

What Will You be Doing Between Now and Passover?

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In modern society today, nothing is simple anymore. It just seems no matter what you try to do, it's far more complicated than it used to be. I mean simple tasks.

I can remember growing up as a grade school kid and high school kid. I had my own lawn mowing business. And in the spring after the first weekend of lawn mowing, I would go and blow my first paycheck on a local drugstore and get myself a big bowl of ice cream. And the big decision you had to make was: Is it vanilla or chocolate or strawberry? I mean that was huge. You look at the three of them. "Well, which do I get? Or I'll get one of each," or whatever, but we go to a Thirty-one Flavors and you could sit there and your eyes start crossing and you think of all the possibilities. And our lives are a lot more than it used to be.

More and more demands are made on our time. I mean everything seems more complicated and it takes more time.

I was thinking back in my grade school and high school. Before I got my driver's license, we'd go to the gas station and pull up in a neighborhood gas station and the fellow would walk out, you knew him by name, said, "Hi." And you just sat there and he plugged the pump in and washed the windshield for you and checked the tires. And there were no credit cards back then. You just handed over some cash and he gave you change and in a few minutes you were on your way. You had a pleasant conversation with a friend.

Now you pull up in front of the pump and you come up there and there's a LCD display—and if it's a bright day, you can't read it—and then it starts asking you questions. Well, do you have a savings card? Do you want to apply for savings on this one? What's your zip code? And you're standing there and you're talking to a machine. And it takes far more time than it would for this friend to come out and pump your gas.

It just seems everything is an ordeal. And if you try to call any corporation today, whether it's the phone company or the water company or your cable company, and the first thing you hear is "Please listen carefully to our mention as it has changed recently." And you know when you hear that, you're in trouble! You're going to sit there for five minutes while they go through fourteen different layers of menus and then you just want to talk to a human being!

Dorothy quite often, I can hear here just yelling into the phone, "Operator! Agent! Have somebody talk to me!" And you can go through fourteen layers and none of them apply to what you want! And so, then you press 0 and then it takes you

right back to the beginning and you start all over again. And it just is incredible the way the society deals with people and the way it's turned out.

Well, the problem is that Satan has complicated modern society's lives so much that there is no time for what's really important. And that's the plan. That's what he wants is to complicate our lives so much with unimportant stuff that we don't have time to pay attention to the really important stuff.

Now as this sermon is being given—and, of course, it will be a week less when the CDs and DVDs go out—but it's five weeks and a day before Passover. And so, one of the questions we want to ask, and this is the title of the sermon, is *"What are you going to be doing with your life between now and Passover?"* What are we going to be doing with it? Are we going to let Passover just kind of creep up on us and let it happen? Or, are we going to plan for Passover? So we're going to have five points that hopefully give us a direction on what to do with our lives and our time between now and Passover.

The First Point that all of need to pay attention to—and I'm speaking to myself too—is that:

I. We must get back to basics.

We have to focus on what's important. Focus on the important issues in our lives and not get sidetracked and spend time on things that are relatively unimportant. We can't forget our ultimate goal. We can't do that.

Now we know the Scripture Matthew 6 and verse 33. It's a promise that if we seek the Kingdom first, then everything else is going to fall into line. All these things are going to be added to us. And so, that can free our mind and free our time that if we really focus on the important things of achieving God's Kingdom, then all this other trivia and all this other dribble that we have to put up with will fall into line if we put first things first; but quite often the tail wags the dog and we spend endless time on the internet or on a phone or messing around with things that are not all that important.

Let's go to 1 Peter 5 and verse 4 and see that this is our ultimate goal and we cannot allow ourselves to get sidetracked from this goal. 1 Peter 5 and verse 4, he is talking about when the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ shall appear. And given what's going on in the world, it certainly appears it's getting closer and closer faster and faster. 1 Peter 5 and verse 4, the apostle Peter says:

1 Peter 5:4. *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, [you] shall receive a crown of glory that [fades] not away. (KJV)*

That is our goal. That is our first principle. And we should seek that and order our time and order our lives so that we put first things first.

Now in our lives, I think, obviously, God should come first. That should be our first priority. We must put God first. The first Commandments tell us so. The first four of the Ten tell us that. We have to put God first.

And I don't mean—I'm not preaching heresy here, but do you know what the second thing that we should pay attention to, our second priority? It should frankly be our health, because if we don't have our health all the rest is not going to happen. We're either going to be dead or we're going to be so sick we can't fulfill the rest of it.

So, that means that we need to have adequate sleep. We need to watch what we eat. We need to exercise. We need to pay attention to what's in our mind—thinking positive thoughts and not negative thoughts. And this is not a sermon on health, but we should put God first and then, we should pay very close attention to our health because the other three I'm going to give you aren't going to work if we're not in good health. If we're in bed, if we're in a hospital, you can't do the other three.

So, the third one is our family. Our family has to come next because God holds husbands and wives, mothers and fathers responsible for the welfare of the children. And, as I said, if you don't have health—if mom and dad are in bed or they're too sick to function properly—you can't be a good parent. You can't be a good husband or a good wife if you're sick or if you're tired.

So, God first, our health second, our family third, our job is fourth because we're worse than an infidel if we don't provide for our families. And I don't think any of us—Paul was writing to Timothy; I think it's 1 Timothy 5:8 if memory serves—but my point is that God says, "You are worse than an infidel if you don't provide for your family." Now an infidel is somebody who doesn't even believe in God. And we're being told, "You are worse than that if you don't provide for your family."

