

# Discernment - Part 6

by Vance Havner

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*Discernment is the ability to distinguish between good and evil, and to make wise decisions based on that understanding, which requires maturity, experience, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 42:02

**Scripture:** John 10:27, Hebrews 5:12

**Topics:** "Discernment"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of discernment in the way we live our lives. He expresses concern about the fast-paced lifestyle and the excessive consumption of television, which he believes hinders our connection with God. The preacher references the story of Jim Elliot, a martyr for the faith, who was convicted by God while watching TV. He encourages the audience to prioritize their relationship with God and seek discernment in distinguishing between what is valuable and what is trivial in life.

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## Transcript

Amen. Well, I want to take just a moment to say, so very inadequately, what a great time I've had these four days. I've felt something of the spirit and atmosphere of this fellowship.

It's been a great joy to get to know Dr. Stanley better and to have this fellowship and the service with these wonderful musicians, and with Dan DeHaan and all you friends. And it's been a sort of a homecoming because I've met so many folks that I have known through the years all over this part of the country, 20, 30, 40 years ago. Some of them heard me, still navigating some of them, and we've had a good time.

I really have enjoyed it, and I said I wanted to be put on the mailing list of this church's bulletin. I want to follow this great venture of faith here and see what keeps on happening, because I'm charmed with it. I'm glad the choir, I began to wonder whether they'd find a place to sit.

I know they didn't want to sit up here in the back of a bald head. It's not a very edifying spectacle to look through, all through a sermon. You know there are four stages to the growth of hair, bald, fuzz, his, was.

When you get around to was, of course the front part's not much better to look at in that case, but I don't blame them for wanting to move. We've had a good time. The Lord's been with us.

I'm reminded of that dear brother who was in a meeting one night. Oh, they had the time. He just walked about in Zion in that meeting.

The next morning he went back and they called on him to lead in prayer, and he hadn't got off the mountain yet from the night before. He said, Lord, we sure did have a wonderful time last night. I just want to thank you for that great meeting.

Never had a better time of life than any of you. They got excited, said, Lord, you just ought to have been there. Well, thank the Lord.

He's been here, and he is here, and we have his promise. Now, we've been talking, and so I'm going to have to catch you up for just a moment about discernment, and there are five verses in the New Testament about it, and then there's an extra verse that covers all the five about the Bible being a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. We've been talking about discerning the truth and discerning the times and discerning the spirits and discerning the Lord's body, and tonight we come to the last of the five, discerning good and evil.

For that verse, we turn to Hebrews 5, 12-14, just three verses. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is obeyed.

And then the text, But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Now there's another verse that makes us think of this one, where Paul wrote to the Corinthians and called them church babies, and that's what a lot of church members are. They're not all in the nursery, you know, the 150 and 200 pound crowd, the ones that create a lot of trouble.

They had them in Corinth, we've had them ever since. Sometimes they get a little fussy. When a new preacher comes, they say, I don't like him, he changed my formula.

You can understand that. If we classified some of our 40-year-old church members by their spiritual progress, they'd still be in the beginner's department. They'd look funny over there, but that's where they belong.

Christians grow, as I have said here already, by food, rest, and exercise, just like a boy does. And when you leave out either, you have an unbalanced experience indeed. Now this word exercise, in verse 14, one of the translations puts it, Their perceptions are trained by long use to discriminate between good and evil.

Now, discriminate is a sort of a half-brother to discern, meaning about the same thing. And somebody else has translated it with some other words, but I like these two best. Now this doesn't mean that you try everything, good and bad, and out of that experience make up your mind which is which.

Sometimes when we object to filthy shows and vile books, the anvil chorus says, well, have you seen the show? And have you read the book? You don't have to drink liquor to decide whether it's right or wrong. All I have to do is look at the crowd that's drinking it. You don't have to be an adulterer to make up your mind about immorality.

This pernicious and silly nonsense is the chatter of the indiscriminating who have not exercised their senses to discern between good and evil. Now how do you do it? By using our faculties as directed by the Holy Spirit, by prayer and by the word of God, and by sanctified common sense, making decisions as to right and wrong. Most of our church membership today, let's face it, is unframed, undisciplined, a mixed multitude with no knowledge of the Bible and no clear convictions about creed or conduct.

