

# The Sermon on the Mount (4)

by Nigel Lee

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of self-judgment, discernment, and spiritual growth, and warns against the dangers of a critical spirit and casting pearls before pigs.*

**Duration:** 45:27

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:22-24, Matthew 6:33 - 7:5, Matthew 7:7-11, Matthew 7:13-27, Galatians 5:24, James 1:5

**Topics:** "Jesus Teaching", "Self-Examination", "Building on God's Word"

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## Description

Nigel Lee emphasizes the importance of spiritual integrity and discernment in 'The Sermon on the Mount (4)', urging believers to examine their own lives before judging others. He highlights the necessity of seeking God's kingdom first and warns against the dangers of a critical spirit, encouraging self-reflection and personal accountability. Lee also discusses the significance of building one's life on the solid foundation of God's Word, contrasting it with the futility of a life built on sand. The sermon concludes with a call to action, reminding listeners that true faith is demonstrated through obedience and the fruits of one's life. Lee's message challenges the congregation to make conscious choices in their spiritual journey.

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## Transcript

The eye, if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. And then verse twenty-four, no man can serve two masters, either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Chapter five has been to do with our characters. Chapter six to do with true spirituality in what we do. And we thought finally yesterday of our sight and our service.

And running right through the paragraphs, the question is this, God sees, do you really believe it, God sees you in the secret place, and God will reward your service in the secret place. And so you get that same note struck in the paragraph on money, the paragraph on prayer, and then the paragraph on the treatment and use of your body. And the whole thing climaxed, we didn't have time to come right through to this, but verses thirty-three and thirty-four, we've just been singing thirty-three.

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Now we come to chapter seven.

We'll read it, and then ask the Lord's blessing on our thoughts together. Judge not that you be not judged, for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. And with what measure you meet, it shall be measured unto you.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me cast out the mote out of thine eye? And lo, the beam is in thine own eye. Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest happily they trample them under their feet and turn and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth. And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him? All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them, for this is the law and the prophets.

Enter ye in by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that enter thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straightened the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity. Every one therefore which heareth these words of mine and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man which built his house upon the rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon the rock.

And every one that heareth these words of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house, and it fell. And great was the fall thereof. And it came to pass when Jesus ended these words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Our Father, all authority, in our lives and in the universe, is granted unto the Lord Jesus Christ. And we would gladly acknowledge that authority and proclaim that authority this morning, and worship before him, for you have exalted him, O God. And we put ourselves under the authority of this word and the challenge

of this chapter.

We pray, O God, that these chapters that we've been meditating on together these last few days will bear fruit in our lives and will become foundational for us in the days ahead. Speak to us again in mercy, Father, we pray as we gather. Help us in our inadequacy and weakness.

Grant us new insight, fresh revelation upon the page, a deeper understanding of ourselves as we meet before you, in order that there might be that cleansing, stabilizing, fruit-bearing work within us. Grant it, O God, for Jesus' sake, not for our sake, but for his glory. Amen.

I suppose the first thing to say about chapter 7 is that it follows chapter 6 and that is not as daft as you might think. The Lord is drawing to an end. His sermon is coming to a conclusion.

And he concludes the sermon by laying three alternative choices before you. Which road are you going to travel on? Which kind of fruit are you going to produce? Which sort of building are you going to build in your life? Three parallel examples of the choices that you must make in your response to all that's gone before. That's the paragraph 13-14, 15-23, and then 24 to the end.

What are the early paragraphs about? Can I suggest that they are to do with our response to everything that has gone before? The Lord knows that He's coming to the end of the sermon and He wants our reactions to what has already been said to be right reactions. And in three paragraphs, He warns us against three wrong reactions to everything that He's been saying up to now. Because we all, don't we, face this problem of knowing truth, of hearing some tremendous messages, of being stirred as we sit in the seats in the prayer meeting or listening to the Word of God.

But actually, the day-by-day way in which we organise our lives is somewhere quite different. And sometimes we can wrongly react to what we hear preached. So let us look at these three paragraphs first.

The first one, judge not that you be not judged. May I suggest for your meditation, put it in the ladder for January, February, if you like, it's to do with the danger of a critical spirit. The danger of listening to truth and its only result in your life is to criticise other people for not living up to it.

Perhaps you've already been going through these last three sessions that you've had and you have imagined that this message is for this person or that person or possibly you think mainly for me. This is quite possible too. And not allowing the thing to strike your own heart.

