

Church of Vidor Friday

by David Ravenhill

David Ravenhill shares the importance of understanding culture and God's initiative to dwell with His people, emphasizing the need to be the dwelling place of God.

Duration: 1:19:40

Scripture: Exodus 25:8, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 100:4, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 6:10, John 4:24, Romans 1:21, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Peter 1:16, Revelation 4:8

Topics: "Christian Life", "God's Presence", "Worship and Holiness"

Description

David Ravenhill shares his journey and experiences across various cultures, emphasizing the importance of understanding God's habitation and the environment He desires to dwell in. He discusses the concept of revival as a return to a God consciousness, highlighting that God longs to dwell among His people but requires a holy and clean place for His presence. Ravenhill stresses that true worship involves radical obedience and surrendering the throne of our lives to God, allowing Him to reign in every aspect. He encourages the congregation to cultivate an atmosphere of holiness, thanksgiving, and worship, which are essential for experiencing God's presence.

Transcript

A little bit of a background. You've already assessed that I'm not from Texas, I guess, and I was born in England and lived there till I was 12 years of age. Then as a family we moved to Ireland.

My mother is Irish, so we lived there for three years and then at the age of 15 moved to the States. Lived for about seven years in Minnesota. Any Minnesotans here? Thawing out, right? And then went through Bible college there.

Met my wife. We worked for a couple of years in New York City with David Wilkerson and then went down to New Zealand. Lived there for about 18 months.

Got Youth with a Mission. Any Y-whammers here, X-Y-whammers? No? Okay, Youth with a Mission is an organization now that has grown over the years to many, many thousands of young people. Of course, because it's been going for so long, there's a lot of old people in it as well.

Anyway, we were instrumental in starting that work down in New Zealand. Then we came back to the States. Spent four years in California.

Then from there went down to New Guinea and did some missionary work there for several years. And then from New Guinea to New Zealand where we were involved in ministry for about 15 years. And then 10 years ago came back to the States.

Spent a year in Dallas. Four years in Kansas City. Another four and a half years up near Seattle.

And then the last six months down in Pensacola. So anyway, if you roll all those accents together, that's the language I'm speaking to you in. And I trust that you can understand it.

My wife and I have been married for 34 years, I think it is this year. And we have three girls. Our oldest daughter is a missionary in China.

She's 32 years of age. Just had her birthday last week. And then we have a 29 year old with three children.

So I'm a grandfather three times over. And in fact, they were just with us for a couple of days. Left this morning when I left.

And I'm glad I'm not... I better be careful. We've got a brother here that's due to have another one. I'm glad that those years are over.

Those kids exhausted me. It's always wonderful to see them. But I'm getting older or something.

And then we have a 22 year old daughter as well that's living in Kansas City. Just graduated from college and will be a high school teacher if she can find a job. So anyway, that's just a little bit of a background.

And again, it's wonderful to be with you. I want to share with you tonight on the habitation of God. The habitation of God.

And God is doing a very wonderful work right now around the nation, around the nations. I have always been somewhat hesitant to use the word revival. I'm always afraid that once we call it revival, then we've sort of given it a 10 in the gymnastic at least scoreboard.

And then there's nothing else to aim at. But certainly there is a move of God that is unprecedented. There's a hunger.

There's a desire for God right now that certainly in my 33 or 34 years of ministry, I've not seen before. And not only in this nation, but in the nations around the world. There's just a fresh longing for the presence of God.

And the word revive means really to restore, to bring back to life. A person that you know is drowning and is rescued and the paramedics come and he's unconscious. Again, they breathe life into that individual and he revives.

He comes back into a realm of consciousness. And I believe revival is coming back into a God consciousness that we've been out of. It's almost as though we've been you know asleep.

And there's a whole realm of activity there in the supernatural that we have been totally immune from if you like. And suddenly there is a revival. We realize once again that God is on the move.

We realize that God is wanting to use us. And I believe that's what's happening right now. There is a God consciousness coming back to the church.

You know, we've tried all the gimmicks over the years. We've tried all the various moves, discipleship, faith, prosperity, this, that, and the other thing. The thing that this move of God centers around again is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We sang that song tonight. If I be lifted up, I'll lift him up. And somebody said with the river, taking the analogy there from Ezekiel's river, that you know the waters initially are up to the ankles and then waters up to the loins and then eventually waters to swim in.

And they said when the waters are at the place where we can swim in, only the head shows. And I believe we're getting to that place where only the head is going to show. The Lord Jesus Christ again is going to be exalted and magnified and glorified and the rest of the body if you like is going to be submerged.

And we're going to see the Lord in a way that we've never seen him before. And I'm excited about what God is doing. But tonight again I want to speak to you about the the habitation of God.

I'm going to be using a number of words sort of interchangeably and the first part of this message is going to be somewhat light-hearted. There's a reason for that. I want to establish a little bit of a foundation before we move on.

But I'm going to be using a number of words, the word culture, the word environment, the word atmosphere, the word environment, all of those words having sort of similar overtones if you like. Because God I believe lives in a particular habitat, a particular atmosphere, a particular environment. God has a I came over as I said to America when I was 15 years of age.

My father based his ministry for a while at a Bible college in Minneapolis, Bethany Fellowship. Some of you are familiar with Bethany book publishing. And we lived on that base for about seven years.

I'd only been there about three or four days when I was horrified to discover that some of the kids that I was playing with, these were staff kids, staff brats as they were called, I was horrified to find out that they were swearing. And they were equally horrified to find out that Leonard Ravenhill's son, this wonderful evangelist had written these books and so on, that his son was also swearing. Until we realized that we had a clash of cultures, that swear words in England are not necessarily swear words in America and vice versa.

And I was not swearing in my particular culture, I was an American, and they were not swearing in their culture, but they were in mine. And I realized again that just because we spoke the same language, there was a difference in culture. And one of the things of course that you learn as you travel, and I've had the wonderful privilege of traveling now many, many years and visiting various countries as well as living in different countries, and that is that you begin to appreciate a person's culture.

They teach you now of course as you go out on missionary activity, that not only do you need a knowledge of the Word of God to explain the gospel, but you need to understand the culture to which you're going. It's very easy to offend somebody. The book of Proverbs says, a brother offended is harder to be one than taking a city.

And some of you know that, I guess by experience you've offended somebody and that offense is maybe still there. You've done everything you can, you've written letters, you've picked up the phone, you've apologized, but somehow that offense has caused a breach in your relationship. And so we need to understand cultures, we need to understand again the way in which somebody operates, that their value system may not be the same as your value system.