The old clear-cut lines are pretty fuzzy today. Black and white have been smudged into gray, and everything's relative and nothing's absolute in popular thinking. There's no king in Israel, as the Bible says, and everybody does not what's right in his own eyes, but whatever he wants to do, whether it's right or wrong, and he endeavors to justify it.

It's about time we dusted off the bases again and found out where they are if we're going to play the game. What's right for me may be wrong for you and so on. Well, the Bible doesn't say that.

This is an indiscriminate amiability that tries to see the good in everything and even speak a nice word for the devil himself. Any man with definite judgments is a little too angular today to fit the neat, smooth, groovy patterns of today. I think about that woman who said to her congressman, I sure do like your straightforward way of dodging the issue.

We've got a lot of people who are pretty good at that, and we've got a lot of preaching along that line. Adlai Stevenson, when he went to the U.N., said, I've learned a new word, yo. I said, what does that mean? He said, it can mean yes or no.

And that's good in politics. We've heard of yes men and no men, but Lord, save us from yo men. And we have more of them than ever before.

We've got a lot of preaching that's tasteless, nothing to bite on, chew on, like boneless chicken stewed in cream. And it doesn't do you any good. When I go to church, I don't want to come away feeling like I've been out to a meal where all they served was cool whip.

I like dogmatic preaching. I like things dogmatic. The trouble today is that what used to be dogma has become smogma, and we don't know where we are.

I go to a doctor, I want a dogmatic doctor. I don't want him to say, well, it could be this, it could be that. We'll give you these pills.

If they don't care, you go try something else. I want a dogmatic doctor. And tomorrow when I get on that plane for Greensboro, I don't want that to be the morning that the pilot says over the loudspeaker, we're going to try something new today.

Uh-uh. Don't know whether it'll work or not, but we'll give it a try. I don't want to be on that.

This kind of preaching, half of what the preacher says cancels the other half of what he says, and he winds up having said nothing. And that's a tragic thing. Charlie Wilson was in Eisenhower's cabinet, if you remember.

He was a General Motors man, didn't know anything about politics, and had a rough time there for a while. And he said, the next time I get a secretary, I want a one-armed man. They said, why? He said, I'm so tired of on the one hand this and on the other hand that.

Now, the most popular shelf in the ecclesiastical supermarket today is the canned goods and baby food department. That's the most popular shelf. Strong meat's not popular, because it belongs to the full-grown and the discerning.

And this verse pays tribute to maturity and to experience. These don't count for much today. Age and experience have surrendered to inexperience.

I have a better response than youth today have ever had in my life. I thank God for the many young people that endeavor to serve the Lord, but they want it laid on the line. When I was a boy, I didn't want the preacher to mark the prices down to get me to run down a church aisle.

I had sense enough to know that if being a Christian was worth anything, it ought to be worth everything. And I expected him to preach it that way. But we are in danger of what has been told by one of our writers, teenage tyranny.

Rehoboam, you know, listened to the younger instead of the older generation and split the nation. And this capitulation starts in the home. There's as much authority in the home as there ever was.

The only difference is the young people use it. I don't know whether the parents are bringing up the young people or vice versa today. I get amused at a lot of this talk about, you'd think young folks have just been invented.

Well, we've had them as far back as I can remember. But I've been in some places where the church program got all mixed up and the tail was wagging the dog, and if it keeps up, the deacons will all come out of the junior department before long. Now, I thank God for you.

Somebody has said that youth has fire without light and age has light without fire. And somebody has said if youth only knew how to live and old age could, that's the problem that we have. And we need both in the church, the young people to keep it from going too slow and the old folks to keep it from going too fast.

But there are some things, beloved, that require time. Now, if you're raising mushrooms, that's one thing. But if you're growing oats, that's something else.

Even coffee has to have time to percolate. It takes time. If you get out of the cocoon too early, that's too bad for the butterfly.