Beware, says the Lord, at the end of all this, of judging someone else. Turn over to the Ephesians to the Romans and the 14th chapter. Romans 14.

First of all, verse 4. Romans 14, verse 4. Who art thou that judges the servant of another? What have you got to do with judging anyone else? They're not your servant. You didn't give them the job to do. To his own Lord he standeth or falleth.

Yea, he shall be made to stand. For the Lord hath power to make him stand. The Lord looks at our service in order to evaluate what has been done, not to criticise.

It's not up to us to judge. Verse 10 of the same chapter. But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? Or again, why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

We all face the same judgment as our brother. Verse 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.

But judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way or an occasion of falling. Paul is saying, judge yourselves. Be critical of yourselves and make sure that you don't allow yourself to put a stumbling block in the way of your brother if you're at all able to avoid it consciously.

Learn to judge yourself. So Matthew 5 is saying two interesting things. Intention.

Don't judge. And yet in verse 15 we'll see him requiring people to judge. You've got to judge the false prophets.

You've got to decide what kind of fruit they are bearing. How do we hold these two things in tension so that we decide whether a man is a false prophet or not. At the same time we are obedient to the Lord's word not to judge another.

Not to set up in business as an eye surgeon with a great plank sticking out of one eye. It's actually quite a comic picture if you imagine it. A man with a dirty great log poking out of one eye coming in to do some of the most delicate surgery that it is possible for human fingers to do.

It may be it hasn't got you sort of rolling off your seats but this does seem to be an example of first century humour. And the Lord is saying that a critical spirit can so easily crowd your judgement you won't be able to see correctly. How do we hold these two in tension? The Lord is implying that we need to learn to judge ourselves.

Examine ourselves. Judge ourselves before we judge another. Can I suggest to you that you have all of you been put in charge of some land, some territory.

You're all land owners. Marvellous feeling isn't it? God has put you in charge of a bit of territory. A bit of land.

A very small farm. Well with some of you it's bigger than with others. But you've been put in charge of a bit of farming land.

It's quite unusual land actually. It has some qualities and capacities that you don't normally associate with bits of dirt outside. But you've been put into government.

You've been invited to reign over this little bit of territory. It has already happened. It's not that you're going to get it one day when the Lord comes back.

It has already begun. You don't know what I'm talking about do you? You're looking at me in absolute mystification apart from the few that were at the seminar on preaching. What has God made you out of? What did God make Adam out of? Dust of the ground.

And this is the little children's story. When asked the question, did Adam have a navel? And the little child said, of course Adam had a navel. Of course he did.

God took the ground and he rolled the body and he rolled the head and he popped it on the top and rolled the arms and stuck them on and then the legs on and the feet and made Adam out of the ground and then he put him up on the shelf and he said, there, you're done. Have you ever wondered why it is in scripture that so often we are spoken of as plots of land? Bits of ground. The sower went forth to sow and the seed fell into the ground and it began to produce fruit of one kind or another.

In Hebrews chapter six you're spoken of as being like a field producing either a good crop or a bad crop. You're spoken of as being branches on a vine that's growing up in a piece of ground. God has made you out of the dust of the ground and he wants to see you bringing forth fruit.

See you as a little estate that you reign over bringing forth fruit. In fact, what many of us produce is the same as of Adam in the garden. The thorns and the thistles of sin and rebellion and therefore Adam was put out of the garden and had to go through the educative discipline of himself planting and finding that it produced thorns and thistles in order to teach him something of his own nature.

You have been put in charge of a bit of territory. It is that bit of the ground that's walking around on two legs that you control. Adam was told to run the estate run the garden for God to use the ground to make it fruitful to bring forth fruit unto God to make that bit of the ground which was now himself also fruitful.

Of course this he lamentably failed to do. You've been put in charge of a bit of territory. You are to bring forth fruit out of your own bit of ground unto God.

And as you mature and progress in that kind of gardening where Adam was a gardener you yourself in your bit of ground seeing the fruit of godliness the fruit of being a peacemaker the fruit of some of these characteristics that we've already been reading about growing gradually up in you as you demonstrate a right ability to exercise rule and judgment and pruning in your own life. So God will actually expand your circle of government and judgment and authority and responsibility. You get married.