What appreciate may not be what you appreciate. And as I've again traveled, I've discovered that not everybody does things the way we do them. In fact, when my wife and I were in New Guinea, we were talking to one of the missionaries, we were in the major city there, Port Moresby.

And New Guinea, if you know anything about that nation, it's a nation of three million people and it has 700 languages, not dialects, but languages, and then there's the various dialects as well. It's a very mountainous nation, one of the worst flying countries in the world, and of course Wycliffe have their largest base there. And we got to know some of these missionaries that were working in one of these very remote areas, and they were telling us some of the sort of humorous things that they'd come across.

So one of them was that after they'd been there for a number of months, the Nationals, they don't like to be called natives, but we would refer to them more as natives, but the Nationals came up to one of the American missionaries that was translating the Bible into their particular language, and he asked a question. And the question was this, he wanted to know about the handkerchief. They had never seen a handkerchief before until the the Americans came along and they were somewhat mystified, and they wanted to know that if they would explain why when they blow their nose they keep this particular substance, and they wrap it up so carefully in this white handkerchief, this white cloth they referred to it as, and then they put it in their pocket.

And of course in their mind there was something of tremendous value, because they said you always have a very white cloth that which to them of course spoke of, you know, something that was sort of almost sanctified, but you take this very white precious cloth out of your pocket, you very carefully blow your nose, and this substance then is then very carefully folded up and it's placed back in your pocket, and the question was what do you do with that stuff? We want to know, we've wasted that substance for you know thousands of years, and obviously you have discovered a priceless commodity, that the way you handle it, the way you are so careful to put it in that white cloth and preserve it, what what do you do with it? Now again that's rather humorous, and it is humorous, but you see in their culture they did not understand, it was a mystery to them. Now we would obviously just, we grow up in our particular culture, it's something that we're taught, it's something that we do automatically, it's something that we don't even think about, but to a Stone Age culture, again they thought it was quite strange. In some cultures it's appropriate in the middle of the meal to belch, and the longer and louder the belch, then the more you're enjoying the meal, and basically what you're saying to the cook is this is a wonderful meal.

We gathered with some of the pastors tonight, had a wonderful meal, some of the wives had spent all day preparing it, and it was delicious, but I was not about to belch in the middle of the meal to let them know that I was enjoying it, I expressed it in a different way, but in some cultures again if you don't belch, then you would offend the host, you would offend the cook, because there is no sign of appreciation. Now again when somebody belches at the table, especially if you have visitors, you know the appropriate thing to do is for a father to sort of look with one of those looks right across the table, or if he can reach you, kick under the table and remind you that we have guests tonight, be on your best behavior. It's embarrassing when your teenager belches at the table, and we don't do that, but again in certain cultures you do.

When my wife and I lived in New Zealand just ten years ago, in fact it's about 11 years ago now that I made a trip down to the city of Dunedin down in the South Island of New Zealand, that's the old Scottish city settled by the Scots, and our oldest daughter was in university there, and I went down to do some meetings and I was staying at the house that she was also staying at, and while I was waiting for breakfast that particular morning, I picked up the morning newspaper and there was an article on the front page that caught my attention, it was a an article concerning a museum exhibit that was touring Australasia, it was going to New Zealand and over to Australia, I think up into Malaysia, but it was the an exhibit from the Inca civilization, the Incas from Peru, South America, and the the article described this particular museum exhibit, it said that they had various pieces of pottery and jewelry and artifacts pertaining to the Inca civilization, some gold and some silver vessels and so on, but it said the pride and joy of this particular museum exhibit was the mummified remains of an Inca person, and the purpose of the article was to say that New Zealand was the only place on this particular tour where these mummified remains were not being displayed, and it said the reason was that the Maori people, who make up about 15 or 20 percent of the New Zealand population, they're the original inhabitants of New Zealand that would be equivalent to the American Indians, they were, they are very superstitious when it comes to anything to do with death, and so the New Zealand government was sensitive to their particular culture, knew that it would be highly offensive to have a dead body on display even though that body was supposedly thousands of years old, and so they were not displaying this particular mummy, all the other artifacts were on display. Again, they were sensitive to another culture and they realized that they could cause a breach in the relationship that the government had with the, with the Maori people. In Malaysia, if you've traveled in Malaysia, I've traveled reasonably extensively in Malaysia, when you go into a home, it doesn't matter if that home is poor, if that home is rich, that before you cross the threshold of that house, of that home, you have to remove your shoes.

I remember going with a Chinese doctor, medical doctor, that I was staying with during a week of meetings up in a place called Penang, and we drove to his home, beautiful Mercedes Benz, very rich family, got to the entrance of the house, there were some gates, he automatically opened, we went in, there was a maid at the door, and I proceeded to walk into the house, and there was a tap on my shoulder, I was reminded, pointed down, and that here was a series of shoes, I thought maybe Imelda was there, but anyway, I was asked if I would remove my shoes, there were dozens of shoes at the door, there were no shoes worn in that house, even though there was no carpet in the house, again because of the heat, most of the floors are terrazzo or tile flooring, but you see in that culture, you would never ever think of going across the threshold into a house without first of all removing your shoes, it's just the way in which they operate in that particular culture, and so understanding a person's culture is absolutely essential, I was in Thailand many years ago, doing a missionary conference there, and they were asking me at that time I was living in New Zealand, and they asked me about a particular person, did I know a particular person, and I said yes, happened to work with this gentleman, and he'd been there as a speaker the year before I had, and they were still talking about something that happened, he was illustrating his message, and he took off his shoe, and he threw his shoe, I think he was talking about David and Goliath, he didn't have any sling, so he took his shoe off, and he threw it across the audience, and they were horrified because in Thailand the shoe is the most despised, or the lower you go in the body, it's more and more despised, and the foot is the most despised part of the body, in fact it's a sort of an insult to sit and to point the sole of your foot at somebody, or to point your shoe at somebody, that's the, in that culture that's highly offensive, these people on the front row would be offending me if I was Thai, don't worry, but, and so what he did, he did something that was culturally not acceptable, and here it was a year later, and they were still talking about it, and so again we need to understand that not everybody operates the same way, what we value other

people don't necessarily value, we get so used to operating in our particular culture, don't we?

Most of you tonight I'm sure had some sort of a meal, and you used a knife, or a fork, or a spoon to eat with, and yet you know there's well over a billion people that wouldn't even know how to begin to use a knife and a fork, they use chopsticks, and they are just as adapted to using chopsticks as we are with knives and forks and spoons, but because we have been raised that way, we just automatically think the rest of the world operates the same way. So I'm going to share with you tonight something of God's culture, if you like, the environment, the habitation of God, the Bible says that we are growing into a habitation of God, in other words we are being prepared by God to be the dwelling place of God, to be the home of God, the Bible says that we are the temple, the house if you like, the temple of God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, now the word habitat in the dictionary, it means the usual place that someone or something is found, in other words the usual place that someone or something is found, that's the word habitation or the word habitat.

