pleasure. You’ll have pleasure forever. There are a number of physical pleasures. There are mental pleasures; there are emotional pleasures; there are spiritual pleasures. The Devil counterfeits each one of these to allure us away from connectedness with Jesus. You can’t repent of your desire for pleasure. You can only repent of pursuing pleasure the wrong way. You were created by the God of pleasure to crave pleasure. The reason you love it is because God is filled with pleasure in his personality and you’re made in his image. You can’t repent of your longing for pleasure. You can only repent of pursuing it in the wrong way because the Devil has a counterfeit for all of these.

THE GREATEST PLEASURE IS WHEN GOD REVEALS GOD

At the end of paragraph B, I write that the greatest pleasure available to the human spirit is when God reveals God to the human spirit. Not just in this age, though surely in this age as well, but in the age to come, a million years from now, God will reveal God to you. The Spirit will reveal the Father and the Son a million years from now and you’ll say, “Oh, yes!” You won’t do it exactly that way, but you may say, “Oh, I love You, I love You.” You’ll have new insights about God’s heart forever.

There's a reason the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are always around the throne saying, "Holy!" They never stop. Do you know why? Those four living creatures have wings that cover their eyes. They're called seraphim. They fly with two wings, and with two wings they cover their eyes. They're before the throne of the Father; their eyes are really big and focused; and they see the beauty of God. They say, "Holy!" *Holy* really means, "transcendent beauty, transcendent beauty, transcendent beauty, utterly unique, infinitely superior beauty." That's what holiness means in that context. I can't go into that now, but that's what that means. They'll see the beauty of God. They'll cover their eyes because they're overwhelmed. Then, the power of that touches their being. They come up for air, open their wings and say, "Ah!" Another revelation of beauty hits; it overcomes them again, and they cover their eyes again. Some time passes. They'll open their wings, they look at the Father, they experience another wave of beauty, and they cover their eyes again. They do that forever. We're talking about a beautiful God, a fascinating God. We're not talking about a boring God.

Some people say, "I will pay the price to endure boring God in prayer."

I say, "You have the completely wrong God on the other side of your thinking."

In the age to come, we can be far away in the New Jerusalem on the new earth and we can say, "Hey, how is it going?"

You'll say, "Oh, man, I got so touched by the Holy Spirit today!" You'll have a physical, resurrected body and you'll get new revelation of God. You'll look up, and there is the Father. Around the throne, those four living creatures will be bowing down again.

We'll say, "Man, we're not even close to getting to the end of the knowledge of God." They're still looking at Him. They have not stopped. Millions of years later we'll look up and say, "We have so much more in the ocean of God's beauty to learn." Beloved, we don't wait until the age to come to touch that beauty. That's within our reach now.

KNOWING GOD ENABLES US TO RESIST TEMPTATION

That's what fasting does: It helps us to touch that. In my opinion, there's no successful, sustainable, consistent approach to holiness that's not interacting at the heart level with the beauty of God. The human spirit was created to be fascinated. If we're bored, we're not fascinated. If we're bored, we're vulnerable to all kinds of sin. The Devil wants us defiled so that we live bored. If we have a defiled spirit and we don't feel God's beauty, then we don't feel His presence. We live bored, and we're vulnerable to every kind of distraction the Devil can throw our way—distractions that take our time, that aren't inherently sinful, and then other distractions that are sinful. A bored believer is very vulnerable to the attack of the enemy. We don't have to live bored. I'm committed to living fascinated in my spirit—not just until I meet the Lord, but for billions and billions of years. I'm not going to think that I'm going to look at sinful pleasure, grit my teeth and say, "Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it, don't do it, don't do it, don't do it! Well, I think I'm going to make it!" That's how a lot of people approach holiness.

The Holy Spirit wants to tap you on the shoulder and say, "Hey, turn around. Change your focus. He's a beautiful God." It's a whole new perspective. I don't mean you get it all at the beginning. Well, we never get it all. Billions of years later, those four living creatures will still be overwhelmed. Billions of years later, those

angels, those seraphim still won't get it all. What a signpost to the people of God in the City forever. We put our focus on the revelation of Jesus. We're pursuing the pleasure and the fascination of Jesus, and then the Devil and the flesh touch us on the shoulder. We turn around and say, "No, no!" and we keep running this fascinated way. For a lot of people, all they have is sinful pleasure. They say, "Ah! I'm trying to say 'no'... but I did it again." They turn the attention of their soul in other directions. If you get preoccupied with another realm of beauty, you won't be nearly as vulnerable to the inferior pleasures. Sin is pleasurable, but it's an inferior pleasure. The pleasure is real, but it's not the most powerful pleasure there is. If it's the only pleasure you know, then it's the most powerful one in your life.