And then you've got some interesting little bits of territory to start to control. Or running about wild. You in your own family wife and husband cooperating together running a home.

And 1 Timothy 3 says a man in the church if he proves himself in his own household he is then qualified for leadership in the work of God. He gets an even larger circle of government and responsibility. And 1 Corinthians 6 will tell you that men who learn judgment and responsibility within the church will one day have to judge angels.

Judge angels and evaluate the service of angels. For angels are defined as people who are sent forth as ministering servants to aid those that are being brought to salvation. The Bible will also speak of you one day perhaps being given a city to reign over.

This is getting horribly fanciful, isn't it? That one day we will reign with Christ over this entire universe. I wonder what cities God has got in mind for some of you. Some semi-forsaken place in Tibet I'm sure is marked down for me.

The whole of life involves learning leadership, government. You are being trained in responsibility. You begin by learning to judge yourself rather than to judge others.

First, yourself. Then you get given responsibility in other people's lives. It was one of the early lessons that Abraham had to learn.

You remember, I'm sure, Abraham. Don't look so puzzled. Please, please smile at me.

Looking as if you've never heard anything remotely like this before. You remember Abraham? Good. Abraham had a wife, Sarah, and he mistreated her terribly on three occasions.

His whole life divides up into these three sections because, I mean, he badly treats her. He tells lies about her. He allows her to be taken off into someone else's house.

I mean, Abraham is not really a tremendous model for us in the way we should treat our wives. It is interesting that Abraham is the first of the bride of Christ, we might say. God proposes marriage to Abraham.

And then the processes of Abraham's own spiritual growth are often worked out at the level of his own relationship with his wife. Well, in the middle section of Abraham's life, from chapter 16 to chapter 19 of Genesis, he plunges impetuously into a relationship with Hagar, you remember? And it results in Ishmael. And God doesn't really speak to Abraham very much, at least it's not recorded, for about 13 years.

While this boy, this wretched twit of a donkey, I mean, the Bible calls him a wild ass of a young man. Can you imagine what it must be like to have a wild donkey growing up in your own house? He was unbelievably annoying and frustrating. He had two left feet, four left hands.

He was constant irritant. And God didn't say very much to Abraham during those years. He was beginning to learn the consequences of his own flesh when it gets loose.

Beginning to learn to judge the flesh. And so in chapter 17 of Genesis, you scribble down a few things and follow it through in January and February. God says, Abraham, I want you to walk before me and be perfect.

I want you to agree to my covenant. My covenant is that I will give you. You will achieve nothing by your flesh.

I will give you the promises. I will give you the land. I will give you seed.

In your flesh, Abraham, dwells no good thing. Are you prepared to agree with me and to judge the flesh? And Abraham asks in verse 18 of Genesis 17 a very significant question. He says, Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee.

He will live, I will bless him, but he will not inherit the promise, says God. Abraham is prepared, finally, to agree with God after 13 years that his flesh needs only judgment and crucifixion. He is willing to agree to circumcision, an indelible mark in the flesh that he no longer trusts his own flesh to accomplish the purposes of God.

He judges himself. Get circumcised. And in the very next chapter, God turns up outside Abraham's tent and invites Abraham, Genesis 18, to join him in the government of Sodom and Gomorrah.

What are we going to do about Sodom and Gomorrah? That man who has learned to judge himself, learned to agree with God's evaluations of his own flesh, is thereby being qualified to judge with God the two cities that represented the flesh at their very worst here on earth. God and Abraham discuss the future fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. And Abraham agrees with God and God agrees with Abraham that if there are less than ten righteous, the place deserves to be obliterated.

But first Lot must be brought out. It's a tragic story because Lot ends up also producing unwanted, unrequired offspring as a result of his own flesh. That young man who started out so well as a pilgrim finishes up as a drunken caveman at the end of chapter 19.

And the Moabites and the Ammonites are to be thorns in the flesh of Israel for generations to come. And we see that where God was prepared to forgive Abraham, where Abraham was prepared to judge himself, cooperate with God, learn from his mistakes, Lot never ever showed any trace of a willingness to judge himself, to examine himself, to criticize himself, to learn from God. And the man finishes up at the end of chapter 19 in a worse mess than that in which he started.

It's a section of Genesis that is to do with learning to judge yourself. Beware of judging other people. The judgment you give to them will be the one that you receive yourself.