I lived up in Seattle until six months ago and of course that whole area of the Great Northwest with its magnificent scenery and the wonderful trees and so on, you know they've had the environmentalists up there saying that we should not be cutting down some of that old forest growth because of a little bird called the spotted owl, and they are great proponents of defending that helpless little bird I guess, in the meantime people are dying of course because they don't have jobs and can't afford to feed their families, but that doesn't seem to matter, but anyway they tell us that there is a particular habitat that that bird needs in order to survive and if we destroy that habitat that bird of course will go into extinction and so on, in order to preserve that bird we need to, we need to

maintain the habitat, and so again the dictionary defines habitation or habitat as the usual place that someone or something is found, now the word habitation in the Bible is an interesting word, you can go home if you like, check it out on your computer, on your strong's, it's a word that is translated tabernacle, a dwelling, a place to settle, a place to dwell, a place to marry, a place to keep house, and a place to rest, and various other ways of translating that word habitation, a place to settle, a place to marry, a place to keep house, a place to rest, a place to abide, all of that and you'll notice that all of that of course has one thing in common, a place where you feel at home, when you get married you establish a home, it's a place where you can rest, you can settle, you can

settle down and just that becomes your habitation, that becomes your habitat, now if you have your Bible tonight turn with me to Exodus chapter 25, Exodus 25 and verse 8 and this is God now speaking to Moses and he says in verse 8 and let them construct a sanctuary for me that I may dwell among them, now notice this is God taking the initiative, this is not Moses at the end of 40 days of prayer and fasting sort of begging God to come and to dwell in the midst of his people, it's not Moses saying God it's about time you paid us a visit, after all we're supposed to be your kids and you know you're supposed to be a father, why don't you come, why don't you dwell with us, why do you sort of distance yourself from us and so on and after 40 days of prayer and fasting he finally gets God's

attention and it's not that way at all, this is God taking the initiative, God coming to Moses and expressing a longing, a deep desire that God has to dwell in the midst of his people and how many of you know the Bible says I am the Lord and I change not, that God still longs to dwell with his people, I believe the heart of any father and especially father is to be with his family and he says I want to come and I want to dwell among them, so first of all God expresses his desire, the second thing we find is that God expresses his demands, first of all his desires, secondly his demands, in other words God says even though I want to

dwell with you, I will not dwell anywhere and so he says to Moses, Moses according to all that I'm going to show you, as to the pattern of the tabernacle, the

pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it, in other words God says to Moses, Moses don't get any bright ideas about building me an environment, a culture, a habitat, an atmosphere, I'm going to give you all the details, I'm going to tell you exactly how to build a habitat, a habitation for me, a tabernacle, a place where I can dwell, a place where I can settle, a place where I can marry, a place where I can keep house, a place where I can feel at home and he says I'll give you the dimensions, I'll give you the color scheme, I'll give you the type of furniture, I will show you every single detail and God says and just so you shall construct it and so we find that even though God has got a tremendous desire to dwell with his people, he also has certain demands.

Now as we look at this tonight, we need to understand the ways of God, see the psalmist cried out many many times, Lord show me thy ways or teach me thy ways, if you like teach me your culture God, how you operate, your value system, the way you do things, what you appreciate, what you don't appreciate and so on, if we are going to get along with somebody, we need to know what they appreciate and what they don't appreciate, I think it was AW Tozer that sort of summarized the Christian life this way, if you want to grow spiritually, you need to learn what God loves and love it and learn what God hates and hate it and that really is the essence of the Christian life, find out what God loves and begin loving what God loves, find out what God hates and begin to hate what God hates, now if we really honestly did that because God has some lists of hatreds, I hate those that sow seeds of discord among the brethren, if we really hated that like God hated it, there'd still be an awful lot of churches together instead of divided right and so on, so we need to understand again God's value system and so God says listen I want to dwell with you but I will not dwell anywhere, I've got standards that need to be met, we need to understand that about God right from the very beginning, so he says let them construct a sanctuary, the word sanctuary means a clean place, one of the things we know about God is that he will not dwell with his uncleanness, word sanctuary means a clean place, now one of the things you discover when you travel, you begin to, well let me let me back up and say this, you can discover a lot about a person by visiting their home, in the course of my travels over the years I've stayed in many many different types of homes, I spent an entire week once in a castle, very beautiful magnificent castle right up in the St.

Lawrence Seaway believe it not in this country, built by the head of Singer sewing machine back at the turn of the century, cost something like four million dollars back in 1904, so you can imagine it's on a nine acre island right in the St.

Lawrence Seaway, they've done some filming there, Hollywood has and a Christian gentleman bought it, this is going back now about 30 years, I don't know if he still has it or not, but we spent a week in that castle, knights of armor, beautiful you know stone arches as you walk in, just a magnificent place, you go into a huge library and on either side of this big fireplace there were two panels and in bookcases starting, thousands and thousands of books and the gentleman showed us, he reached in behind one of these books and he lifted up some sort of a lever and all of a sudden the panel on the side of the fireplace opened up and there was a passageway and that entire castle was full of secret passages, it was amazing, it was built after some sort of a castle in Europe, you could almost

go into every single room, our bedroom for instance had a closet, in those days people didn't have quite as many clothes but it was in the corner of the room, it had three hooks at the back, you lifted up the middle hook and the whole back of the closet opened and you could find your way into passages, there was even

a little area that was a prison back in there that you can never find anybody if they were put there and it was just a fascinating place, but I spent a week there, I've slept on dirt floors in Fiji, right up in the mountains of Fiji where it gets extremely cold at night, covered in all sorts of mats and trying to keep warm and so on, so I've been in all sorts of homes but you can tell a lot about a person by going into their home and all you have to do is walk in the front

door and just look around, you can tell if they're rich or they're poor, you can tell if they're clean or they're dirty, you can tell if they're educated or uneducated and so on and so forth, I could go on, you could tell the sort of likes and the dislikes, the type of furniture, you know maybe some homes have very beautiful antique furniture, others all very modern type furniture, others contemporary furniture, various color schemes, you know some that you think how do they live in these sort of colors and so on and you know it tells you about that person, it reflects the personality or the personalities that live in that home, sometimes of course I'm instead of being in a motel, I stay in a home and many times I'm in either a guest bedroom, maybe a teenage bedroom where the teenager has

been asked to you know sleep in the basement or something and I've gone into his room or her room, whatever the case may be and you can tell a lot about that teenager just by looking at the posters on the wall, looking at the CDs that they have, looking at the you know the sports equipment that they've got and so on and all you've got to do is sort of look in that room and you know this guy's in the baseball, this guy's into you know football, this guy's in the tennis, this guy's into music big time or whatever it is, you know sometimes I'll look at the bookcase in a home and I'll look over the books and you know sometimes they're all medical books and I think well obviously somebody in this home, either the husband, maybe they haven't arrived yet, it's a doctor, these books are all

concerning medicine or maybe there's a nurse in the house, other times I look and all the books are about science and so on, I think obviously this guy's well educated in the sciences, other times it's all sports stuff, you know fishing gear or photography magazines or whatever it is and all I've got to do is look and I can tell what sort of person inhabits that home.

