

# Eternal House of Wisdom

by Steve Gallagher

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*To build an eternal house of wisdom, we must subject ourselves to God's authority, God's word, and God's dealings in our lives.*

**Duration:** 1:01:18

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:13-18, Proverbs 9:10, Proverbs 24:3-4, Matthew 7:24-27, Matthew 23:38, Luke 12:20, Luke 19:9, James 3:17

**Topics:** "Godly Wisdom", "Righteous Living"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of building an eternal house of wisdom by submitting to God's authority, word, dealings in life, and living out wisdom. It contrasts the rewards of following God's wisdom, which are eternal, deep, and meaningful, with the superficial and empty rewards of following worldly desires. The speaker urges the audience to make wise decisions, trust in God's blessings, and choose the path of righteousness over immediate gratification.

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## Transcript

Praise the Lord. It's so wonderful to be in a service led by the Holy Spirit. Led by the Holy Spirit.

These guys didn't know what I was speaking on, and you'll see, I think, as we go how the Lord directs our meetings here. It's such a blessing, such a blessing. Solomon said, by wisdom a house is built.

The title of my message this morning is building an eternal house of wisdom. Sounds like a great message, doesn't it? Well, we'll see. I'm going to use a metaphor for this message of a house as our spiritual life, which is found throughout scripture.

I'm going to be all over the place in scripture. You won't be able to keep up with me. You might be able to jot down the references, but I'm not going to be in one passage.

There is so much in the word of God about wisdom, and there is so much about this metaphor of house, and they really do come together quite a bit. But just to get us going in the right direction, I want to ask you to fast forward in your mind to your final day on earth. Now, that could be years, months, whatever.

Who knows? We never really know. But let's say that you're on your deathbed, which means you are still alive and you can still think, so you haven't had a sudden death, and you're looking back over your life. Maybe you've had a successful life.

Maybe you've had a happy life in some ways. But really ultimately at the end of the day, only one thing is going to determine wisdom or foolishness, and that is the greatest question of your life, what did you do with the Savior Jesus Christ? That's really ultimately the only thing that's going to determine wisdom or folly in our lives. Now, wisdom is a hard nebulous term to define, and I looked it up on some internet dictionaries, and they were all pathetic.

So I had to come up with my own definition. Really, my definition is more from the spiritual standpoint. Let me just give it to you.

Wisdom is the determination to take into consideration the far-reaching consequences of your behavior and your decisions. That's pretty good, isn't it? You want me to repeat that? Well, it really must have been good. Wisdom is the determination to take into consideration the far-reaching consequences of your behavior and your decisions.

And so by contrast, the primary concern of a foolish person is getting the rewards of immediate gratification, living in the great now. And I lived my life that way for many years. All I could see in front of me was what I wanted at this moment, and I didn't seem to have the capacity to look past that mountain of now.

How do I feel right now at this moment? What will this make me feel like right now? To do this, to think about this, to live my life this way or whatever. Proverbs 14, 8 says, The wise man looks ahead. The fool attempts to fool himself and won't face facts.

That's the living Bible. And also the living Bible in verse 16 says, A wise man is cautious and avoids danger. A fool plunges ahead with great confidence.

So let me just put those two together to define these two people. The wise man looks ahead. He's cautious and avoids danger.

All right, that's what it says. The fool refuses to face the facts. He just plunges ahead with great confidence.

All right, now directly in the middle of verses 8 and 16 is verse 12. What we've already heard this morning, there is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof is death, right? Let me read that in the living Bible though. I like the living Bible just tends to breathe a lot of life into these verses.

Before every man there lies a wide and pleasant road that seems right, but ends in death. You know, that concept of seems to be a certain way is really what Jeff was talking about earlier. The natural processes of the human mind, unregenerate, or at least not allowing the Holy Spirit to influence it.

Just our natural way of seeing things. Without Christ, if we continue to pursue that line of thinking and actions, behavior, and lifestyle, it's going to end in destruction. That's just reality from an eternal perspective.

So the implication is clear that a fool charts his own course and ends in destruction. A wise man has figured out that there's only one personality, one being who has the capacity to look and see the end of the matter. That's the Lord.