Dating and dancing at ten. A thousand suicides last year among teenagers. And more than that, and even among the preteens.

Immorality. Astounding, unbelievable. We've rushed them too fast.

I watched on TV the other day a bunch of kindergarten kids talking economics and ecology. They ought to have been playing hopscotch out in the backyard. You know that these youngsters, these TV commercial youngsters, get anywhere from \$200,000 to \$10,000 for some of their performances.

That's abnormal. That's sick. That's a diseased state of affairs.

Harden up to being an adult when you have to. Why rush them? Let them be kids. Let them have their childhood and never have it be once.

Discernment of good and evil. One of the translations says adults who have trained and used their tastes to know the difference between good and evil. Now, obviously, that takes time.

Youth has a great place in the church, but the scriptures warn against novices, whether young or older. A novice, a brand new convert, is dangerous. Encourage him all you can, but don't push him too fast.

And today with the media, Lord help us. They're made heroes overnight, and if they don't live up to it, then the church gets another black eye. I remember years ago in Byrne, Indiana, preaching in that great Mennonite church there.

Not a Baptist Methodist or Presbyterian church in town, nearly everybody Mennonite. Tremendous church. I'll never forget how they sang on Easter morning.

Anna stayed with an old country doctor, the old school, and he had a motto in his office, It's what you learn after you know it all that counts. That's terrific. This doesn't mean that wisdom is the exclusive property of old folks.

Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment. Rehoboam's older men weren't much better, they just simply advised political expediency. Let not him boast that putteth on his harness, but he that putteth it off.

We need young Timothy's, and we must not despise their youth, and they mustn't despise it. But in the ministry today, if you're not pretty well fixed by 45, you're almost superannuated as far as getting a church is concerned. They want to hurry the process.

Somebody said that a lot of these churches, if they don't get a very young preacher, they're like the elder brethren of the prodigal son. They grumble and say, Thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. We need maturity and experience.

There are two mistakes that old preachers can make, and I have to continue to remember that. One is to sit around all the time talking about the good old days, and I know they weren't so good after all. Somebody wrote to a newspaper editor and said, Your paper is not as good as it used to be, and he answered, It never has been.

That's the way I feel about the time. But I don't think they ought to keep their mouth shut, either. If they've had any experience, they ought to tell something about it.

Well, you must get mellow as you get older, I believe in that, but some things get mellow just before they spoil, and I'm a little bit uneasy about that. What we do need is more Christians, young or old, who by reason of age have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. We are suffering today from what has been called an epidemic of amateurism.

Novices are blown up into celebrities, and the mass media makes giants out of pygmies to their own eventual undoing, sometimes in the embarrassment of all concern. There is a verse in Ecclesiastes 10.7, and I marvel I have not heard a sermon on it. I have seen servants on horses and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

That's equestrian servants and pedestrian princes. I have seen folks who didn't have any ability exalted to positions of importance, while somebody who had ten times the ability was never recognized. I've seen

that in the ministry again and again.

We're going to have a big shake-up in heaven when we start measuring the preachers over there. We don't know who the big ones are now. We'll let the Lord pass on that later on.

Ephraim, the Bible says, was a cake not turned. We've got a lot of folks who think they're hard-boiled when they're just half-baked, and that was the trouble with Ephraim. We're not to be children tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men in cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

But speaking the truth in love, grow up unto him in all things which is the head, even Jesus Christ. Young people sometimes get together and ask me some questions, and they usually ask about the same questions. What's wrong with rock, and what's wrong with dancing, and what's wrong with this, that, and the other? I say, I hold everything.

They're already off on the wrong foot. What you're asking is, how worldly can I be and still be a Christian? Why didn't you ask how much like Jesus can I be and how little like the world? How near the precipice can I walk without going over? That's the wrong approach. What's right and what's wrong with this and with that? When we really get down to business with Jesus Christ, we find the difference between trash and treasure.

I sometimes try to give my own experience. I'm amazed tonight. As I look back over the years, I can begin now to see that unseen hand.

There's an old song, and the other day down in Mississippi, some ladies sang that song about the unseen hand. It's old and it's new. As I look back now, I can see the things that didn't make a bit of sense to me when I was a teenager in the 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s.