I don't want sin to be the only pleasure I know. If it's the only pleasure I know, then it's the most powerful, and it will dominate me. I'll constantly be saying, "No, no, no," giving in, repenting, getting forgiveness and feeling defiled, then giving in, giving in, repenting, getting forgiveness, feeling defiled again. There's another pleasure. If I can touch the greater pleasure, then I have power to resist the inferior pleasure. The inferior pleasure doesn't go away, but it loses its dominating power over our emotions.

WE'RE ADVERTISING TO AWAKEN AN APPETITE FOR TRUTH

That's foundational truth number one. I love this subject, and this is a vast subject that I'm touching on for three or four minutes here because we have to move on. Let's go to page fifty-three. Again, I urge you to study this more. It pains me to go this fast, but we only have a few sessions in this conference. My goal is to give you a vision of what you can study when you go home. Our leadership team feels a little squeamish about telling you about so many products. Our team was meeting and we said, "We're advertising so many products!" We're doing it for a reason. There's a reason. We're doing it as shepherds. The money we make from our bookstore—we give it to the singers and musicians to support them. We don't want the money. We give away almost all the teachings for free on our website, anyway. We give these advertisements because they're a menu. Not that you can get them all, but we want your tastebuds to say, "Mmm." You might say, "I'm not interested in that one. Oh! Get that one. Yes. No." We're giving you a taste-tester, so to speak. We're trying to awaken your appetite to get materials so that, for the next twelve months, you study them at home. We feel a little apologetic that we're offering so many products to you, but we're so jealous that we have you for only four days and we want to stir you up to good stuff. You have this big wish list: "Eighteen teaching series, twenty-one books, and forty-two CDs, I got it! That's what I want for Christmas next year." Don't wait until next year. Say, "I won't get them all, but at least they gave me a roadmap of some things that will inspire my heart." Again, we feel a little negative about telling you about so many products. We're just so jealous that you find them, and that you study them, and that you're feeding your spirit on the right things. Again, we give all the money away. It's not about money to us; it's about your hearts. I just wanted to put in that point.

THREE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES

Top of page fifty-three. There are two foundational truths; I only mentioned one. I'm skipping the other for time's sake. Three practical principles. I want you to get these principles, at least in your head. I want you to at least know they exist. I have five minutes left in this session. It's not that you're going to understand these three principles in five minutes if they're new to you, but at least we're advertising these three principles to you. You're walking out of here saying, "I didn't get all that, but at least I know it exists. When I go home, I can look it up and see if it's really in the Bible." Always make sure it's in the Bible. Don't take my word for it; don't believe it because it's on my notes. Make sure you see it in your Bible with your own eyes. Then you can

say, “Whoa, those three principles really are in the Bible! Huh. What meanest thou this? What do they mean now, now that I know they exist?” You now have a goal; you know the truths you’re focused on.

THE KNOWING, RESISTING, AND PURSUING PRINCIPLES

When I was younger, I always wanted some old man to tell me what truth to focus on. I was twenty years old, I loved Jesus, the Bible was boring, prayer was boring, but I loved meetings, and I loved Jesus. I said, “Would someone point out the good stuff to me? I don’t know what to do.” Now I’m pointing out three principles to you. I call them the knowing principle, the resisting principle, and the pursuing principle. All three are found in Romans 6, which I believe is the most dynamic chapter in the Bible for walking in freedom and liberty from sin, addictions, fears and phobias—Romans 6. You might not understand it when you first read it. You might say, “I don’t fully get all this.” But, it’s the premiere chapter in the Bible on how to walk in freedom from sin. Another way of saying it is, “How to walk free in your spirit, how to feel God, how to walk free of addictions and phobias, how to walk in confidence.” Romans 6 lays it out more clearly than any other place in the Bible.

Throughout this past summer at IHOP–KC, for—I don’t know—maybe ten or fifteen weeks, I took our staff, week by week, through the principles of Romans 5-6: the revelation of grace, and how to walk in freedom in their spirits. We didn’t even get close to being done because I’m so long-winded that I just go on and on and on—but that’s what I love. There’s always next week, and there’s another staff meeting so I can tell them more.