It clouds your eye until you've learned to judge yourself, to say, look, I've got a clunk of piece of wood in my own eye, let me get it out. Make sure your eyes are clean, that you've learned self-judgment before you judge others. And then the Lord goes on in verse 6 to talk about, not the danger of a critical spirit in result of what's been said, but having a right sense of discernment as to who all this is for.

Beware of casting pearls before pigs. Beware of giving that which is holy unto dogs. You know, we can sometimes rush home from a conference like this and share the great things that God has been doing with people who simply won't understand.

You can come home from a summer crusade and blurt out to your church things that simply cause them mystification, that put their backs up. We need discernment, both in evangelism and counseling. George has often quoted A.W. Tozer's remark that the greatest need in the church today is the gift of discernment.

How we need to cry out to God, to know how to use that which God is giving us. You notice the very different ways in which the Lord dealt with people in the Gospels. Think of John chapter 3 and John chapter 4. The Lord in the first chapter is dealing with a highly intellectual religious professor, a theologian of great standing.

And in the next chapter he's dealing with a poor, broken woman whose life has become just morally a mess. And he's going to talk to one about worship, what it means to really worship God, to worship in spirit, to worship in truth. He's going to tell the other one that you need to be born again, my dear.

You just need to be born again. Now which way round would you do it? You'd probably tell the poor woman, my dear, you need to be born again. Shall we take our problems to Jesus? And you discuss worship and theology and how high God is in heaven with the theologian.

God does it the opposite way round. When he stands before Pilate, he answers him. When he stands before Herod, he's absolutely silent.

Herod doesn't get a single word out of him. That man was reprobate. He was unbelievably evil.

Pilate had the Son of God in front of him and although we know Pilate eventually committed suicide, he got into deeper and deeper trouble with his masters in Rome. Christ stood before him and witnessed to the truth. He distinguished between the two.

We need to learn right discernment in handling the truth and the wisdom and the insights that God gives. Another wrong reaction to all that you've heard up to now in the sermon can be a sense of hopelessness and despair about yourself. I can't make any progress.

These things are too high for me. I'm getting insights that just it seems to me it'll take me years before this will ever become true in my own life. And so from verse 7 down to verse 12, the Lord is warning against that response to the sermon.

Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you shall find. Don't allow these messages and these principles and these truths to be so much up on an ideal pedestal that you actually give up all that we've heard up till now from the Scriptures during these three weeks of conference.

The Lord's practical, life-changing ministry in our life. Do you think the God who set these goals before you isn't willing to answer prayer and help you to make specific, detailed progress in each of these areas? Ask. You will receive.

Knock. You will find. The Lord says, you lack wisdom, James 1.5. Do you lack wisdom? Ask me.

I love to give wisdom. I'm full and overflowing with wisdom. Let me give you wisdom.

Do you need guidance? Don't be stubborn like a mule. Ask. And I will counsel you.

I will guide you with my eye upon you. The Lord will, absolutely promises to answer prayer. He doesn't promise that we always feel wise or feel guided.

But he does promise that he will answer prayer because, as Scripture says, he knows how to give good gifts to his children. I sometimes look at parents and I wonder whether they do know how to give good gifts. I see them loading their children down with all kinds of expensive, breakable, unappreciated toys when the kid is too young.

Let me tell you, one of my latest conversations with Mike Evans in the room, we're discussing pocket money and how much we give to our children. And how do we teach our children to give? I used to receive my pocket money when I was a kid in units of tenpence, old money. I can remember the great day when I received tenpence so that I could put a penny in the collection.

Parents trying to give me so that I could learn to give. Parents being wise in their giving. God doesn't give dangerous toys to people who are not able to handle them.

Sometimes we ask for things and God knows that we're not yet able to handle that responsibility or that blessing. The Lord knows how to give good gifts. You know, you don't give a two-wheeled bike to a two-year-old kid.

It's crazy. There is a time. And as you're seeking God, as you're asking Him for blessing and enrichment, progress in your own Christian life, as you're seeking to be in cooperation with the estate manager, as you run the garden for God, He will give you that which is good and wise and right in the time in which you need it.

Three wrong reactions then to all that's gone before. And then finally the challenge of three different choices. Verses 13 and 14, two roads.