And then the fifth is the Church. Now some of us in years past, we put the Church first—even before God. And put the administration first. And I'm telling you that's—as my dad used to say—"That's bassackwards." It doesn't—it's not right because God must come first. And you can't function in the Church. We talked (the elders) among ourselves that as elders if we're not in good health, we can't serve anybody. You can't serve anybody out of a casket. You can't serve anybody out of a hospital bed whether it's the Church or the family.

So, we need to put first things first. We have to put God first. We have to pay attention to our health. We have to pay attention to our family, then our job, and then we need to serve in the Church. And I know sometimes we all have put the Church in front of our jobs. And maybe sometimes that's necessary, but we need to keep all of these in mind and to focus our attention on what's really, really important.

Then in putting our spiritual life first, we obviously have to focus on prayer. We're talking about getting back to the basics.

And sometimes I have to remind myself when I'm praying is that "You're kneeling down and who are you talking to?" I mean who are you talking to, really? You're talking to the Creator of the Universe! You're talking to the most powerful Being that has never had a beginning and will never have an end and who oversees the

entirety of the universe! And yet, this small weak, sweaty human being is able to talk to the Creator of all things! Now what an honor that is! What a privilege that is! And we should not take that for granted. How many in the world today can understand that they kneel before the very Being that made everything? And we are guaranteed that that Being not only hears us but acts upon what we ask for!

And I think all of us and particularly in the last two or three years, I just go to God that night and I say, "God you have answered every prayer I have made to you today. Thank you!" He hears and He answers. Now sometimes He doesn't answer in the way that we would like, but He answers in the way that is best for us. And what a privilege that is to be able to come to Him in prayer.

Let's go to 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 16 and see what prayer does for our minds as we communicate with God, 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 16. One of the functions of prayer is to change us from who we are to who we want to be. 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 16, Paul says:

2 Corinthians 4:16. *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man [or woman perishes], (KJV)*

Notice what he says here:

2 Corinthians 4:16b. *...yet [our] inward man... (KJV)*

And "man" is in italics. It could be person, man, woman.

2 Corinthians 4:16b. *...the inward [person] is renewed day by day. (KJV)*

That means that when we pray we communicate with God that renews our mind. That renews God's spirit in us, increases God's spirit in us because we're communicating with our Creator. And we are able, then, to change our orientation from the physical to the spiritual, from the flesh to the spirit. That's why prayer is so important that we communicate with God.

And I can't tell you the number of times when you communicate with God, a thought will pop into your head, and urge will come to you to do something. And I believe, in the vast majority of those cases, it's God talking to us—God answering our prayer even as we speak. And that's happened to me, I know it's happened to you.

So what we need to do between now and the Passover and not just to get to the Passover, but from now on we need to commit to pray more than once a day. We need to pray at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day. And David said he prayed three times a day. I know those of you who work fulltime, it's difficult to do but you can go off to a quiet place at lunchtime and say a prayer for a minute or two or three just to reorient the mind.

And we need to commit to pray—and I hate to put a time on it, because you don't want to have people praying with a stopwatch in their hand as though it's something to get through. But you know if we're not praying a half hour or more

a day, then we're not communicating enough with our Father. We need to communicate more. We have twelve hours or sixteen hours a day when we're not sleeping. And you figure if we have sixteen hours a day when we're not sleeping to communicate with God for a minute or two! What does that tell God? We need to spend time in prayer.

Another basic getting back to basics is Bible study. Now let's go to 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15. I know you know what this means but we want to look at the meaning of a certain word here. 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15—the text, Scripture, on study—Paul says to young Timothy, this young minister, he said:

2 Timothy 2:15. *Study to show [yourself] approved unto God, (KJV)*

Now that Greek word for "approved" is the same Greek word that we talked about a few weeks ago about why heresies must come—to show those who are "approved." And that's the Greek word *dokimos* and it means to study to show that you are a legitimate Christian, to show that you are a real Christian.

And when we study, we demonstrate to God that we want to learn about Him because when we pray, we communicate with God, but when we study, God communicates with us through the written Word and through thoughts that come into our head. And so, if we don't study, what we're saying to God is, "I don't want you to communicate with me. It's not that important."

Or if we study five or ten minutes before we fall asleep and we're just groggy and tired and we're nodding off, and yet we've spent a couple of hours watching our favorite TV program, what does that say to God about what we put first in our life?

And so, studying shows God who is approved. And when the end times roll up and it comes to an end, we want God to say to us, "You are approved," whether it's to go to a Place of Safety or to be the Bride of Christ.

And it goes on in that verse, it says:

2 Timothy 2:15b. *...a workman... (KJV)*

That means it takes work. It takes effort. Not laid back in your easy chair just kind of glancing at the Bible, but down at a desk with pencil and paper out and other study aids to really get down to studying.

And I remember when I was in military school; they forced us to get into good habits on study. So from 7:30 to 10 every night the freshman had to be at their desk with both feet on the floor, both knees together, back erect, and you studied. And the upper classmen would patrol the hallways and look in in your room and if you were not that way, some physical hazing resulted. So, fifty push-ups later, yeah, you were in a little better frame of mind to study.

And so when God tells us to study to see a workman that doesn't need to be ashamed, He wants us to really study. Like I said, not in the bark-o-lounger with the eyes at half mast, but to really study.