All right. Now, you had a building project going before you got here, right? There's another scripture in Proverbs that says, a wise woman builds her house, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands. Now, that's making a certain point about, you know, a marriage and family life and all that.

That's the main point that's being made there. But let me just use that same principle for our spiritual lives. A wise person builds their spiritual house for eternity, but a fool tears it down.

And the picture that came to me as I was preparing this message was you guys before you came here, and I know what happened in your life before you came here because I lived it at one time, right? I didn't just, you know, get saved when I was 16 and then just go and live a perfectly pure life after that. That isn't what happened. I had years of sin and folly and everything else.

And I can remember what it was like to try to do the right thing. And it's like building a wall. You know, let's say brick.

You lay some courses of brick. Things are going pretty good for a while. You're doing the right things.

And then all of a sudden, everything takes a turn. And, you know, your feelings, your desires take you in a different direction, and you tear it all back down. How many can relate to that? You build it up, you tear it down.

You build it up, you tear it down. And you came here because you got sick and tired of going around that mountain, right? And you're here because there's a wisdom in this ministry to teach you how to reestablish this building project and get you going in the right direction. Give you a hope, give you a path, a blueprint to follow to living a life where you're continually building and not tearing.

It all back down. That's the hope, right? That's why you came here. All right, so keeping with our metaphor of a building project, there's going to be four steps to doing this.

If there's one thing I understand, it's building projects. You just look around here. You know, when we got here, Kathy and I got here in 91, right? In the end of 91, we got here, bought this property.

There was only the main part of the main house. Everything else has been added since. And not only this property, but the other property and the property in town.

We understand building projects. So there's four steps if you want to build a house. First, you hire a contractor.

Secondly, you pick out your building plans. Third, you pour your foundation. And fourth, you build the actual house, right? That's the way it happens.

Any of you that have gone through the process know what I'm talking about. So let's take this step by step. Number one, are you listening, Robert? Fully alert? You look a little drowsy, Robert.

Number one, you can only build an eternal house of wisdom by subjecting yourself to God's authority. You can only build an eternal house of wisdom by subjecting yourself to God's authority. So in other words, if you're going to build a house, the first thing you need to decide is who's going to be the contractor.

Who's going to be the builder that you're going to look to? Now, I'm glad Esther's here with me this morning because I have a little story out of her life. Do you remember a few years ago, the bathroom? You

remember the bathroom project? I think that was a painful yes. They needed to add a bathroom in that house.

It's an older farmhouse and it only had one bathroom. So they decided they were going to add a bathroom. So Jeff found a local contractor.

Here in the area and hired the guy and his crew to come out and build this bathroom. And after about, what, a week? About a week, Jeff's watching these guys. And he knows enough about building projects because he's been around for quite a while.

And he's watching these guys work. And he's like, I don't know about these guys. And I mean, a few days into it, he finally said, that's it.

It was obvious they didn't know what they were doing. He said, I'll pay you. Just pack your tools up and just leave.

Right now, just leave. I mean, it was the only way to deal with these guys. They either just did not know what they were doing or they were so lazy and careless that they just weren't putting their heart into it.

But it was pathetic, the job that they were doing. Hiring the right contractor is pretty important, right? If you're going to build a house, you want the guy who knows what he's doing to build the place. Well, in relating that to the spiritual building, Psalm 127 says, unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it, right? Only the Lord can build your spiritual house.

2 Corinthians 5 says, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And Hebrews 11 says that Abraham was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. You know, imagine a city with millions of people and every house is a person's life, lived out on this earth.

And what they have, what God is building in your life, through your life, while you're here on earth is what you are going to live with forever. So it's pretty important to get it right. But here's where many people go wrong.

They think they're going to build their house themselves, you know? And really what it boils down to is control. They don't want to let go of control. They want to be in control.

Now, they may be a pseudo-Christian, have one foot in the church and doing some outward things. And that's why we read about all these stories of famous pastors, you know, and so on falling into sin, because they're trying to do it in their own strength. They're trying to live out this Christian life without really being in subjection to the Lord and His authority.