You know sometimes I look and there's cookbooks everywhere and I think this is gonna be a great weekend and so on but anyway you know you learn to know something about that person without even meeting them just by being in their home, that home reflects the type of person that lives there or the type of people that live there and what I want to do tonight, I want you to visit with me as we go into God's house, we've already established from the Old Testament that God says I won't dwell anywhere, that we have to make a place that is suitable for him, so let's turn now to Revelation chapter 4, you see when Moses was told that by God, he was told that he wanted to dwell in the midst of his people and he says but Moses I'm going to show you how to make that house and of course Moses was taken

up into the mountain and for days and days and days God gave him revelations of the tabernacle, he basically said Moses this is what I live like up here and what I want you to do, I want you to duplicate what you see up here down on earth, obviously in a smaller scale but the basic ingredients of components that I'm used to up here, I want you to replicate or duplicate down on earth, I will give you all the details, I will give you the color scheme, I'll give you what needs to be gold, what needs to be silver, what needs to be bronze, what needs to be purple, what needs to be you know whatever it is, I'll tell you the dimensions, I'll tell you the type of furniture, I am particular about where I dwell, I want to have a habitation on earth that is the same as my habitation in heaven, you

see God says I am the Lord and I change not, God is not some sort of chameleon that adjusts to the environment that he's in and we need to understand that and so in Revelation chapter 4, we have John being invited into the house of God and let me just read here in verse 1, after these things I looked and behold a door standing open in heaven and let me just sort of candid as we look at this, God's got a door if you like and the door opens and from inside the house the voice of God speaks and John is invited up in verse 2, immediately I was in the spirit and behold a throne standing in heaven and one sitting on the throne, let me back up to the last part of verse 1, come up here and I will show you what must take place after these things, so the door opens there's a voice that says John

come on in, John comes in to the house of God, he comes into the abode, the dwelling place, the habitation of God himself and as soon as he steps into the house of God, the dwelling place of God, he sees one thing, one thing dominates the house of God, one thing dominates the mind of John, as soon as the door opens and he comes in the spirit realm into the dwelling place of God, he says in verse 2, immediately I was in the spirit and behold a throne was standing in heaven and one sitting on the throne, now we need to understand something about what John saw, you see if God is going to dwell in your life and my life and he longs to do that, that's the desire of God, that's an unchanging desire of God to be with his family, he created us again for his pleasure, he created us for himself and

he wants to come, he wants to make himself manifest in our midst but if he comes, he demands the throne, if he's going to come and be who he is, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, he demands the throne, you see he again would say to us as he said to Moses, David, Susan, John, Mary, whatever your name is, if I'm going to come and reside in your life, if I'm going to bring heaven down to earth, there is one place that I always sit, you see the word habitation is the usual place that someone or something is found and the place that God is not usually found, the place that God is always found, Old and New Testament, he is always on the throne and if he is going to reside in your life and my life, he demands the throne, now the throne speaks of his government, the throne speaks of his

kingdom, the throne speaks of his authority, it speaks of his power, it speaks of his will being done, it speaks of his laws and so on and we need to realize that we will never ever make any spiritual progress in our Christian life until there is a surrender of the throne, you see prior to Jesus Christ coming, you and I sit on the throne, it's my money, it's my time, it's my car, it's my possessions, it's my this, it's my that and so on and we have a little kingdom, if you like, there was a song years ago that the verse went something like this, Jesus be the Lord of all the kingdoms of my heart, we have kingdoms, don't we?

And we reign over those things, again they are my possessions, it's my motorcycle, it's my boat, it's my yacht, it's my fishing rod, it's my camera, those are my clothes, that's again my room and so on and so forth, it's me and mine and we have our kingdom and God says listen, if I come it becomes my kingdom, you see when you pray, Jesus said pray this way, thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, here is as it is in heaven, he sits on the throne and we need to understand that, it's we will never ever, let me say that very clearly, let me underscore that, we will never make any spiritual progress until Jesus Christ really is Lord of your life, until you have abandoned the throne and asked him to come and reign and rule over every facet of your life and that's easier said than done,

you see God says I will not dwell anywhere, see to it Moses that you make it according to the pattern and so the first thing, if we are going to cultivate again a habitation, if we are going to prepare an atmosphere, an environment conducive for the presence of God, he has to first of all have the throne of God and if you've never done that tonight, you can do that, I possibly will share one of these nights on the cross and

a little bit of my own testament but one of the greatest battles that I faced and one of the reasons that I put off accepting Christ year after year after year as a teenager had nothing to do with sin in the sense of all the horrendous things that I did, I hadn't done a lot of horrendous things, I was a good self-righteous sinner but there was one thing that I was not

prepared to give God, I was not prepared to give him the throne and it dealt with a particular area of my life, a particular goal that I had in life, particular ambition that I wanted to fulfill, a destiny that I had dreamed of doing all of my younger days and I thought when I graduate from school, I will do this, that and the other thing and so on and I did not want God interfering with my plans and there was a battle that raged in my life for four or five years, a very real battle and it wasn't the fact that I didn't want to get rid of my sin, I longed to be right with God, I longed to have peace with God but it was over this issue of the throne, I wanted to maintain control of the throne, again it was my time, my money, what I wanted to do with my life and so we've got to come to this

place where God takes over the throne of our life, the second thing that John becomes aware of as he comes in again into the house of God, in verse 8 it says the four living creatures each one of them having six wings are full of eyes around within, around and within and day and night they do not cease but to say holy, holy, holy is the Lord God the Almighty who was, who is and who is to come, John becomes aware of the fact that God dwells in a holy place, a holy place and as John steps in not only does he see the throne but he hears this incessant sound holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, again if God is going to dwell in your life or he's going to dwell in my life after taking over the throne he wants to establish a holy place, our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, in the

Old Testament God dwelt in the holy of holies, you see why?