And it says, "rightly dividing the word of truth." That means getting into the Bible, studying the Greek and the Hebrew, relating Scriptures back and forth, dividing the word of truth. This isn't like reading "TIME Magazine" or your favorite "Good Housekeeping." So, let's understand that Bible study is really, really important.

Now with the five weeks that we have between now and the Passover, what should we be studying? Let me give you some thoughts on that.

The old Worldwide Church of God Correspondence Courses are excellent. There may be a point here or two that we understand a little bit better—maybe not—but the old correspondence courses numbers 22, 23, and 24 cover repentance. And we should be studying that at this time of the year.

And the beauty of the old correspondence courses, if you do them correctly, is: A question would be asked, then the Scripture would be given, and you were to write out the Scripture. And that forces us to focus on the Scripture as we write it out and then we can remember it better when you're writing it out. That's exactly why God told the kings of ancient Israel to write out a book of the Law. Every day they had to get down, open the scrolls, and write their own scroll of the book of the Law. And that principle was what drove the correspondence course. So, then if you had to write it out, you couldn't just sit in your lazy chair and just nod off. You had to have a pen and paper and to write it out.

So, 22, 23, 24 were repentance. Number 33 was on the Passover. Number 34 was on the Days of Unleavened Bread. They're excellent sources to go back and to review.

The old booklet "The Resurrection was not on a Sunday" is one. "How often should we partake of the Lord's Supper?" is another one. There are all kinds of "Good News" and "Plain Truth" articles.

We can read the four gospels. We're going to honor the death of Jesus Christ. Wouldn't it be good if before we got there that we should read all four gospels to understand what He said, what He went through? That would be a good thing to do.

Study the Exodus—coming out of sin, Israel coming out of Egypt. That's a whole book that we could study.

And rather than read a novel or watch TV, another it's easy reading, but the book The Day Christ Died. Now there are some things that are wrong in that, but it gives you an indication of what Jewish life was at the time, what Roman life was at the time. There are some things that are wrong, obviously, of course, but that's easy reading. It doesn't substitute for reading the Bible.

All of these things that I've just mentioned, to cover in five weeks if we start that, we're already behind! We've got a lot to study. And people can say, "Well, I've been in the Church for thirty years. I know all that." Well, if we've been in the Church for thirty years, it probably means we're in our fifties, sixties, or seventies and it also means we've probably forgotten fifty percent of it too. So it's good to go back. And when you go back and review those, it's amazing. Scriptures pop out and "Well, I hadn't thought about that for years!" And so we need to go back and study God's Word.

It's a truism that people say, "Our body is what we eat." And that to a large extent is absolutely true, but likewise it's also true that our mind is what we put in it. And if we put in it sex and violence and sports and comedies and worldly stuff between now and the Passover, what does that say? On the other hand, if we shut the TV off for a while and spend some extra time in study, then we're putting into our mind godly things. And then, that means we would be more ready to take the Passover. Wouldn't we?

So we've talked about prayer. We talked about study. Obviously the third one, you know what's coming. It's fasting because, as we're going to see in a little bit and what John said in the sermonette, is it's a time of self-examination. And one of the keys to seeing ourselves is fasting because it strips off the human pride. When you're hungry, when you're thirsty and the realization comes to you and comes to me too is that without food, air, and water, I'm a dead man in a very short order. When that realization comes, then it changes your orientation

And this tsunami in Japan—life, as several people have said, reporters have said—it shows us that life is very fragile. It was a beautiful day they said. And, then, five minutes later, their whole world changes. And they're just observers. They have no power, no control. God does. We don't. And so as we watch that, it reminds us that we don't have a lot of power and control apart from God and apart from Jesus Christ.

So I would encourage everybody to fast at least once between now and the Passover. And it should be a twenty-four hour fast without water. I mean it's fashionable in some circles, I'm told, that you can have a fast for three or four hours or a fast is to miss one meal. That's not a fast! We're playing games if we do that. Or you can have a fast and drink water. Well, again, that's playing games. That's not what the Bible says. And we've had many sermons on that in years past.

So, please fast between now and the Passover. And what fasting does, you see, is open the door to the following. Let's go to Luke chapter 1 and we're going to begin in verse 31. And Christ's human mother, Mary, is being told some very important things here. And it tells us a lot about the holy spirit. Luke 1 verse 31:

Luke 1:31. And, behold, [you shall] conceive in [your] womb, and bring forth a son, and [shall] call his name JESUS. (KJV)

Luke 1 now verse 32:

Luke 1:32. *He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: (KJV)*

Verse 33:

Luke 1:33. *And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

34) *Then said Mary unto the angel, How [can] this be, [She says, "I've never known a man. How can this happen?" (KJV)*

She was just bewildered! Verse 35:

Luke 1:35. *And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy [spirit] shall come upon [you], (KJV)*

Now notice what the angel says!

Luke 1:35b. *...the power of the Highest... (KJV)*

That's what the holy spirit is.

Luke 1:35b. *...the power of the Highest shall overshadow [you]: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of [you] shall be called the Son of God. (KJV)*

And when we fast, we begin to see who God is and to realize the power of the holy spirit versus what little power we have. And then it's far easier for us to begin to ask for more of God's spirit, for more of that power, because the flesh is so weak when we fast.

Let's go to Romans 15 and verse 13 and see that Paul understood this very thing. Paul understood this and he was encouraging those at Rome to have access to this power of God. Romans 15 verse 13, he's saying:

Romans 15:13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, (KJV)*

Believing the Gospel, believing the Truth!