If you're going to build a house, you've got to decide who's in charge in this project. Only a fool hires a contractor, a professional who knows what he's doing, hires the man to build this thing, and then gets in the middle of it, and, you know, just starts telling the workers what to do, and, no, I want it to be this way, and, you know, starts trying to take charge again. Maybe a better metaphor for that is sometimes you'd read about a sports team owner, you know, and the owner hires a general manager.

Well, the general manager has years of experience in dealing with sports stuff, and, you know, basketball, football, whatever the team is. He knows what he's doing. He's a professional.

He's probably got 30 years of experience, but the owner's the guy with the cash. He's the man who really ultimately is in control. So he gets in the middle, and he starts trying to make decisions about stuff he doesn't know about.

But because he's got control, and he wants to be in control, and he wants to micromanage and all of that, he just bypasses the general manager and gets in the middle and makes a mess out of everything. I don't know if you've ever heard about owners like that, but I have. And that's such a picture of what a lot of Christians do, or a lot of people do.

They want to control everything. So we have to decide who's going to be in control of this thing. David said, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

It's the beginning of wisdom. And Solomon said it also in Proverbs. In the Living Bible, it says it a little differently.

How can men be wise? The only way to begin is by reverence for God. That's the only way to begin. You must respect his authority.

You have to respect his authority. Either God's going to build this house, or you're going to. You can't have it both ways.

You've got to decide who's going to be in charge here. Albert Barnes said this, reverence for God, respect for his law, his will, his government, himself. The fear of offending him is the beginning of wisdom.

The foundation, the origin, the commencement of being truly wise. The highest wisdom is that he may know and honor God. This makes one man wiser than another.

Yeah, that's right. He captured the essence of it. But I like what the pulpit commentary said.

The beginning of wisdom is not found in keen insight, nor wide experience, nor the learning of the schools, but in the temper of reverence and awe. The fear of the finite in the presence of the infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the holy. This is the starting point of all true wisdom.

In other words, really taking your place before God. Fear of the Lord is kind of a nebulous thing. How do you make yourself fear the Lord? Well, I'll tell you what you do.

You humble yourself. You get with God, get on your knees before God, and you give him control of your life. Now, you'll have the tendency to want to take it back, but you start off there.

You give him control of your life. You give him the reins of your life. You entrust your life into his care.

Isn't that what being a believer is supposed to mean? Trust, right? You're not too sure? You know, if I say something like that, you're supposed to respond. You don't just sit there staring at me with a blank look on your face. All right, number two.

You can only build an eternal house of wisdom by subjecting yourself to God's word. This is your blueprint for your building project. Aren't you grateful God has given you the Bible? You know, isn't it wonderful that we have somewhere to turn when we're in doubt, when we're confused, when we're not sure what, you know, to do in life, or how to act, or about decisions and stuff.

Aren't you grateful for the word of God? I am. You've got to have building plans. You can't just show up at the building site and just start, you know, nailing boards together.

It's crazy. You've got to have a plan, and most, you know, the time, real contractors have blueprints that are laid out. They've got them all rolled up, and you have to lay them all out and stuff.

I mean, to me, it's a ridiculous amount of detail, but that's the way the professionals do it. You know, it's all laid out. There it is.

You know exactly where every single thing goes, and if you follow the blueprints by the time you're done, your house is going to look exactly like those plans called for. Let me change the metaphor for a second. Let's say a ship captain wants to take his ship from Boston to Liverpool.

You know, you don't just get out there on the ocean and just kind of hope that you end up at the right place. You have to set your course, turn your engines on, and just kind of blow through the ocean and go from point A to point B. That's how you get there. If you don't have a plan, you're not going to get there.

If you don't know where you're going, you're not going to get there, right? Because when you get out on the ocean, you've got all those strong, powerful currents, and you don't know where you're going to end up. So you have to set a course and keep yourself on that course if you're going to get there. And the currents of the ocean are very much like our own emotions, feelings, and desires.

They fluctuate. They're like waves of the sea. They're, you know, one day you feel like obeying the Lord, the next day you don't.