Have you ever sat down and asked yourself, if you continue as you're going, where will you be in five years? Where are you heading? What kind of a Christian person are you going to be when you leave O.M. maybe? What are you going to do? The life of the disciple, says Christ, is steep, tough, winding. Look back, look over, I'm sorry, to Luke chapter 9. Luke 9, verses 23 to 25. Jesus said unto all of them, If any

man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

For whosoever would save his life, shall lose it. But whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. What did a man profit if he gained the whole world, and lose or forfeit his own self.

Turn over to Galatians chapter 5. Galatians 5, verse 24. You remember how Galatians already has already spoken about being crucified with Christ. In the passive sense, it's something that has been done to you.

Galatians 5, verse 24. Now in the active sense, they that are of Christ Jesus, have crucified the flesh. They've done it themselves.

They've cooperated with the executioner. They have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof. What does it mean to be crucified? To live a crucified life.

Was it Tozer who said, I can't remember, that when you're crucified, you're looking one way only. You're nailed there. You can't turn around.

You can't go back. You've come out of the prison. You've been led up the hill.

You've been nailed to the cross. You are facing one way only. Why is it that in the plan of God, the death of Christ, was designed to be such a long drawn out thing as crucifixion? Why did Christ not undergo a death that was instant? Why was He not beheaded? Why was He not shot through with an arrow? Why is it such a long drawn out business, His death? Because for you and me, to live crucified lives, it is a long drawn out thing, isn't it? There may well have been some areas of your life that you nailed to the cross, perhaps earlier this summer, or at some conference a year or two ago.

And the thing isn't dead yet. Don't be among those that after a few months or a year or two, pull out the nails, come down off the cross and walk around as if there was no change. With many of those areas of our life that we're battling with, we are going to continue to battle for a long, long time before they die.

We have crucified the flesh. When is a person crucified? When they're nailed up on the tree or when they're finally dead? Well, in a sense, both. That crucifixion is a long drawn out thing.

And maybe your tongue or your lust or your selfishness or your sins of worry you are still battling with, they're still hurting. You have crucified the flesh. You're facing one way only.

You're not going back, but you're still dealing with the pain of that decision that was taken months or years ago to nail that thing to the cross. It takes a long time. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh.

That's the road that we walk as a disciple. Enter by that narrow gate. It's straight.

It leads to life. And there'll be few that find it. So consider where you're going.

Consider the kind of fruit, secondly, that you're producing. What kind of fruit are you producing in your life? Christianity, I suspect, uniquely among world religions attracts talkers. People who seem to be all mouth.

I don't know why it is, but there is so much preaching and discussing and talking and conferring among Christians. Much more, it seems to me, than among Hindus and Muslims. I may be wrong.

And the Lord says here that there will be people who have had the gift of prophecy, people who have been able, apparently, to cast out demons, people who have done many mighty works, and they will all cascade into hell. It is a sobering thought, isn't it? People who have cast out demons, people who have done miracles, people who have prophesied in Christ's name. Christ Himself will finally say to them, I never knew you.

I don't recognize you. We never knew each other. You're not mine.

You're still among the goats. You were in it for what you could get. You were like diatrophies who loved the preeminence.

Depart, I never knew you. What kind of fruit are we producing? Consider the Lord on the cross again. What fruit is He bearing even on the cross? The fruit of forgiveness for those that crucify Him.

The fruit of evangelism. Even there in His dying hours, Jesus, our Savior, is drawing others into the kingdom in pain, in suffering, with His death only moments away, comparatively speaking. And yet He's still reaching out in love to His own family, caring for them, demonstrating real love within His own family, arranging for His mother to be looked after by one of His closest friends.

Even in that time, publicly expressing His faith in His Father. Father, into Your hands do I commend my spirit. What fruit? You and I have been made part of the vine and it is the Father's responsibility to prune.

It is our responsibility simply to abide. Let Him prune. Let Him prune.

I don't know whether you've ever seen people working among the vines in the springtime, getting them ready for production later in the summer. They seem to slash off an incredible amount. They cut the thing back possibly to just a couple of strands.

The amount that gets cut off the vines and lies around and is gathered up and burnt is tremendous. Let God prune. You abide in order that you might bring forth fruit unto Him.

And then there's the question of two different kinds of building verses 24 to 27. The Lord says it's entirely a matter of the foundation that you're building on. Two men, common problems, common weather, a common purpose, and yet one built on rock and the other built on sand.

The Lord is saying that His own Word is the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like the man who builds on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does them not will be written off as foolish.