Because God said to Moses, Moses come up here I want to give you a view of my dwelling place just as John was having a view here in Revelation and Moses saw the dwelling place of God, the holiness of God and so he if you like he makes a copy of that, a shadow the Bible calls it of the true tabernacle, a copy of the true tabernacle but it was a copy and it had a holy place in it and God dwelt in the holy of holies, now notice what sort of holiness it was, it was not a holiness on a Sunday morning, it was not holiness from 10 to 12 or 10 to 1 whatever on a Sunday morning and the holiness on a Wednesday night from you know 7 to 9 o'clock or whatever it says and they cease not day and night to cry holy, holy, holy, in other words it was a continuous atmosphere of holiness, now what is holiness?

Holiness is nothing less than spiritual health, this is a nation that is obsessed with health in the natural isn't it? I'm forgetful now as to how many billions of dollars we spend in health care and related products but it literally is in the billions of dollars that Americans spend every year on exercise equipment, health, foods, medical expenses and so on, we are obsessed with keeping healthy bodies, we jog, we play tennis, we exercise, we take our vitamins, we do this and we do that you know and the slightest little pain that persists for more than maybe two or three or four hours, we make an appointment at the doctor, we want to know, we want to get to the root of this in case it develops into something more serious and certainly if it persists for more than 48 hours, we'll pick up the phone and at the you know pressure of the wife or husband or whatever, honey I think you better get that checked out and we don't leave it very long, we keep very short accounts don't we when it comes to our physical bodies and pain, we want to make sure this isn't cancer, we want to make sure this isn't some other sort of growth or some other disease that is going to cripple us in some way, we go there and we make sure that that thing is taken care of and yet it's amazing isn't it that we can allow the disease of sin to remain in our lives many times year after year after

year after year and do nothing about it and sit through crusades like this, meetings like this, where the evangelist can speak about getting right with God and so on and you know that you've got a problem with pornography, you know that there's a problem with anger, you know that you've got a problem with lust, you know that you've got a problem with you know jealousy or bitterness or unforgiveness, resentment, some other thing, maybe into you know some horrendous sort of thing.

I've pastored long enough to know that nothing surprises me anymore, I've had cases of incest, bestiality, everything else that has been named in my office of people that have come in, people that have sat in church year after year after year, lifted their hands, raised their hands and everything and then all of a sudden something has come up and they've exposed what's really going on in their life and again nothing catches me by surprise anymore, I think I've heard just about every sin name that you can think of, but it's amazing isn't it that we will allow that sort of disease which is the worst disease to persist without going to the great physician and saying God you've got to take care of this thing, I can't stand it a moment longer, I'm bound with this thing, I'm bound with alcohol,

I'm bound with lust, I'm bound with anger or whatever it is, God you've got to set me free and so holiness is nothing more than wholeness, spiritual well-being, be holy as I am holy and it is a consistent holiness, day and night they cease not, it's not just periods of time, see we can always be on our best behavior in a meeting like this, we turn around to greet one another, we've got all the right cliches, God bless you brother, good to see you, praise God, you know and so on and so forth, but I'm talking about when when nobody else is around, somebody said character is what you're like when you're alone, or character is revealed in the dark, when there's nobody else to check up on you, when your wife's out, the kids are out, it's what you watch on television, what you read, what you

think about, all of those things reveals what you really are, and God dwells in a holy place, always has, always will, and so there has to be a change if God is going to abide, if he's going to feel at home, or he may visit once in a while so to speak, but he's not going to reside there, my wife and I had an experience about 12 years ago where we wanted to get away on a break from the church we were involved in, we were involved in quite a large church at that time, about sixteen, eighteen hundred people, and we'd heard about a sort of a holiday vacation home in New Zealand, New Zealand again has got about three something million people, and between fifty and seventy million sheep, it's basically an agricultural country, it's about the size of California, a thousand miles long, maybe 150

miles wide, and what will happen is that a farmer will have a successful season, and he will want to enlarge his property, and so he will buy up an adjacent property, an adjacent farm, and of course when he gets the additional acreage of course, he buys also the house that is on it, and not being able to live in two houses, if the house is in good condition, he will rent it out for what they call farm holidays, and there's a bureau that you can call, and they will tell you about these farms that are all over New Zealand that you can go to, spend a week or two weeks there, and just enjoy the scenery, and you know, trample over the, you know, the fields, and so on, and so we'd heard about this particular place, it was down a long valley, mountains on either side, snow-capped mountains, and

beautiful river, I was hoping to do a little bit of fishing, and just get away from the telephone, and the people, and so, you know, we were anticipating getting away, and enjoying this place, the day finally came, we packed our kids in the car, all some of our belongings, I shouldn't say all our belongings, but anyway, some of our belongings, seemed like all, and drove to this place, we pulled in at the farmhouse, and the lady says, gave us the key, and told us where the place was, it's the first farm you come to, down

the road there, about another quarter mile, half a mile, on the left-hand side, and sure enough, here was this magnificent valley, and this river, and so on, we pulled in, walked into this house, and we were flabbergasted, it was nothing like people had described it to us,

I mean, people are giving it rave reviews, oh, it's beautiful there, it's wonderful, you'll enjoy it, and so on, well, obviously, we either had a different value system than they did, or something, or they were blind, during the time that they were there, but we walked in, and this place was absolutely filthy, I mean, you know, it had an old, a couple of chairs, with the springs coming up out to the, literally out of the seat, held threadbare carpet, we went into the kitchen, and there were, there must have been, two or three hundred bottles, around a, sort of a shelf, and around the bottom of the, the kitchen, beer bottles of every single description, at least alcoholic beverages, of every single description, we went into the bedroom, I won't even begin to describe to you the condition

of the mattress, my wife took one look at it, and said, honey, I'm not sleeping there, that was the end of that, and now, you need to understand, my wife has a German background, even though she was born in America, and she's a perfectionist, you know, the kids and I have modified her a little bit over the years, but, you know, she's the type that always adjusts them, you know, and I can't see the difference after she gets through, but she can, obviously, so, anyway, so, anybody else married to one of those, but, okay, we'll have an alter call after, but, here we were, in this place, it was anything but perfection, it was just dirty, to say the least, and we thought, well, we're here now, we've paid, we'll make the best of it, we, you know, put two or three blankets on the bed, we

eventually slept there, we woke up in the morning, thinking at least we'll be able to get out, and, you know, sit outside, do some reading, kids can swim, I can do some fishing, and so on, and woke up in the morning, it was just torrential rain, it just rained, and rained, and rained, and for four solid days, it rained, and here we were, stuck in this place, that every time I sat down, I thought I was going to get the plague, or something, and, you know, we just couldn't wait to get out of there, finally, we didn't know how much long it was going to rain, we made an excuse to the lady, we packed the kids in the car, and we drove home, we spent the rest of our vacation at home, I'll never forget walking in the front door of our home, and feeling at home, you know, the towels were clean,

the floor was clean, the utensils were clean, everything about the house was immaculate, and I sat down, and I just, it was like, this is wonderful, you know, I don't have to sort of wash my hands every time I get up, I mean, it was that bad, and I sometimes think that God is like that, He is used to, again, a holy place, and He comes into your life, and my life, and all of a sudden, it's like, boy, I just can't stand what's going on here.