Romans 15:13b. *...that [you] may abound in hope, (KJV)*

And how is this done—having peace and hope and joy?

Romans 15:13 continued. *...through the power of the Holy [spirit]. (KJV)*

It's a power. And it is the power that Christ said gives peace that passes all understanding. When lives are on the line, as John was talking about in the sermonette, when a crisis comes and things just seem to be overwhelming and we just don't know what to do, this power can come upon us and give us peace and give us tranquility and give us stability in a time of turmoil.

Let's go back three chapters to Romans 12 and verse 1. In fasting, we follow this Scripture Romans 12 and verse 1. Paul says:

Romans 12:1. *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that [you] present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (KJV)*

And when we go to God and say, "God,"—let's say we're kneeling down at the start of a fast—and we say to God, "God, I'm going to dedicate the next twenty-four hours to you. I'm going to stop eating. I'm going to stop drinking. I'm not going to watch TV. I'm going to dedicate this time to study and to praying to you so that I can be more like you and Jesus Christ. I want to dedicate myself more to you. I need to be more like you. And so I'm sacrificing my energy, my time, sacrificing in the sense of no food, no water because I want to get back to basics. I want to prepare myself for Passover. And I want to be more like you and Jesus Christ."

So the First Point through fasting and prayer and meditation and to putting priorities in the right order in our lives, we need to get back to basics and we need to reorient our minds. And this world will and Satan will try to get us off track and we need to reorient our minds by getting back to basics. That's the First Point.

The Second Point is:

II. You can't accomplish that unless you get control of your time.

We must get control of our time because Satan wants our time to be out of control. As I said, Satan wants us to pay attention to frivolous things, unimportant things, just complicate our lives so much that we don't have time for the essentials.

Let's go to Psalm 90 and we're going to read verses 10 and 12. Psalm 90 verse 10 and then we'll jump to verse 12. Notice the reality of David's understanding. Psalm 90 verse 10, it says:

Psalm 90:10. *The days of our years are threescore years and ten [roughly seventy years]; and [he says] if by reason of strength they be [eighty] years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. (KJV)*

Meaning, we die. The physical body just deteriorates and we die.

Verse 12, he says, because of that fact:

Psalm 90:12. *So [he says] teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (KJV)*

In other words, account for the time. Number the days. Number the hours. Number the minutes. And account for your time so you can get closer to God and we can live our lives through God's wisdom, through God's spirit and not by the way of the world.

And we also see in the Psalms that laziness is something that can be—I mean not in the Psalms but in the Proverbs—that laziness can be deadly to a Christian. Absolutely deadly! Let's go to Proverbs 18 and verse 9. Laziness and fatigue can cause us to not do what we should be doing. Proverbs 18 and verse 9 says—it's talking about in your work, but he says:

Proverbs 18:9. He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster. (KJV)

Meaning: a waster of time, a waster of energy and effort.

And so if we apply that to getting control of our time and getting back to basics, it means that we can't be slothful in this. We can't just be lazy and the "Mañana Syndrome"—I'll get to it tomorrow or the next day. We can't do that.

Vince Lombardi, who was one of the great motivators of our age and one of the great leaders of our age—yes, he had his faults and he was imperfect too, but he was the coach of the Green Bay Packers. And I've got several books on him and he made a difference in people's lives. All of his football players told him that he "transformed my life." And he taught lessons about life. And the football players said, "I learned more about life under Vince Lombardi than I ever learned about football." And he was, in that sense, a great man. And when he comes up in the resurrection, he's going to be a great teacher for God once his mind gets oriented.

But he said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all." If we're tired, it's easy just to give up. If we're tired, it's easy to say, "Well, I'm not going to study tonight," or "I'm not going to pray tonight. I'm too sleepy." And just go to bed. And then we repeat that day after day after day after day. And then you look back and you say, if we're honest ourselves, "I haven't done a lot. I haven't accomplished a lot." And what we don't want to do is get up to the Passover and look back and say, "Oh, I'm not really as ready as I should be for the Passover."

When I first came in the Church in the mid-sixties, there was an article in the Good News in 1967 that changed my life. And it was an article about Ben Franklin and his example. And Ben Franklin obviously was a writer. He wrote several books. He was an athlete. (Most people don't know that.) He was an expert printer. He was a newspaper editor and he was a publisher. He was a great statesman. He was an ambassador. And he was our first great scientist in the United States.

Now you think about that—athlete, printer, publisher, writer, editor, statesman, ambassador, and scientist! How did he do all that? We struggle just to do one thing. But how did he do all that? He managed his time and he wrote a book about that, about managing your time. And in this Plain Truth article, it talked

about him and the book and then gave some guidelines of how we should manage our time.

And I read that and it was just, it was eye-opening. I had never really thought about managing my time before. You just kind of take time as it comes. But this talked about organizing your time by the day, by the hour, by the week, by the month, by the year. And it basically was telling us you need to get into a routine that works. And Benjamin Franklin had everyday outlined. He would study from this hour to this hour. Then he would pray from this hour to this hour. Then he would go work from this hour to this hour. Then he would have lunch. Then he would come back and then he would work again from this hour to this hour. Then in the evening, he would set aside time to reflect on the day and what he could have done better. And then this hour he would pray. It just went through his life and he was encouraging people to do the same thing. And this was just a brand-new concept to me and it changed my life from that point forward.