Now I begin to see the lineaments of a hand, an unseen hand that was back of it all. I never knew the day I wasn't called to preach. I don't know how you work that into your theology, but that's your problem.

I don't know the day. I remember the day that I stood up scared half to death in that little old country church when I was not quite twelve when I was licensed to preach the gospel. I won't forget when I made my first real talk away from home at Hickory in North Carolina, twelve miles from where I grew up.

Twelve miles, horse and buggy, dirt roads. I got a farmer to take us in an old model Ford, bulb horn, 30 horsepower and 20 of them dead. We started across that dirt road.

The closer I got to Hickory, the scarier I was. I'd never been in a big town. I didn't know much.

Not only didn't know much, I didn't even suspect anything. We got over to Hickory. My daddy was with me.

We looked down. The aisle looked like a mile to the pulpit. He said he'd stay back there and pray.

I went down to the front. They put me in a chair. The pastor of the church stood on one side and the state evangelist stood on the other, like those fellows that held up the hands of Moses.

I did the best I could. I've been trying to do that ever since. That's all God ever asked me to do.

That's all he ever asked you to do, just be faithful. You can do that. You can't get around that.

You don't have a million dollars to give and you can't sing solos, but you can be faithful. It is required. It's not optional.

It's not take it or leave it. If you like it, be faithful. No, it is required in stewards that a man be found just faithful.

I talked to the young folks today. I said there's one difference. I've been young and old both, and you've just been young.

That does make a difference. There's a crying need to get out of this epidemic of amateurism to maturity in the things of God and to become childlike. Yes, all our days, but not childish, which is a different thing altogether.

Nothing is more rare than discernment. The natural man knows nothing about it, and the carnal man is devoid of it, and only a spiritual man has it. Well, I've been talking all these days about it.

What is the secret of discernment? The secret of it is that it's part of the wisdom of God, and James tells us, if any one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God. If you want knowledge, go to school, but if you want wisdom, get on your knees. You don't learn wisdom just in school.

Wisdom is the proper use of knowledge. You get the knowledge, but not the wisdom. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and God's not stingy.

He giveth the liberal and upbraideth not. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.

Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord, for a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Pray, and if you have laid everything on the altar and you're honest and you mean business, God knows when you're honest and you know when you're honest. The next thing to do is believe you've got it.

Whatsoever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them. That's the trouble. We pray and say, I don't feel any differently, so I don't have anything.

Then you're not believing God, and you're an unbeliever again. But that prayer must be according to the four accordings, like the four sides of a picture. According to his word, according to his will, according to your need, and according to your faith.

Anything that you ask according to those four, you will get, because one of them is need. God has promised to supply what is according to his word and his will and your need and your faith. You say, well, if I'm sick, will God heal me? If that's part of his will and purpose, it's not always.

I sat in Billy Graham's home some years ago in Montreat. Ruth had asked me to set up there for supper. We were taking a little vacation there in Montreat.

Dr. Bell sat there and told us about the healing of his other daughter, Rosabelle Montgomery, who was dying of tuberculosis in Albuquerque. Out of the will of God, a bit bitter, she'd never married. She was nearly gone.

And then she got right with God. And then maybe God would heal me. They called in a few friends and started a prayer.

She said to the doctors, I'm not taking any more treatment. Dr. Bell said, that doctor called me long distance, said, what am I going to do? I said, if that's what she wants, she'll abide by her wishes. She got well, she married, and Catherine Marshall has a whole chapter in one of her books about Rosabelle Montgomery.

But as I came down that mountain that night on cloud nine, I said, thank God, I lived to hear something like that straight out from the mouth of a surgeon and a Christian doctor. But God didn't heal my wife, and he doesn't heal a lot of people. Not now, they're all going to be healed one of these days.

We're all going to get a brand new outfit, you know, of the resurrection. But God had other plans. But when it's according to his word and his will and your need and your faith.

And then there are guidelines in this matter of December, 1 John 4, 2, 3, Hereby know ye the spirit of God. Now here's a way. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. And this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world. Now that's as plain as day.