Now, obviously, the work of the Holy Spirit, initially, is to convict us of sin. When my wife and I were first married, we worked with David Wilkerson in New York City, and they had us living in a little tiny two-room apartment up above a garage at the back of Teen Challenge on a place called Vanderbilt Avenue in Brooklyn, and I remember the first day we were there, my wife went through the two rooms, didn't take her too long, and the bathroom, and came back with a report, you know, a honeydew list, and it was, darling, I can't stand the color of the bathroom, you know, we need to paint it, and before long, that place reflected our particular personality, the color scheme, we bought some curtains, we bought a rug for the floor, we painted the bathroom, we cleaned the place out, some druggies had been in there prior to us, I guess, and so on, but the place began to feel like home. Now, that's the work of the Holy Spirit.

It doesn't happen all at once. The Bible talks about the washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Ghost. There is a renewing process, but if we are not cooperating with the Holy Spirit, then we have a problem on our hands, because God will not dwell with us uncleanness, you see.

As long as there is cooperation, as long as we are responding to the work of the Holy Spirit, as he begins to highlight and put his finger on certain areas, and that's what spiritual maturity is, it's God dealing with different areas of our life at different times, dealing with attitudes, dealing with problems, resentment, bitterness, whatever it is, and saying, David, you've got to deal with that thing. David, you've got to go to that person and apologize. David, you've got to quit doing this thing, and so on, and as we begin to cooperate, obviously we grow, but if we stop doing that, then again, we grieve the Spirit of God.

I remember when we were in New Guinea, my wife and I had a gentleman visit us with a group of young people. It was a sort of a Bible school that they were traveling during the summer months from Australia, and this gentleman spoke one night in one of our meetings, and at the end of the service, he gave an altar call, and there was quite a number of people that came to the altar, and there were three young men, I remember on one side, and this gentleman went over, he was praying for them for the baptism of the Spirit, and nothing was taking place, and he kept on praying, and I could see a sort of a certain frustration, and eventually he left the first man and went to the second man, same thing happened, same thing happened to the third man, and then he started ministering to some others, and I remember going to the first young man, he'd only been saved about two or three weeks, and I said to this young man, I said, listen, the problem is not the Holy Spirit, and I quoted in the verse from the book of James, James chapter 4 and verse 5, where it says, the Spirit, capital S, Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit that God has made to dwell in us, jealously desires us. It's one of those beautiful verses expressing the jealousy of the Holy Spirit for your life and my life, because we were created as the dwelling place of God, we are the habitation of God, God created us to be the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and I said the Holy Spirit jealously longs to dwell in that which God created him to dwell in, and I said there must be something in your life that is grieving the Holy Spirit, are you aware of anything, and just like that, I didn't expect him, I didn't suggest anything, I didn't name anything, and just like that, he named a sin.

In his case, it was smoking. He'd only been saved about a month, and he said, you know, I took my first cigarette today since being saved. I'd never mentioned anything about smoking, it's not my job to play Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit, you see, had highlighted that in his life that afternoon when he took that cigarette, and I said, well, are you prepared to deal with that? He said, yes, and he repented of that thing, and we prayed, and he came through to the baptism of the Spirit.

I went to the second young man, and I did the same thing, and he confessed the sin. He said, yeah, I got angry today. He said, I let a guy have it.

I can't remember if he knocked him out or not, but anyway, he got in a scrap or a fight at work, and he knew it was wrong. You see, I didn't mention anything about fighting. I mean, I couldn't even begin to think of what it would be, but he knew that there was something in his life that he had done that he had not dealt with when the Holy Spirit said, you shouldn't have done that.

You see, he allowed it to just remain there. You see, he allowed the uncleanness to remain in his life, and as soon as he put that thing right, immediately, again, the Spirit of God came. The third young man, the same thing, and I can't remember what the third one was now.

I remember the first two. You see, we need to make sure that God dwells in a holy place. There's no uncleanness in our life.

The next thing that we find that John becomes aware of is in verse 9, and it says, and the living creatures were given glory and honor and thanks to him that sits on the throne, to him that lives forever and ever. Now notice he got the glory. These living beings were constantly giving glory to God.

The Bible says in whatever you do, in word or deed, do all to the glory of God, you see, and granting him honor, and then it says, and they were giving him thanks, and John then becomes aware that not only is there this atmosphere of holiness, but there is an atmosphere of thanksgiving. Now you think, well, what's so important about thanksgiving? You know, thanksgiving is absolutely vital to God coming and dwelling in your life. Romans chapter 1 says, when they knew God, they honored him not as God, neither were they thankful.

Therefore, God gave them over ultimately to a reprobate mind. There was something about thanksgiving that is absolutely essential if God is going to dwell in your life. You see, you enter into his gates with thanksgiving.

What were the gates? Of course, the gates were the gates of the tabernacle or the temple. Why was that? Because John, or rather Moses, was taken up into the presence of God, like John, and he saw what was going on in heaven, that these living creatures, again, were constantly bowing in adoration, and they were giving thanks to him that sits upon the throne, you see. And so God dwells in an atmosphere of thanksgiving, you see.

We say that God, what? Inhabits the praises of his people. It becomes the habitation of God. There's something about praise or thankfulness or gratitude that becomes a place that is conducive for God to dwell in.

It's where Paul and Silas, in prison, it's midnight, they're in chains, and I'm not sure which one suggested it, but maybe Paul said to Silas or vice versa, you know, before we go to sleep, why don't we sing a few songs? And maybe they got those chains rattling in some sort of beat, I don't know, but they started praising God, and all of a sudden God comes down, you see. You see, God sort of inclined his ear, and he said, boy, that's like home. I'll go down, I can dwell in that sort of atmosphere.

And God invades that atmosphere, and all of a sudden the doors open, and so on and so forth, you see. Now, we need to understand the importance of that. In the Old Testament it says, because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy or gratefulness, therefore you will serve your enemies.

Now, I can understand God saying, you know, because you murdered or committed adultery, or you were a homosexual, or, you know, you were stealing or something, therefore you will serve your enemies. That seems like a stiff penalty, that when you were not grateful. See, God puts a high value in everything, give thanks, you see, in everything give thanks.