And we need to plan our time on a daily basis. We need to set aside time for prayer. Don't just let it happen. We need to commit that from this beginning here from eight o'clock in the morning until 8:30 a.m., I am going to pray. Nothing's going to get in the way of that. Or it could be from 4:30 a.m. to five in the morning depending on your schedule. And I am going to study from this time to this time every day. Nothing's going to interfere with that.

And then for those with families and kids, we have to pay attention to our family. So, I'm going to spend time with my family from this time to this time. And it should be nothing should interfere. Dad gets home from work. You have dinner. And then from seven to eight, before the kids go to bed, I am going to play with my kids. I'm going to spend time with my kids.

And then there should be time to exercise. If you're older, it can be taking a walk. If you're younger, it can be as simple as doing some push-ups and sit-ups in your basement. Or if you're able and have the time, go to a gym, but do some exercise. Get the bodily fluids going. Get the breath going. Get the blood going. And that will help focus on prayer and focus on fasting and focus on study so we don't fall asleep. We're so fatigued we fall asleep.

So we need to plan our time every day. Then we need to plan our time weekly and monthly. And every year in December, I get one of these date books that's a month date book. You go through and you put all the Holy Days in there. You put all the anniversaries. You put all the important things in there. And then you take it a month at a time and you plan time. Plan the Holy Days. Plan the anniversaries. Plan some time for vacation for a change of place. Plan time for "escape weekends." Plan time—think of the concept here—plan time to fast. In the first quarter of next year, I want to fast "x" number of times. So you plan it and you write it down and you do it, you see. We get control of our time.

Look at Ephesians 5 and we're going to read verses 15 through 17. Paul is talking to the people of the day and to us today that we shouldn't walk as fools. We should be wise in what we do. Ephesians 5 beginning in verse 15, Paul says:

Ephesians 5:15. See then that [you] walk circumspectly, (KJV)

That means with care and attention.

Ephesians 5:15. See then that [you] walk circumspectly, [and] not as fools, but as wise, (KJV)

Notice these next three words!

Ephesians 5:16. Redeeming the time, (KJV)

"Redeeming the time" means to buy back. The Greek word means to buy back from the lost. And he says, "What I want you to do is not waste your time." Now time that's behind us is dead time. We can't go back and buy the time that we've already spent, but what we can do is buy back the time that we would normally have wasted by changing our lives.

He says:

Ephesians 5:16. [Redeem] the time, because the days are evil. (KJV)

And I'll tell you, the days today are far more evil than the days when Paul was writing this.

Verse 17:

Ephesians 5:17. Wherefore be [you] not unwise, but [understand] what the will of the Lord [the Eternal] is. (KJV)

Meaning: His will is to be accountable for our time, to buy back the time, and make sure we don't waste our time.

So the Second Point is that:

II. We have to get control of our time.

The Third Point relates back to what we talked about in the beginning.

III. We have to uncomplicate our lives.

We have to uncomplicate our lives. Modern society overcomplicates our life. And most of us try to do too much. We try to accomplish too much. We spread ourselves too thin. And, when we do that, it leads to 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 33. We know what that is. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says: "God is not the author of what? "Confusion." But the rest of that verse says, "but God is the author of" what? "Peace." And when our lives get out of control, they get too complicated, we do not have peace. "Well, I should be doing this," or "I should be doing that," or "I didn't do this." You're just running with full afterburner and your hair on fire

and you're just not accomplishing much. Running in circles because life is too complicated!

So what we need to do is pare down our lives if we're involved in things that aren't essential. Sometimes we try to do too much.

Satan's way is complexity. Now back when I first grew up as a kid, the only thing we really had was some old 78 RPMs, records, and a radio. That was it. We played outside. We played basketball and football. And we played hide and seek out in the yard and ran ourselves ragged. And then, maybe, on a Saturday morning—I obviously wasn't converted at the time—we got to listen to a Saturday morning show on the radio. And that was about it. And in grade school and high school, you came home and you did your homework. Or face the consequences!

And yet, today, guess what? We've got television. Not only go for the broadcast television, but cable television of nine hundred channels. We've got cell phones, but more than that—we don't talk on cell phones anymore—we can do everything on cell phones. We can look at pictures. We can watch television shows. We can surf the internet. We can text other people. And we can do all this. And then we can go on things like—I don't even know what they are—Facebook and Twitter and all of that. And find out what thirty friends have done today. And so we read what they say. And then we can play video games and go into a la la land of fantasy that has nothing to do with reality. Nothing to do with helping us get closer to God.

And you see in the modern society, look at the complications that have occurred. Not just the difference between three flavors and thirty-one flavors, but look at what is available to take up people's time and to waste their time. And if it means unplugging the computer, or shutting off the cell phone—

And Dorothy and I resigned from Facebook the other day because I don't have time to go on Facebook. And Facebook e-mails and says, "So and so wants to be your friend." And I look and I don't know who this person is. They could be a bank robber for all I know. And I don't have time to go on Facebook and type things out. So, we just e-mailed Facebook and said, "Deactivate us. Pour us down the drain," because I don't have time for that.

And we need to simplify our lives. God's way is simple. Satan's way and man's way is complicated.

Look at 2 Corinthians 11 and verse 3.

And by the way in resigning Facebook, we don't mean it to be a slap in the face of anybody who wants to be a friend or communicate that way; but, frankly, I just don't have the time. If you want to communicate, the old fashioned telephone or e-mail, I mean forbid an actual letter. We can communicate that way if you think of it.