Then we have the Bible, the great discerner, quick, which means living, powerful, which means energetic, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner, quick to discern, skilled in judging like an expert surgeon with a sharp knife, the thoughts and intents of the heart. Anybody with the Holy Spirit in him and a Bible in front of him, praying in faith for wisdom, got no business shaking his head or her head and saying, I don't know what to think, I don't know how to assess this and determine that. We are children of the day, not of the night nor of darkness.

We can pray positively and with assurance. But the one I like best, if one should like one verse more than another, is where our Lord said in John 10, My sheep hear my voice, number one. Number two, I know them.

Number three, they follow me. Number four, they know my voice. Number five, they do not know the voice of strangers.

Oh, how beautiful, how simple. The best antidote to the counterfeit is a double dose of the genuine. You get the real thing, you won't be bothered by the phony.

They say that when experts deal with counterfeit money, when it gets into circulation, they don't go around and study all the counterfeit money. You never would get to the end of that. They know real money so well.

And now we've got machinery, of course, to take care of that. You put a dollar bill in and get change, and that's amazing. But it knows the genuine and sets it alongside the real dollar bill.

The best way to discern the spirits is to be intimately acquainted with Jesus Christ. When the sheep know the shepherd's voice, they are not deceived, the voice of strangers. When you know the bright morning star, you will not be fooled by Jesus Christ's superstar.

You can see what's phony and all that. Some time ago I read about a youngster who marched in a parade of boys, and everybody else was in step with that kid, and they investigated and found that he had a transistor radio in his coat, and he was marching to music from a thousand miles away. That's a going through this world.

Thank God you are marching to the steps of another drummer. You're getting the rhythm from God. Chris Everts says, or they say of her, that she has made an isolation booth of her mind when she plays tennis, so that she's aware of only one thing, that union and that ball and where it is.

No matter whether the crowd is for or against her or whatever. Now, that's an art, and Christians ought to develop that. This new 16-year-old champion swimmer, a skater, she doesn't have much social life.

She said, I haven't got time for anything but now to get ready for the competition. What if God's people lived like that? I was in Wichita Falls, Texas, years ago with Landon Level in a meeting, and the great concert pianist Van Cliburn came to church and played the offertory, and then I had a chat with him. A fine man, a fine young man, just lives for music, just lives for the piano.

Anybody would like to play a piano like Van Cliburn, but they wouldn't like to practice like Van Cliburn. You have to go through that drudgery all the time to get up there, and then you have to keep it up to stay up there, because if you don't, your fingers are all thumbs in no time. And the Christian is on a pretty tight schedule.

We're training. This world's an ideal place for training Christians. It's a rough place to live in today.

But it's the very thing for Christian character. You can't sharpen an axe on a pound of butter. You have to have a grindstone.

Sometimes the Lord even uses the devil's grindstone to put an edge on some of the saints. If you're having trouble along that line, remember that God has strange ways of getting the keen edge on you. And if you're going to have discernment, there's one thing you must do, and everywhere I go today, I'm bothered by the way we're living so fast.

TV is the first thing on in the morning and the last thing off at night. You can't live that way and have much news from heaven. There are good things on it, but you can't just make a dive at it.

I think of Jim Elliott, who was butchered down in Ecuador as one of the martyrs for the faith. Jim was a red-blooded, good-looking young fellow. And in his diary, and it reads like some of the old mystics, he said, I went with a friend to his house and watched TV last night, but God convicted me with psalm 100.

There's one thing you must do, and everywhere I go today, I'm bothered by the way we're living so fast. TV is the first thing on in the morning and the last thing off at night. You can't live that way and have much news from heaven.

There are good things on it, but you can't just make a dive at it. I think of Jim Elliott, who was butchered down in Ecuador as one of the martyrs for the faith. Jim was a red-blooded, good-looking young fellow.

And in his diary, and it reads like some of the old mystics, he said, I went with a friend to his house and watched TV last night, but God convicted me with psalm 100 in 1937. Keep thou mine eyes from beholding vanity. You better make a motto out of that and hang it on the TV.