For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. See, we're in the will of God, we're in the culture of God, if you like, when we are thankful. And, again, if God is going to dwell in your life and my life, we need to be people that are constantly giving thanks to God, as we drive along or whatever.

You know, there's so much to be grateful for, especially in America. The liberties that we have, the freedoms that we have, health and strength and all the other things, I mean, you know, we are blessed.

And there's always something that we can thank God for, you see.

And then it says in verse 10, and the four and twenty elders will fall down before him, who sits on the throne and will worship him. John now becomes aware that there is worship going on. And worship is one of those themes that seems to be so vast, it's almost impossible to sort of really tap into all the sort of the full essence of all that is involved in that great topic of worship.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. He is the Lord, and worship thou him. The Father seeks those that will worship him.

What is worship? See, in America, worship and praise are synonymous. We pick up a magazine like Charisma magazine, you have a worship conference here and a worship conference there. And, you know, those worship conferences, you always have somebody that can play a guitar or play a piano or something that's the lecturer, the guest and so on, because we automatically assume that he's a worshiper, not necessarily.

You see, worship and praise, while they may, if you like, overlap, in another sense, they are almost unrelated. See, what is worship? There's an old law of biblical interpretation called the law of first mention. And the law of first mention simply means that when something is mentioned for the very first time in the Bible, it gives us an understanding as to how it's used all the way through the rest of the Scriptures.

God establishes, in other words, a standard, and then you see that all the way through. For instance, marriage. We see God's standard for marriage right in the very beginning.

But worship, the first time that worship is ever mentioned in the Word of God, it's mentioned in association with Abraham. And God says to Abraham one day after Sarah is conceived and given birth to Isaac. And Isaac now has grown.

Most people feel he's around 15, 17 years of age. But God speaks to Abraham. He says, Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only son, Isaac, the son that you love, and I want you to go and I want you to sacrifice your son.

How would you feel if God spoke to you about taking one of your children especially the child that maybe had all the prophetic words, a child that is the embodiment maybe of everything that you've ever dreamed of as Isaac was. He was a child of promise, born of the Spirit in that sense. He was going to be the extension of all that Abraham, all the covenantal promises that God had given to Abraham were going to be revealed again through Isaac.

And God says to him, he says, I want you to take your only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, the thing that you love the most, the thing that is supreme in your life, and I want you to place it on the altar. The Bible says about Abraham, he rose early that morning. You see, if there was ever a morning to sleep in, that was the morning.

Isn't that right? After all, it's the morning you're going to take this priceless possession, this thing that you love more than life itself. And I'd have made every excuse in the book, but it says Abraham rose early and he saddled his donkey and he split the wood and so on. I'd have been saddling the donkey and kicking it so it ran down the field and I'd have spent three hours chasing it, hoping never to catch it.

And I'd have delayed as long as possible. Why? Because I don't want to give up that which I cherish so much. But Abraham springs out of bed, he saddles the donkey, he splits the wood, he goes on a three-day pilgrimage, and then he says to his servants, stay here.

I and the lad will go yonder and we will worship. You see, there's no music. It's not a single instrument.

It's just a radical obedience to God. You see, worship really is radical, unreserved obedience to God. Whatever He asks of you, the response of your spirit is, Lord, I will do it.

In fact, in the book of Revelation, so often the word worship and the word amen go together. And the word amen means to concur with, to be in harmony with, to be in agreement with. And what is worship? Worship is when our spirit resonates with the Spirit of God.

And no matter what He demands of you, what He asks of you, there is an amen in our spirit. Not a resistance, not a digging in the heels, not an anger that whelms up within us and say, God, how could you ask me to do this? This is a child of promise. You gave me a prophetic word that I would be an evangelist.

You gave me a prophetic word that I would, you know, be a gospel singer. You gave me a prophetic word that I would be a missionary. You gave me a prophetic word I would do this or that.

It's been confirmed. Others have done it. And now you're asking me to give it up? I mean, that's pretty tough, isn't it? When God Himself has made clear to you something.

And here is Isaac that is the embodiment of all these promises. And God says, I want you to put him on the altar. And there is an amen that whelms up in the life of Abraham.

There is that radical, unreserved obedience to God without any questions whatsoever. I'll do it, Lord. That's worship.

The case of Job, when Job, his entire family, apart from his wife, is wiped out. All those children, their homes, crops, everything else, his whole life is devastated. And his wife says, if I were you, I'd curse God and die.

And what does Job do? He falls on his face and he worships. You see, again, there is that radical obedience to God. There is an amen in his spirit.

Yes, Lord. I don't understand it. But who am I to question you? Can the clay say to the potter why? The Bible says he worshiped.

There's no music. You have David who committed his sin with Bathsheba and out of that union there came, of course, a child born out of wedlock. That child lives just for a matter of days, maybe weeks, and God then strikes the child with a sickness.

And whether David understood fully what was going on or not at that particular time, he goes into his room and he prays. What is it? Seven days, I think. He's fasting, he's praying, he's begging God on behalf of that helpless little child that God would spare the life of that child.

And at the end of seven days, there is a knock on the door and David is told that the child is dead. What would your response be? God, how can you do that? It was my sin. This is not right.

It's not just. God, how can you take the life of this innocent little child? Instead, David goes into his room, he shaves, he washes himself, he anoints himself. He goes right back into that room, falls on his face, and he worships.

You see, there is an Amen. God, you've done the right thing. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? God, you always do right.

You have the final word in everything. Who am I to question your wisdom? Who am I to question your justice? See, there's something about worship that is a mystery. We don't understand it.

It's not just playing a guitar or synthesizer or raising our hands or something. It's far deeper than that. The Father seeks those that will worship Him.

It's to recognize Him for who He is. Satan said to Jesus, if you'll fall down and worship me, there's no music. If you'll recognize me for who I am, I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world.

You see, it's a heart thing. It's recognizing God for who He is. He is God.

He demands again the throne. He demands a place of holiness. He demands thanksgiving.

He demands that unreserved, radical obedience, that whatever He asks you to do, as Mary says there at the wedding of Canaan, whatever He saith unto you, do it. And there's an Amen in your spirit. God, I'll go.

I was planning on being a medical doctor, but I'll give that up and I'll go to Africa if you want me to go. You know, I was planning on doing this, but I'll do that if that's what you want me to do. You see, worship again transcends just the playing of an instrument or the singing of songs.

He is the Lord and worship Thou Him. We have the Magi that came with their gold, their frankincense and their myrrh. And they said that they fell down at His feet and they, what? They worshiped Him.