2 Corinthians 11 verse 3:

2 Corinthians 11:3. *But I fear [Paul says], lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, (KJV)*

The Greek word means "craftiness" or "cunning." He says, just like that (snapping fingers) it's going to happen to you.

2 Corinthians 11:3b. *...so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. (KJV)*

Christ's way is simple. It is not complicated.

Now the Catholic Church will tell you that you have to have a priest between you and Christ. And then above the priest is the Pope and then above the Pope is Mary as the intercessor. And then, finally, you get to Jesus Christ somewhere in the mix.

And the Bible, it tells us that we can go directly to God and Jesus Christ on our knees or by opening the Book and have Them communicate with us. That's very, very simple.

Doctrines are simple. The Tkach's told us that "Well, you need these tools that you can only get from going to a seminary to understand God's Word." That is the biggest pile of "caca" I have ever heard in my life! We can go directly to God. And we can understand Greek and Hebrew as much as we need to to understand what the Bible is telling us.

And so, Christ's way is simple. And we have to reject the world's way and Satan's way of complexity. And if we have to get rid of stuff in our lives—I don't care if it's too many cars or the garden is too big, or whatever it might be. We need to simplify our lives as the time gets closer to the end, because we cannot get distracted from our main purpose and our main goal. We need to establish priorities and stick with them. Sometimes we need to cut back.

And Dorothy will tell you. She calls me "The Whirlwind." And I'm usually going nine hundred miles an hour and I've had to learn, "You cannot do everything. You cannot do it all." And that's one of my weaknesses. I try to do everything. And sometimes it's a little easier as you get older and you don't have the stamina that you used to have. You have to cut back. You have to pare back.

Look at Colossians 4 and verse 5. Once again, talking about redeeming the time and we do so by uncomplicating our lives. Colossians 4 and verse 5, it says:

Colossians 4:5. *Walk in wisdom toward [those] that are without [meaning not called], redeeming the time. (KJV)*

And the Greek word "redeeming," as I said before, is to rescue from loss—to rescue from loss. Don't lose the time. Uncomplicate your life, so that you don't waste time doing things that are unessential.

Now the Fourth Point is:

IV. We need to, as we heard in the sermonette, to spiritually evaluate ourselves and to set goals to achieve.

We have to evaluate ourselves, see where we fall short, and then set goals that we want to achieve. Now, obviously, those goals have to be not "How I can make more money," or "How I can have more possessions." The goal should be "How can I be the Bride of Christ?" Look at 2 Corinthians 13 and verse 5—the Scripture that we quote this time of year, but I think sometimes we lose sight of what it actually is saying to us. It says, 2 Corinthians 13 verse 5:

2 Corinthians 13:5. Examine yourselves, (KJV)

Okay, let's stop there. It doesn't say, "Examine your brother in the Church." It doesn't say, "Examine your local minister." It doesn't say, "Examine your wife or your husband." It says, "Examine yourselves." Meaning: we should be looking at ourselves, not pointing fingers at other people.

He says:

2 Corinthians 13:5. Examine yourselves, whether [you] be in the faith;
(KJV)

But notice this!

2 Corinthians 13:5b. ...prove your own selves. (KJV)

Guess what that word for "prove" is. This time it's Strong's 1381 and it's *dokimazo*, a variant of *dokimos*. *Dokimazo* and it means to test—like you would test the weight of a coin to see if it's legitimate or not—to test or examine to see whether a thing is genuine or not as with metals, as with coins.

So it says, "Examine yourselves, prove yourselves to see whether are a legitimate Christian or not.

And a second meaning is to recognize as genuine after examination. And the word "*dokimos*," as I've said several times before, applied to money. So if a coin was *dokimos*, it was examined to be of the proper metal and the proper weight. So what Paul is telling the Corinthians, "Look at yourself and see if you are a legitimate Christian or whether you are a fake Christian, if you're just playing games."

But notice then where he says, "Prove your own selves," notice what he says now. We often just neglect this last phrase or sentence.

2 Corinthians 13:5 continued. Know [you] not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except [you] be reprobates? (KJV)

So we examine, we prove ourselves to see whether Christ is really in us. Remember several sermons earlier in the year or late last year, I said, "It's not

enough just to have God's holy spirit. You have to be led by God's spirit (Romans 8)." Okay, we have to examine ourselves. Am I being led by God's spirit? Or am I being led by the world? Or led by my own lusts? Or led by Satan? Am I really being led by God's holy spirit? That's what we should do between now and the Passover. And, frankly, all year long!

You see, when we examine ourselves, what we need to do is identify our weak areas. Where am I susceptible to going astray? Because I can guarantee you Satan knows where each one of us is susceptible to going astray because he's a spirit being. He knows what our weaknesses are.

Now Satan is a good general. He's a good military man. You don't attack your enemy where he is strongest. If you have a line, a defensive line, your enemy is in a defensive mode and they know you're going to attack and they set up a defensive line. And part of the line is made out of wood and part of the line is thirty feet high made of stones. Now are you going to go attack the part of the line that's defended by thirty feet of stones, three stories high? No. You're going to find where it's defended by a fence that's made of wood waist high and you're going to attack there. Or you're going to attack where the forces are at a minimum, not a maximum.

Now Satan knows that about us. He knows what our weak areas are. And he provokes us and he attacks us in the areas where we are weakest. Not where we're strong, but where he can get through to us. And he knows where we're weak.