That boy was all out for the Lord. And we had better learn that secret. There's a price to pay for this.

You may have to get up earlier. Oh, William Lowe said, who am I to lie folded up in a bed late of a morning when the farmers have already gone about their work and I'm so far behind with my sanctification. I like that.

Now, we might get in an argument tonight about sanctification, but I think all denominations are pretty well agreed on one thing. We're all behind with our sanctification. You may need to get up earlier.

You may have to give up that late, late, late, late show. Think you could live without it? Your grandmother did. It calls for meditation, and I don't mean transcendental either.

Nobody knows anything much about meditation today. I preach a lot to preachers, and preachers are forever more in a great big hurry getting from Dan to Beersheba. They haven't got time to get still.

You don't see anybody out just thinking these days. You see a fellow coming down the road, you know, just walking along. You figure that he's either out of gas or out of his head running at two.

Walking is my only un-American activity. I can't get preachers to walk with me. Can't get anybody much.

I was at a good Bible conference last summer, and a young fellow who's now in Asbury College said, preacher, I'll get up at six and walk with you every morning. I did. He didn't miss a morning.

That boy was going somewhere because he wanted to be still and think. And Jesus was like that. We need to recover the gate, G-A-I-T gate of Galilee.

The whole life of Jesus just runs against all our system today. If we'd have been arranged in the coming of Jesus to this world, we never would have set it up like that. We'd have had him to come as a full-grown man going around Rome, Alexandria, and Athens.

What the media could have done with that 12-year-old boy in the temple? Could have made a boy preacher out of him. Instead, he went back to Nazareth and waited till he was 30 years of old working in a carpenter's shop. Now, what sort of business is that? Had only 33 years to save the world and spend 30 of them in a carpenter's shop.

Campbell Morgan had a great message on the hidden years at Nazareth. There's more to that than we've ever seen. I think Jesus spent all that time in the carpenter's shop because he wanted us to know that what he came to give this world is something that you can live out in a carpenter's shop.

You can live it out in ordinary daily life. He did it himself for 30 years before he even started preaching. He didn't want publicity.

If he performed a miracle, he'd say sometimes, don't tell it. He said to his brothers, they said, why don't you go up to Jerusalem and preach and get out of the backwoods and get up on the boulevards? You need a press agent. Jesus said, the world doesn't hate you, it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

And when he came out of the grave, what a chance he missed. Why didn't he go before Herod and Pilate and Caiaphas and say, here I am? That would have been the greatest news break in all history. He could have proved then what we've been trying to tell the world for 2,000 years since that he came out of that

grave and walked about, but he only made himself known to a few disciples.

His ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. He loved the birds.

So many of his sermons were full of nature references, the mountains and the sea. And when Paul got ready to get his theology together and went way out to Arabia, he'd been in cities all the time. Get away if you can.

Get outdoors if you can. And remember that you're living in a bewildering bedlam, and our eardrums have been battered by a thousand voices, and some of them are from the devil. And if we're to keep our sanity, we must take time for what the radio and television calls station identification.

Have you had time lately for station identification? We've got Christians who don't know whether they're hearing from heaven or hell these days. Have you stopped long enough to check the guidelines and read your Bible and listen to that voice? Some time ago, a fellow was in a phone booth, and it was getting dark, and he was trying to find the number, and he had the door half open. And an awful time, he couldn't locate it to save his life.

And a friend saw his plight and came up to him and said, the light comes on when you shut the door. Now, if you're having trouble making connection, I want to say to you that the light's not going to come on till you shut the door. And that's why my Savior said, but thou, that's the people of prayer.

When thou prayest, that's the practice of prayer. Enter into thy closet, that's the place of prayer. And when thou hast shut thy door, that's the privacy of prayer.

Pray to thy Father which is in secret, that's the privilege of prayer. And thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward the opening, that's the promise of prayer. Learn how to close all your doors behind you.