And that's kind of why you build your wall and then you tear it back down, because you're allowing your feelings to dictate how you're going to go about this thing. You're not going to get anywhere that way. You have to set your course and stick by that course no matter what.

Now, in regards to, you know, our thinking and the way we naturally go, if you don't allow the Word of God to dictate your lifestyle, just by default, you are going to slide into the mindset of this world. And there is a definite mindset in this world. And the mindset of the world is really pretty much at odds with the mindset of God.

You know, and that's why our hearts, it's so important to guard our hearts. Our heart, God created our hearts to be very impressionable. You know, He made them that way for a purpose.

The reason He did it the way that He did it is because He wants us to live in dependence on Him. That is God's great goal for every believer's life, is to get us to such a place of poverty of spirit, of humility, that we are constantly turning to Him to allow Him to direct our affairs, to lead us, to guide us, to take control of our life. That's the way the Lord wants it.

This attitude that some people have, that God gave you a mind, just use it, you know, well, it sounds nice, and there certainly are situations like that. But when it comes to the decisions of life, He expects us to subject ourselves to His thinking. And the way to do that is to immerse yourself in the Word of God.

He created your heart to need the Word. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word out of the mouth of God, right? But the world has a voice also. And, you know, in the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul, the whole point that he's making in that three chapters is the contrast between the

wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God.

And he just hammers it over and over, comparing the two back and forth, showing the difference between God's wisdom and the world's wisdom. And then in the third chapter, he kind of brings it all to a head. And he says, he uses the metaphor of building a house.

And he says, some people are gonna build their houses with gold, silver, and precious stones, and other people are gonna build their house with wood, hay, and stubble. But the fires of judgment are coming, right? Isn't this what it says? The fire of judgment is gonna come and it's gonna burn whatever's there. And the only thing that's gonna survive that are the things that have been established in God.

Your house is going to undergo a great fire, and so is mine. And anything that we do with our lives, the decisions we make, our behavior, our lifestyle, any of it that isn't based in the word of God is not gonna leave us with any kind of eternal value. All right, number three.

You can only build an eternal house of wisdom by subjecting yourself to God's dealings in your life. Now, Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is painting a picture of what life in his kingdom should look like. You know, some of the maxims and some of the, just the ways of living are all laid out in the Sermon on the Mount.

And towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount, he says that, you know, the entrance into this life is through a narrow gate, and then you proceed down this narrow path. And you get this sense, this long road. And the metaphor here is that the scriptures provide a map and you are going to live your life as best you can on that narrow path.

But the Lord doesn't leave us to ourselves. You know, the truth is we can't trust ourselves. He can give us the map, but we just have this tendency to stray like sheep, right? We just do.

We have that tendency, even if we're trying sincerely to do the right thing, it's just in us to just kind of veer off course. So the Lord gives us the Holy Spirit, again, like we've already heard this morning. And the Holy Spirit, one of his jobs or functions in our lives is that he's walking along beside of us as it were.

We're going down this narrow path and then we just start kind of cruising off track. And so what's the Holy Spirit do? He stops us from going astray. He starts speaking to us.

He brings circumstances into our life or whatever. He is our GPS system. Now, if any of you have ever used the GPS, and most of you have, you know what a blessing that is when you're in a strange city.

Kathy and I were in Phoenix a few years ago with another couple, nice people. And the wife is a little on the naive side. And so, you know, I had my GPS system on.

We were going to look, go somewhere. So I put the address in the GPS, the TomTom. And, you know, we started driving.

And then, you know, I come up to the first place I need to turn and this woman's voice comes on. We had tuned to a nice British voice. And she says, you know, to turn right.

And the lady in the back seat is amazed at this. She had never seen anything like this. And I said, oh, let me tell you how it works.

There's this lady in Des Moines. And she's got a computer screen in front of her. And she's watching our car.

And so when we get to the turn, she tells us to turn. And she goes, oh, really? Well, I was having a little fun at her expense. But it was pretty funny.

No, it's not exactly like that. But, you know, that is how the Holy Spirit works. When we start getting out of whack, he's got a voice there.

And it's usually not British either. But he's got a voice there. And he speaks.