And what we need to do in examining ourselves is to ask God to show us where we're weak and where we need to be stronger, where we need to pay attention.

A second thing—not just weak areas, but this is, frankly, I think even more important today in the Church—is we need to ask God to reveal our blind spots. All of us have blind spots. And I had a blind spot—and I've said this before, for thirty years in God's Church. I'm coming up on forty-five now, forty-five years in God's Church—and for the first thirty years I had a blind spot of what love was. I didn't have a clue what love really was. And being in the Church for thirty-five, thirty years and not understanding the most—what God is, love—I didn't really understand it. I don't think the Church in those days understood it, but it was a huge blind spot because I thought I was doing okay. I didn't have a clue that I was just blind to the fact that I didn't understand this core part of the nature of God. I mean God is love. And I didn't understand that.

And so now it scares me to death to think "What else am I blind to today? What else do I not see?" Because God does and He is not going to have His Son marry somebody that's not like Christ and not like Himself.

Look at 1 Timothy 5 and verse 24. We all have blind spots. I'm going to read this out of the Revised Standard Version. And Paul is trying to teach Timothy, the young minister, of some things to pay attention to when you deal with the Brethren. 1 Timothy 5:24:

1 Timothy 5:24. *The sins of some men are conspicuous, (RSV)*

They're just right out there. Anybody in the Church can see it. He says, "pointing to judgment."

1 Timothy 5:24. *The sins of some men are conspicuous, pointing to judgment but [he says] the sins of others appear later. (RSV)*

The King James says—I think—"follow" behind. And the fact is that these are hidden sins. And the individual may not recognize them, may not see them.

David understood that. After the mess with Bathsheba and all that he went through and the turmoil and the trouble it caused in his life and his family, notice in Psalm 19 and verse 12 because this applies to what David went through. Psalm 19 and verse 12, David had a gigantic blind spot that he didn't see. And then after the sins, multiple sins were over, he had to confront himself. Psalm 19 and verse 12, David says:

Psalm 19:12. *Who can understand his errors? (KJV)*

He's asking. You know we can't as human beings. He says:

Psalm 19:12b. *...cleanse [You] me from secret faults. (KJV)*

Psalm 19:12b. *...cleanse [You] me from secret faults. (KJV)*

The word "secret" in the Hebrew means "hidden" or "concealed." That means blind. We're blind to them. They are hidden to us. We don't see them yet.

And so what we want to do is in preparing for the Passover is beseech God, fast to God, pray to God to show us our hidden sins, our blind spots, our secret faults.

Now what are some common blind spots?

One of the biggest, frankly, is self-righteousness. And that is one of the hardest I've ever seen to deal with over the years. A lady asked me prior to Passover probably twenty-five years ago and said, "Well, what do I need to help me see myself?" And I said, "Frankly, you asked. So I'm going to tell you." And I said, "One of the greatest sins of all is self-righteousness because when you're self-righteous, you're deceived. You don't know that you're self-righteous. And you're pointing fingers at other people, but you're not seeing yourself. And quick to see the sins of others and you're not seeing yourself." And we see that in the Church today. Look at the groups pointing fingers at other groups. Look at people pointing fingers at other people, but not to themselves, you see.

Respect of persons is another blind spot. We treat some people differently than other people in God's Church. Both of them have God's holy spirit, but we favor some over others. And there are many Scriptures about respect of persons. And some people just do it and they don't think about. And they don't realize

they're doing it, but we need to treat everybody the same because we're all Brothers and Sisters. We're all part of the Body of Christ.

Another one, a huge one, is pride. You see pride prevents us from admitting we're wrong. Pride prevents us from seeing ourselves. Pride prevents us from repenting. And I've gone to people seriously and had discussions with them—some even my peers. And it's happened to me. And I'm not guiltless in this because there are times when my pride would not allow me to admit I'm wrong. My pride would not allow me because you see most of us are insecure. We're the weak of the world. We're insecure. And we're not the high and mighty. We haven't accomplished great things. We can't look at ourselves and say, "Well, look what I've done," or "My strength, or my intelligence or my money" or whatever. We're the weak of the world.

That's why God can deal with us, but sometimes we come into the Church, we are insecure. And so, we know deep down that we're not worth a hoot, but we don't want to admit that because if we admit that we're a failure or we admit we screwed up or we admit we sinned, then that lets us know that we are inferior. And that's hard to admit sometimes—that we are inferior! And apart from God, we are inferior. None of us can amount to a hill of beans apart from God. And that's why God chose us because we, hopefully, learn the lesson at some point that apart from God, we won't accomplish anything worthwhile. And yet, some of the most insecure people are some of the people that have the highest level of pride. And it will block us from the Kingdom of God. Pride will keep us out of the Kingdom of God if we can't look at ourselves, examine ourselves, and realize that we're nothing. And then go to the person we've offended, or we've hurt through our pride and apologize to them. That takes character. And sometimes pride, as I said, gets in the way.

Another one is selfishness. Blind spot! Just everything we do is about the self. I talked to a fellow the other day and I said, "We've been on the phone now for an hour and fifteen minutes. And I'm saying this out of love for you, but the whole time you've talked about yourself—your problems, your issues. And I said, "There are people with far more significant problems than you have. And I'm not belittling your problems. But there are some people—you have problems, yes, but your life isn't on the line. You're not dying of cancer. You don't have MS where your body is now—you're captive to your body and you can't communicate." I said, "You're not there. And yet, all you have told me today is your problems. Maybe you should consider the idea of getting your mind off of yourself and being concerned about other people. Then maybe your faults, yours sins, your troubles—I mean not faults and sins but—your troubles, the trial you're going through won't appear as great because your mind is on people that have far worse trials than you have."