Everything that he will build will be washed away. As you think of this year ahead, as you think possibly some of you of marriages that you'll make your own, as you think of the responsibilities that you will have on land and at sea, as you think of your own life, your own personal evangelistic ministry, your growth, privately with God. Why does Jesus end this sermon this way? Why does the Son of God finally draw to an end and the last thing that He wants to say after you've heard everything that's gone before, He says, now look, this is the choice before you.

You either set yourself to be a doer or you don't. You're either going to build that which will be blown away, it will collapse, the storms and the batterings of the unfolding story of your life will leave you with nothing. Relatives of Mine, people I've known at college and in the work of the Lord, made a mess of their life, of

their ministry, of their marriages, of their families.

God has spelt out for us the only sound way to build, to think, to go in the future, build consciously on God's Word. Why do you do what you do? Because of God's Word, specific scriptures. Why do you want to emphasize what you emphasize? Because of God's Word.

Build consciously and deliberately, knowingly on the Word of God. I prophesy to you that this will be one of the biggest struggles in your life ahead. God will try and cut you off from the simple, plain understanding of His Word.

He will try and cause you in our own OM fellowship. Amidst all the many hours you will spend distributing God's Word, He will want to move your own heart into increasing boredom with it. So that you actually have little time to read it, no time to study it, and no real intention to search out its meaning and make it your own.

What a hollow irony it is that we can be involved in a movement that's perhaps known above many others in this world for distributing God's Word. And yet in our own private lives we can allow Satan to cut us off from that simple truth in that paragraph. Build consciously and deliberately on the Scriptures.

I mean, the Lord says to Joshua, same thing. In those well-known verses, that first mention of the term success and prosperity in the Bible. Do you want it? Do you want your work to remain? We face this in the long haul here in Europe.

You face it on the ships. You face it out in India. What you're building, what you're investing your time and your effort in, is it going to last? Or is it going to be destroyed so soon? It so often seems that God's way is a slow way.

It's the long way around. We want quick results. God says you build Scripture into people's lives.

You cause them to have a right and disciplined relationship with God's Word, a love for Scripture, a growing sense that their life, their marriage, their family, their ministry is being based on this. Then your work will last. Oh, may God deliver us this year from laboring in preaching, laboring in door-to-door work, or in office work, or in whatever it is that God has lined up lovingly for you.

And somehow we get detached from God's own Word. And what we do, what we build, our counseling, our preaching, everything is just swept away. It's gone.

It's like a morning mist. It blows away. Everyone that hears these words of mine and does them will be likened unto a wise man who builds his house upon the rock.

Place the choice. The Lord Himself ends with that very sobering verse. The rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew and smote upon that house and it fell.

And great was the fall thereof. The Lord Himself ends on a negative note. Let us ask God to give us wisdom, to help us build a right, to take the slow, long route if that's what it's going to require.

Father, we bring to you our sense of challenge and inadequacy in our hearts for all that lies ahead. Lord, we want to walk that road of the cross. And yet, Lord, we just praise you that you have called us having gone before.

Called us to take your hand and move forward. Oh God, we want our fruit to be that which gladdens your heart, that remains, that is good fruit. Lord, you said to the disciples that they had been cleansed by your word.

You speak through the Apostle Paul of the bride of Christ being cleansed by the water of the word of God. Cleanse our motives. Cleanse our motives here at this conference, even.

How quickly it's possible for us to be more interested in our own comfort and convenience, our own satisfaction, than in walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Lord, we pray that this year, right across the world, in Bromley, in Paris, in Lagos, in Doulos, in Mossbach, in Lucknow, in Bombay, there might be a tremendous hungering to know your word. A richness of soul that we be not beggars, but men with much to give away that we've found in your word.

We don't be men of poverty of spirit. Men who have become rich as they wait upon the living God. Oh Father, we cry out to you that what we build in home after home, in church after church, as we get involved in the thousands of things that we're involved in this year, the making of film strips and the organizing of campaigns, in the practical jobs that we have to do.

Lord, may there be that rich sense surrounding us of your word being lived and loved and filling our hearts. Help us all, God, to build on that foundation. And no other.

Help us all, God, as we face up to the storms, the wind and the battering that will inevitably come. Not to half build, but build a dwelling place for God here on this earth that will stand for all eternity and to your glory. In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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