And as we've already heard, again, as we've already heard this morning, you know, if you belong to him, you're going to have ears to hear. You're going to hear the spirit speaking inside you. I don't know how to explain that.

You know, it's better felt than telt, I guess. But it just is there. And so we have to, on our part, make a commitment that we are going to follow that voice, follow the instructions that we've received in our blueprint, the word of God.

We have to make that commitment. And back to Matthew 7, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus finishes out all his teachings in the Sermon on the Mount with this little parable. And I'm going to read it.

And you'll see what the point is here. Therefore, he says, everyone who hears these words of mine, in other words, people who read the Bible or listen to sermons or whatever, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and slammed against that house.

And yet it did not fall for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and slammed against that house and it fell.

And great was its fall. You know, this is one of the few times scripture uses a superlative like that. You know, great was its fall.

And let me tell you, when you stand before the Lord after a lifetime of self-will and rebellion, doing your own thing, living for this world, great will be the fall of your house on that day. Now, I want to tell you something from a lot of experience. If you are committed to living your life on the narrow path of Christianity, of allowing God to build this spiritual house out of your life, I want to promise you something, guys.

It will become easier and easier as time goes by. It's the truth. It is the truth.

It gets easier. You right now, you're facing the hardest it's ever going to be because you are having to completely change over some long-term habit patterns of thinking and acting. You know, you guys have been accustomed to doing your own thing for many years.

Yeah, going to church, you know, avoiding certain outward things that maybe you would have done before you became a Christian. But, you know, just basically doing your own thing. This is one of the things that is always interesting to me.

I watch you guys come in here. And most of you get it right away, you know, that we have a way of seating in here. And there's purposes for it.

The number one purpose is just so it doesn't cause all this confusion. People just tend to grab the seat by the aisle, right? I always do. And good thing I'm not in the program.

But, you know, so we have to do away with that for just practical reasons. So we have you stream in in order and sit out like that. But you always get the new guys, and they know the rule.

They know the rule most of the time, but they want to do it their own way anyways. And I watch them, you know, they don't realize that I'm on it. And I don't ever say anything, but I take note of it.

I don't know if Brad does. They take care of it. Okay, Jordan's back there.

He's watching. By the way, I'll just tell you guys something. You should come up to Bradley Furgus at the end of the service and say, I'm so grateful that you are running this live-in program and Pastor Steve isn't.

Every one of you should come up to him and tell him that. Because some of these guys that were around back when I was involved, Amen, brother. When I started this live-in program, I was only a few years out of the L.A. Sheriff's Academy, and that's how I ran it.

You know, you came in, this brother back here with the beard, you would have never showed up here with a beard, trust me. And, you know, I mean, I had so many rules. I was so hard on the guys.

I was overboard. I know that. Listen, this was one of the things that really helped me in life, was the discipline in that Sheriff's Academy.

It did a lot of good for me. And so, you know, I'm just trying to find my way. I don't know.

They didn't tell me anything in Bible school about running a residential facility. I didn't know what I was doing. You know, so I started off on the strong side, which is always the right way to start anything.

And these guys kind of eased things back once I got out of the picture, you know, like the owner who's in there meddling and stuff. I've learned not to meddle. I just let them do their thing.

And I'm sorry. I apologize to you how it's gone downhill since then. It was a streamlined operation when I ran it.

I tell you that. Of course, people only lasted three or four weeks. But they were definitely affected.

Oh, where am I here? If you are committed to this process, guys, I promise you it gets easier and easier. Because here's what happens. You establish a new system in life.

Yeah, it cuts against the way you've had it. You have to start saying no to certain things in life. You have to start doing things that you weren't all that disciplined about doing before.

You know, you've got to institute some changes in your life. But they get easier, you know, when you get used to them. And I've been, for instance, my prayer time, my time with the Lord in the morning, for I think 30 years, something like that.

I've been spending two hours at least with the Lord every morning. When I first started doing that, man, that was hard. You know, two hours.

Really? Two hours? Because God spoke to me in a church service in 1988 and told me to spend two hours with him. It was one hour, and then he doubled it. And I started doing it.

It was hard at first. But, you know, it is just second nature to me. It is not a problem.