No music. But they gave something that was worthy of a king. And it's when we give out of the very depths of our being in obedience, we give that which is worthy of a king, that is worship.

And I say all that tonight to say this, that God dwells in a particular environment, particular atmosphere. We see it beautifully illustrated here in this fourth chapter of Revelation. You see, this is the house that He wants to dwell in.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. See, revival is when God comes and He takes over your house. The Lord whom you seek will what? Suddenly come to His temple.

What's His temple? This? No, this. He suddenly comes to His temple. There's a God consciousness.

God, I can't believe that for so long I've been so stubborn. I've been so resistant to what You wanted to do in my life. Lord, I've been in control.

I've been in charge. I've been on the throne. Lord, I've allowed sin in my life that I haven't dealt with.

I know You've put Your finger on that. I know You've told me to write a letter to so-and-so. I know You've told me to go and put this thing right.

And I haven't done it. I picked up the phone many times. I thought, you know, I need to call the pastor.

What's he going to think if I tell him what my problem is? I've been in the church now for five years. How's my wife going to react when I tell her that I've had an affair with somebody else? And then we wonder, why is it that God doesn't seem to be as real as He is in the lives of other people? We're grieving the Holy Spirit. Right.

Let me close. In the book of Genesis, there's a little story concerning Noah. And it says in Genesis chapter 8, in verse 6, it came about at the end of 40 days that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.

And he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the waters were dried up from the earth. And notice the first bird that Noah releases is a raven. And the Bible tells us that raven flew here and there until the waters were dried up.

This bird is an unclean bird. It's a bird that will settle on any sort of substance, whether it's, you know, the bloated body of an animal or whether it's an old log or whatever it may be, the raven will settle anywhere. And what Noah is trying to assess is this, have the waters dried up yet? Is it safe now to open the door of the ark? In verse 8, it says, and he sent a dove out from him to see if the water was abated from the face of the land.

But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot. And so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. And then he put out his hand and he took her and he brought her into the ark to himself.

And he waited yet another seven days. And again, he sent out the dove from the ark. And the dove came to him towards evening and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf.

And Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth. You see, the raven will settle anywhere and Noah could not determine whether the water abated or not, whether water had settled or not. When he releases the dove, the dove will not settle whether it's death, whether it's disease, whether there's any contamination, any uncleanness.

And the dove immediately flew around and then it flew back and he took the dove and he brought it back in and then he released it again. Seven days later and the dove comes back and it's got in its mouth a freshly picked olive leaf. In other words, there's life.

And you see, the dove was able to settle and Noah knew something about the nature of the dove as opposed to the nature of the raven. The dove will only settle where there's fresh life, where there's growth. And he knew then it was safe to open the door and to go out.

You see, the dove obviously in the Bible typifies the Holy Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit will not settle where there's uncleanness because he is the Holy Spirit. And some of us are wondering, why is it that I don't seem to hear the voice of God? Why is it that I don't seem to be making any spiritual progress? What's wrong with my Christian life? Why don't I seem to be growing and developing? I see others that seem to be getting answers from God.

What's wrong with my life? Let me suggest to you tonight that it has to do with the fact that you have not prepared him the habitation that he's looking for. Moses, see to it that you make it according to the pattern. You see, certain things will grow if you place them in the right environment.

I was out the other day in a hardware store and they had some beautiful palms that, you know, were growing there. And I thought, boy, I asked the lady, I said, you know, will these things sort of survive a Florida winter? And she said, oh yeah, she said a lot of people buy them and plant them and so on. I thought, you know, if I were to take that plant and drive it up to Seattle, possibly it won't even survive one of our summers.

Why? Because it's not designed to dwell in that sort of environment, you see. The amount of moisture is maybe too much. There's not enough heat.

There's not enough sunshine and so on. It requires a certain environment. We talk about indoor plants and outdoor plants, don't we? Indoor plants, again, need a certain temperature year round.

You put them outside in the middle of winter when there's a frost on the ground, you come back in the next morning, all it takes is just a matter of hours and that thing's gone. Why? Because we took it out of the environment that it was designed to flourish in and we put it in a foreign environment. You know, some of us are trying to put God in a foreign environment.

We're trying to ask God if He will accommodate Himself to our particular way of doing things. God, you've got to adjust to my culture now. And God says, no.

He says, see to it again that you make it according to the pattern. I don't know how else to say it tonight, how more simply to say it than this, but we need to make sure that He, first of all, has a throne, that there is a place of holiness, that you are pressing in. Without holiness, no man will see God.

There's that desire to keep short accounts with God. If there's sin in your life, that you deal with it. Otherwise you grieve the Holy Spirit.

If I had time tonight, I could go into verses in the Old Testament where it talks about the Spirit of God lifting off the house of God, where God says, I will remove my presence from Shiloh because of what you've done. In other words, God said, I'm not going to hang around here. Why? Because there is sin going on, and I can no longer dwell with sin.

What fellowship is what? Light with darkness. Two can't walk together unless there'd be an agreement. It's important that we understand the ways of God.

Let's just close in prayer. While our heads are bowed tonight, I'm going to ask you to be honest with God. You see, in the parable of the sower, it was the honest heart that brought forth 30, 60, 100 fold, not the pure heart, not the successful heart, not the blameless heart.

As good as all of those hearts are, the Bible classifies the heart that was the most productive as the honest heart. You see, if we're honest before God, then the Word of God can germinate. The Word of God can take effect.

You need to be honest tonight about your condition. Does He really honestly have the throne? Has there been a conscious decision in your life where you've said, God, from this moment on, I want you to have the throne of my life. That means that you reign over every facet of my life, over my emotional life, over my finances, over my time, over every single area of my life.

You come and you bring your kingdom into that area of my life. Again, the area of holiness, where you can honestly say tonight, Lord, I know there's nothing in my life right now that grieves you. There's nothing that offends you.

It's all under the blood. I've dealt with it. I've confessed it.

I've repented of it. I've turned from it. I'm living a life that is pleasing to you, Lord.

Again, an atmosphere of thanksgiving, where you've learned to just worship the Lord and bless the Lord. Where you can say with the psalmist, bless the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me, bless his holy name. When you get up in the morning or when you're driving to work, cleaning the house, whatever it may be, that there's just a spirit of thanksgiving.

And then that you're coming to that place where you're learning to worship. Lord, who am I to question you? Lord, I may not understand why this has happened or why that's happened. But Lord, you are sovereign.

You're Lord. You're the potter and I'm the clay. Lord, whatever you ask of me, I'll do it.

Lord, I'm not going to hold a single thing back. There's going to be no objections. Lord, I want to have that radical obedience.

I want to be a worshiper, a true worshiper.

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