Nearly everybody in here tonight has got something in the past you wish you could slam the door on, never think of it again. Lloyd George, England's Prime Minister, used to love to play cricket over there, and one day he and some friends were going through a pasture, and they'd gone through the pasture gate, and they went a little ways, and Lloyd George went all the way back, shut the gate. And they said, why did you do that, sir? He said, I've always made a practice to close all gates behind me.

When I went to my first country church, there was a dear man there whose wife had committed suicide. He came home one day and found her hanging up there in the alley. It nearly killed him.

They had to watch him night and day for a little while. But he got through it and over it and above it by the grace of God. And we'd sit in the store and talk, and we were talking about insomnia one time, and he said, well, I've learned one thing.

When I go to bed now, I shut the door. And I knew he meant more than the door to that room. He shut some other doors.

Forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth to the things that are before, I press on toward the morning. I'm the loneliest man you ever saw. I've wept more in the last three and a half years, never did in my life.

I went out to Travis Avenue, and they said the single adults conference, talk to us about loneliness. There have never been as many lonely people in all history as there are now. We've never had more

amusement, we've never had more entertainment, and we've never had as many miserable people.

Lonely, lonely in the crowd. You can be lonelier than anywhere else. It's only by the grace of God that I keep going.

I had trouble for two years long ago. Nervous exhaustion and sleeplessness. I never appreciated sleep until I couldn't get it.

And that's just like it is with everything else. And when my dear wife, when I said, oh, now we're in for it again. The doctor gave me some Valium and said, take some of that.

That's all right if you need it. But I said, Lord, I don't want to get started on this. He giveth his beloved sleep.

And you know, that's been three years and four, six months ago. And it has worked. And I'm still going.

And I want to say to you young folks tonight, when I started out as a kid trying to preach this at all, it won't last. Well, 63 years long, let's give it a try. I crave for these many, many fine young people here tonight.

I trust that you've already set your face like a flint to move forward. You've sold out to Jesus Christ and you're marching to the music of another drummer from another world. And some of the crowd won't, won't understand it.

And they'll say, join the club. And when old Elisha started out to see Elijah go to heaven in a whirlwind, he said, now that doesn't happen every day and I'm going to be in on that. But the students at Bethel Theological Seminary and Jericho Theological Seminary were all up and down the road.

They said, you know, your message is going to heaven today. Yes, be quiet. He had his mind on better things.

You ever start out for the mountain peak and plenty of folks will say, oh, and I don't get on a high horse. You can't do it anyhow. Tell them, no, I've heard the song of saints on higher ground.

My soul has no desire to stay where doubts arise. Confused, dismayed, for faith has caught the joyful sound. Song of saints on higher ground.

I was out in Tennessee at a preacher's conference way back in the mountains. Oh, wonderful one. Rugged.

Everything was rugged. They had a high one there. And every morning before breakfast, I started up it in the first time.

And about halfway, you know, my knees started wobbling. My breath got a little short. And something said to me, who do you think you are, a teenager? But I wanted to see from the top of the mountain.

I said, I believe it can make it. And it did. And when I got to the top and all that panorama spread out before me, I said, bless God, the difference is worth the distance.

Don't you stop halfway. That's where the crowd is today. You get on through the best that God has for you.

Pray for me, won't you? I've got more people praying for me today than ever before, and I feel it in my ministry. I don't know how I keep going except by the grace of God. I haven't got any organization, no foundation, except the one that's laid by faith in his excellent word.

I don't even get out brochures. I had more sense than to put my picture on a brochure. I wouldn't get any calls to preach if I'd have started like that.

I've been running on a shoestring all my life, never owed but \$200, and borrowed that and a Zoboay. And my daddy said dirt, debt, and the devil were all related. And I made up my mind I wouldn't have anything to do with either one of them if I could help it.

I don't know how I make it. I never have been on drugs. I told Paul Rees the other day, I've got to get me a banjo or something.

He said, what do you mean? I said, you've got to have something. You've got to have a sideline today. All I've been doing is just preaching.

So he saw me a little later and he slipped up and said, got your banjo yet? No, I've not gotten a banjo. You can make it anytime. Just be a simple Christian, the old vanilla kind, just praying, and God will see you through.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

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