In fact, really, the truth is I enjoy my time with the Lord. It really is the highlight of my life. But it was getting it established was the hard part.

And for guys who are accustomed to allowing their feelings to dictate their decisions and the way they live their life, this is where discipline comes in handy, you know, is you just are committed to doing something a certain way. And you're going to do that and stick with it no matter what your flimsy, fluctuating feelings tell you, right? And that's one of the big keys to seeing your life turned around. Anyway, you start going down this neural path.

And when you start veering off course, the Holy Spirit corrects you, brings correction into your life. And he knows how to do it so beautifully. And when you guys leave here, you will find that he is there for you to help you.

And one of the things that really helps is you get tired of paying the price for disobedience, right? You get sick of it. Solomon said, a rebuke goes deeper into a wise man than a hundred blows into a fool. Now, I took my hundred blows.

I can guarantee you before I finally started getting it right. But I did eventually get it right. And it becomes a lifestyle to you.

And this is what we're trying to establish in your guys' life. A new way of doing life. Living a life of wisdom.

That is the foundation of the building, right? Is committing yourself to living this way. It's like quitting smoking. How many of you quit smoking? Okay, the rest of you keep pushing on ahead.

You'll get it. Ed, keep. Carla.

Half the battle with quitting smoking is making the decision. It's the indecisiveness of it that makes it, turns it into torture, right? You have to make a commitment. And once you make that decision, the battle is half over at least.

It's not like it's going to be automatic. You're not going to have any problems or anything. But I promise you, once you make that commitment, that you are going to be on this narrow path, that you are going to stick by the disciplines in your life.

I promise you, once you make that commitment, you will find that life becomes much easier for you. One of the ways that you can get around facing the discipline of the Lord is to establish discipline in your own life. You know, I have said this, I don't know, to the Lord or to myself, whatever, many times over the years, that I am going to do my utmost to live my life in such a way that I don't have to face God's discipline.

That's wisdom, right? Isn't that being wise? I get tired of getting whacked, you know, so I'm just going to do my best. Now, the truth is, sometimes the Lord needs to bring correction into our lives anyway. We just, there's some things we just can't straighten out about ourselves.

But we can go a long way in avoiding the suffering of punishment and discipline from the Lord by just doing things right in the first place. That just makes good common sense. All right, number four.

You can only build an eternal house of wisdom by subjecting yourself to the maxims of wisdom. In other words, by living it out. Wisdom begets more wisdom.

Folly begets more folly. You know, you reap what you sow. When you start sowing wisdom into your life, more wisdom comes forth.

You start thinking that way and anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself. Now, this is the actual building. Okay, living out a life of wisdom.

Making wise choices and decisions. That's the raising of your building. You already have decided that God is going to be the architect and the builder of your house.

And you're going to submit yourself to his authority and let him be the one to build it. You've already made that decision. You've made the decision to allow his word to be the blueprint for your life.

This is going to establish the course of your life and the way this building is built and put together and so on. And you've already decided to make the foundation of your house obedience and submission to the Lord. Okay, so these three things establish something.

They establish a, I don't know how to say it exactly. I'll get it out here, but let me put it to you this way. You will find that there are two benefits to living on this narrow path or to allowing God to build this spiritual building for you.

The first is that fruit will come forth. James 3, in that little section talking about wisdom, James 3 says, the fruits of wisdom are peace, purity, meekness, mercy, and righteousness. In other words, when you're talking about fruit, you're not talking about somehow bear this apple.

It's not like that. You're just living your life the way God has told you to live it and the fruit is just a natural outcome. It's effortless.

You don't have to somehow make it happen. It's just a byproduct of living a wise life. And I should say that wisdom is also a byproduct.

That's an amazing thing. The more that you make wise decisions and live a wise life, the more wisdom you find in your life to discern what's going on inside of you, to have the foresight to see out ahead, to have insight into spiritual matters. You know, all of those things become increasingly more clear as you live in God's wisdom.

And the other thing is blessings. If you live on the straight and narrow, as they say, you will receive the blessings of the Lord. That I can promise you as well.