ROMANS 6: KNOWING WHO GOD IS AND WHO YOU ARE

The knowing principle. Paragraph A. I won’t break it down here. If it grabs your spirit, again, check out the website. Get the teaching CDs. They’re free, and study them if they grab your spirit. I’ll just give you the summary in the last two or three minutes here. We must know certain things. The knowing principle is the most neglected one. People are most committed to doing. Doing and pursuing the right things is important, but knowing is fundamental. Most believers that I know really neglect this first principle. And because they neglect this first principle that’s right here in Romans 6—the great chapter on walking in liberty—they never, ever successfully do the right things. They try to, but they don’t follow through because they don’t know some very important truths. You must know who you are in Christ. You must know what you have received in Him. You must know at least some of the truth about the heart of God as the Father and the heart of God as the Bridegroom. You must know these fundamental things.

SEE YOURSELF AS ALIVE TO GOD

There’s much in Romans 6. I’ve written here, “We see ourselves alive to God.” That’s what Paul said: “See yourself alive to God” (Rom. 6:11, paraphrased). In other words, you must know what you look like before God. In order to see ourselves alive to God, we must see ourselves enjoyed by God, we must see ourselves enjoyed by the Spirit, we must be empowered to use the name of Jesus, and see ourselves commissioned with a divine assignment. These are massive truths. I’ll leave you with this on this first principle. You must know these things. Don’t skip knowing and go right on to doing. You’ll do, but you’ll burn out by doing. You’ll be defiled in your failure while you’re doing the right things. It won’t work.

WE MUST RESIST NOT ONLY SATAN, BUT CIRCUMSTANCES

Paragraph B. Principle two. There’s the resisting principle. It’s not enough only to know the right things about God and who you are in God. We must resist. We must resist. We must resist Satan, but this last one is very

important; this is where many young people trip up. We must resist sin-provoking circumstances. Paul said, “Don’t put yourself in settings that are going to stir up sin on the inside” (Rom. 6:13, paraphrased).

THE DEVIL WON’T GET YOU THE FIRST TIME

The man says, “I love God, I’m in the prayer meeting. I love You Jesus, I love You Jesus.”

He gets in his car and says, “Grace of God, grace of God, grace of God.” He drives himself right to the wrong setting. They all have a loose spirit, they’re indulging in their alcohol and they’re flirting—and more, and more, and more.

The man says, “Grace of God, grace of God, grace of God.” He escapes. Nothing really bad happened, but now he has his confidence up that he’s doing OK there.

The Devil says, “Good. Now that you believe you can make it there, I’ve got you.”

The Devil isn’t going to get you the first time. Usually, he’s going to get you the tenth time and destroy your life. He’s going to build your confidence up to think that you can be in those circumstances and not be defiled. When your guard is down, he will come at you with a life-destroying crisis of temptation and sin.

Paul says, “Don’t present your body to situations that stir your sin up. Don’t do it. Resist them” (Rom. 6:13, paraphrased). That’s a big subject. My point is this: It’s not enough to know the right things. There’s a resisting element. God won’t do the resisting for you. No one can do it for you.

KNOW TRUTH, RESIST DARKNESS, PURSUE GOD

But that’s not enough, either. Principle three. There’s a pursuing principle. These are the things that we do. It’s doing and it’s being. In other words, we’re cultivating: we’re pursuing God, we’re pursuing people, and we’re pursuing the works of the kingdom. It’s not just that we’re resisting; we’re pursuing God with active involvement in the building of His kingdom.

Paragraph D. Summary. In this pursuit of holiness, we must know truth, resist darkness, and pursue God and people. Many different ministries focus on knowing truth, but they don’t say no to sin. Other groups, the holiness groups, say no to sin, but they don’t know who they are in God. Other groups, really active in ministry, say, “We’re doing works of justice, we’re building houses of prayer, and we’re pursuing God.” They don’t know who they are and they don’t know God as their Bridegroom and Father. Because they don’t know who they are in God, they’re riddled with guilt, and they’re never fascinated in their spirit because they don’t know the God they long to pursue. They’re in prayer meetings always repenting: “Oh, God, I’m trying to do this right!”

Paul says, “Know the right things, so that when you pursue, it impacts you differently, but you also have to resist.” Many groups pick one or two of these three at the expense of the others. We have to do all three of them.

DOING JUSTLY

Roman numeral VI. Do justly. I won't cover that one, only for this reason: it's not because it's not important, but because this truth is being emphasized all over the Body of Christ, which excites me. It excites me. We must do justly. The reason I'm not emphasizing it is because a lot of people are grabbing hold of this. We need to do this, but we need to do it while we pursue and while we know the truth and resist sin. Doing justly is front and center, and being emphasized by the Holy Spirit in this hour of human history. You're doing it; you're saying yes to it.

Amen. Let's stand.