You know, I remember what life was like when I was in control of it. I was miserable. You know, I lived for what this world offered and I got a lot of what this world offered.

I was a cop in Los Angeles. You know, I mean, think what you will of that, the wisdom of it. Maybe it wasn't the smartest thing in some ways, but hey, I was pretty happy with it.

And in the sense that to be a cop in Los Angeles meant a lot to me. And yet, at the same time, my life was miserable. You know, just, I don't know how to explain it.

Wasn't the job, it was me. I couldn't get away from me. And all I can say is I look at my life now and it is full.

I could point to all the outward blessings, but that's not the point. It's the change that has happened inside me. The peace, the joy, the sense of fulfillment, the sense of being right with God, the sense of knowing where I'm headed in life, knowing without a question where my eternal destiny is.

All of those things are set and established and I'm just at such peace. And you know, that inward sense of fulfillment, how can you put a dollar sign on that? That's one of the points that Solomon made also in Proverbs 3. How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, for her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels and nothing you desire compares with her.

Nothing. I wish we could look at the church in America and see the reality of this. Because most of the church, they would say those words, but they don't believe it.

They live their whole life all about one thing, really, and that is gaining material prosperity on earth. That's their focus and you know what? It brings nothing but emptiness. You cannot live a fulfilled life trying to fill yourself with the things this world has to offer.

Not that God is against, you know, I've got a brand new car sitting out there. But what you may not understand is, I was gonna buy a car two years ago and the Lord stopped us. He stopped us because we were listening.

We weren't bent on forcing our own way. We prayed and prayed about it. And he said, no.

And so we let it go. And then later when it was the right time, we got the right car. I'm so glad we got this car, not the one we're gonna get.

But let me give you another example. A couple of years ago, Kathy and I felt like it would be really wonderful to take a trip out to California and drive up the coastal highway. We hadn't been there in 30 years.

And, you know, so we started praying about it. We started really feeling like the Lord was in this thing, you know, so we were getting kind of excited about it. And I started looking at the flights and I was ready to book the flight.

I mean, literally, all I had to do is punch the button or click on it to purchase the flights. And I felt this resistance inside me. If you know what I'm talking about, when you get that check in your spirit, you know the Lord is saying, don't do this.

And so I backed off and, you know, I just said, okay, I must've been mistaken. I thought the Lord was saying we could do this trip, but apparently not. So I've just backed out of it, shut the website down, got out of it, and we went back to praying.

I said, Lord, I was confused. Lord, I thought you were telling us that we could go on this trip. And as it turned out over the next few days, a friend out there, anyway, we got free tickets and we got my friend's truck that we were able to use the whole time instead of renting a car.

It all turned around and it turned into a fabulous trip. But that's the kind of stuff when you are accustomed to going to the Lord and being willing to allow Him to direct your decisions instead of making it happen to get what you want. You know, when I get a desire for something, I hold onto it very loosely because the first thing that's got to happen is I've got to run it by the Lord because He knows much better than I do if it's going to be a good thing or a bad thing for me.

And so Kathy and I have that habit, you know, and because we allow Him to bless us. Guys, I want you to hear me on this one. You cannot bless yourself anywhere like God can bless you.

When you try to bless yourself, it usually is empty, meaningless, and you don't get any real sense of fulfillment or joy out of it. Usually like if you, let's say you want a new computer or something and you just get it in your mind, I want this thing. You got a credit card, you know, praise God for credit cards, right? Because then we can have anything we want and whenever we want it, we don't have to wait on anything.

We don't have to wait on God. We can just go make it happen. And that's how most people live their lives.

If they want it, they buy it. And, you know, so we go through life that way. But when you allow the Lord to be in charge of the blessings in your life instead of forcing stuff through yourself, man, I can't tell you what it's like to receive a blessing from the Lord.

It is so different than when you do something for yourself. Let's say we would have forced through that trip to California. You know, I just guarantee you it would have not been what it ended up being.

You know, we knew we went out there with the assurance that God was in this thing and just everything went right. It was so just blessed. It was just a blessed trip.

But I have to be honest, Satan also has a reward system. And there's no sense in trying to deny it. He has his own reward system.

But it's all built around immediacy. You know, if you want it, you can have it right now. That is Satan's mindset.

That's his biggest lure into sin and into his ways of doing life. You can have whatever you want and you can have it right now. Satan's rewards are temporal.

God's rewards are eternal. Satan's rewards are superficial. God's rewards are deep.

Satan's rewards are empty. God's rewards are meaningful. Satan's rewards are selfish.

God's rewards are noble. That's the difference between allowing the Lord to lead you in life and subjecting yourself to his lifestyle. You know, when the Lord blesses you, it's usually He does it in such a different manner than Satan.

Satan's, I'm not going to call it blessing, but rewards. It's like Las Vegas. You know, a lot of flashing lights, loud blaring music and everything just to try to pull you in to the agitation of the world.

You know, that is the way Satan draws people. But, you know, like a huckster out in front of a whatever, a carnival or something. But the Lord is humble.

He's quiet. And he gives rewards, but they don't come instantly like that. He brings them about in time.

And usually through the back door. In other words, unexpectedly. You know, that's usually the way the Lord blesses.

I have many years of experience in the Lord's blessings. And man, I just don't have words enough to say what it's like to live your life that way. So really, you know, if you just get it down to bare tacks, you're given two options in life.

You can bless yourself or with Satan's rewards. Or you can go the way of the Lord and just be patient. Determine that you're not going to do anything outside of his will and let him bless you as he sees fit.

Proverbs 3 says this, the curse of the Lord is on the house of the unbeliever. In other words, nothing ever quite goes right. And what I mean by right is there's no fulfillment to it.

It's empty. One empty experience after another. The curse of the Lord is on the house of the unbeliever, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.

Right? Do you want your dwelling to be blessed? Nod your head. Say yes. All right, I'm going to wrap it up now.

In Luke 12, Jesus gave a story of a rich man who everything was all about prosperity. He was totally given over to building up his business. And he built up quite an inventory, such a huge inventory that he had to build a whole new warehouse system, you know, barn in those farming terms.

But just things are going well. And then one day, suddenly, the Almighty's voice boomed from heaven. You fool, he says, this very night you will have to give up your life.

Then who will get all these things you have kept for yourself? You know, we are headed for that day. It may feel like it's forever, but it's not forever. And every day we make decisions that are taking us in one direction or another.

I'm going to close by reading a little passage out of my book, *The Time of Your Life in Light of Eternity*. One need only fast forward to the unbeliever's last moments on earth. Lying there on his deathbed, earth life has nothing left to offer him.

He has lived for pleasures he can no longer enjoy. His good times have abandoned him like disloyal friends, leaving him with nothing but a bed of misery and an uncertain future. The unbeliever would be horrified if he could peer just beyond the veil of the temporal to see what awaited him.

Maybe he would see leering demons now anticipating his death like so many morbid vultures. Perhaps he would see the massive black cavern of hell lying beneath him. Whatever the case may be, surely the godless man has nothing good awaiting him in eternity.

I want to end this message with two statements that Jesus made. And we all are making a choice every day which one of these statements would best apply on that deathbed, that last day on earth as we prepare to cross over. For the fool, Jesus would say, Behold, your house is being left to you desolate.

On that in Matthew 23, what he said to the Pharisees, Behold, your house is being left to you desolate. That's eternity. No reprieve, no changing, forever desolation.

Or for those who allow God to have his way, this is what he would say to you. Today, salvation has come to this house. Wow.

Think of the reality of that. Today, salvation has come to this house. Man.

Lord, I thank you that you lay it out for us. We all have to decide for ourselves if we are going to humble ourselves before you and live our lives the way you would have us live them. Obediently, humbly, submitted to you, or will we go our own way? Will we try to build a house for ourselves and find out when it's all said and done that it was all in vain? And I pray for these men, Lord.

I'm not convinced that every man in here has made that decision in his heart yet. I know there are men in here who have not surrendered their hearts to you. They insist on staying in control.

Lord, all I can do is ask you to come to them and speak truth to their hearts and help them to make that decision, that eternal decision. Help people, Lord, in your great storehouse of mercy and love and compassion. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.

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