And it's just selfishness. This world is selfish. What did Paul say? In the latter days, men shall be lovers of their own selves. That is a prime characteristic of the Laodicean Era, a prime characteristic of the end of the age.

Another one is hypocrisy. You see if we have a blind spot, we can be hypocritical and not know it. What did Christ say? He said, "You'd better take

the speck out of your own eye before you start"—I mean the plank out of your own eye—"before you start looking at the speck in other people's eyes."

That's hypocrisy. We walk around sometimes and we have the same sin we're pointing out in our neighbor. We have it ten times more and we should know better because we have God's holy spirit. And people can—I've seen it! And frankly, I've done it. You point out somebody else's sin and then down the road a few years later, you come and the light bulb goes on, and the hammer between the eyes, and you realize when I was saying those words, I had it far worse than they did. I had that sin in a greater magnitude than they did and I didn't even see it.

And, of course, the biggest blind spot is a lack of godly love—*agape* love we say. Let's go to Matthew 24. We talk about the end times. We talk about this tsunami. We talk about the strife in this world. And then we read Matthew 24 verses 10-12 and we need to look at ourselves and look at the Church. Matthew 24 verse 10:

Matthew 24:10. *And then shall many be offended, (KJV)*

Have many been offended in the Church in the last ten years? You betcha!

Matthew 24:10b. *...and shall betray one another, (KJV)*

Have many talked about others and said evil things about others? You betcha!

Matthew 24:10 continued. *...and shall hate one another. (KJV)*

I've been on the receiving end of hate. I daresay most of you have too. Not from the world but from Church Brothers and Sisters!

Verse 11:

Matthew 24:11. *And many false prophets shall rise, (KJV)*

Oh man, is that happening! We lost a couple a while back that are hooked up with a guy that believes that he can walk into the cloud of glory. And the cloud of glory was the cloud that went over Mount Sinai. And the cloud of glory is the cloud that went over the Tabernacle and later the Temple. And right now today he can walk in the cloud of glory and communicate with Christ. And then he comes out and tells the people what he's learned. Now is that a false prophet or not? Well, it's a false prophet. You betcha!

And there are others who say, "Well, I'm going to train the two witnesses." Oh really? Who gave you that job? I thought maybe God would do that.

And the list goes on and on and on!

Matthew 24:11. *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. (KJV)*

It just amazes me the following that some of these blatant false prophets have! But this Scripture's coming true right before our eyes.

Verse 12, what we want to focus on.

Matthew 24:12. *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (KJV)*

And that is happening in the Church as we speak! And it's increased since over the last—since Worldwide broke up. It's increased and increased and increased. The true love of many has waxed cold. And frankly, I've been as guilty as anybody. There are times when I said things I shouldn't have said. I had thoughts that I shouldn't have had because I didn't have enough of the love of God in me. And we need to change.

So, in this Fourth Point about evaluating ourselves, we need to go to God and tell him, "Look, Father, I want to be a better husband." Or, "I want to be a better wife. I want to be a better parent. I want to be a better friend. Above all, I want to be a better Christian. Show me what I am lacking. Show me what prevents me from being the Bride of Christ."

And we all need to realize where our battle lies. We have to realize that we don't battle with flesh and blood. We just don't. Look at Ephesians 6 verses 11 and 12. We need to understand this, Ephesians 6 verse 11 and 12. It tells us we have to "Put on the whole armor of God." Why?

Ephesians 6:11b. *...that [you] may be able to [withstand] the wiles of the devil.*

12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (KJV)

Let's understand that. Our battle is within the spiritual realm. Our battle is to have more of God's holy spirit and less influence by Satan.

We are responsible for our own fruit. Let's remember that.

For a final Scripture under this Fourth Point, let's go to Galatians 6 and we'll read verses 3 through 5. Galatians 6 verses 3 through 5, notice what Paul says. He says:

Galatians 6:3. *For if a man [thinks of] himself to be something, when he is nothing [And we're all the weak of the world.], he [deceives] himself.*

4) But let every man prove his own work, (KJV)

Guess what that Greek word for "prove" is. It's *dokimazo* again—to put to the test, to examine our own work.

Galatians 6:4b. ...and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5) For every man [or woman] shall bear his [or her] own burden. (KJV)

It's between us and God. We answer to God. Not to a human being. And we have to carry our own load and we have to prove our own works.

So let's understand that the Fourth Point is that we have to evaluate ourselves. And we have to set goals to achieve.

The Fifth and Last Point, and I can't emphasize this enough, is:

**V. We have to make God an integral part of our everyday life.
Every facet of our life God should be involved.**

We cannot compartmentalize God. I used to do that. I'd pray in the morning. Put God in His box and put God on the shelf. And then go out to work. And during the day I didn't think much about God. I was just involved in my work. Then I'd come back and pray at the end of the day, take God off the shelf, and open the box and pray to Him. And then put the box on the shelf again. And during the day I didn't think a lot about God. This is when I first came in the Church. I didn't think a lot about Him. I didn't have Him involved in my life. We need to make God a partner in dealing with life.

Look at Hebrews 10 and verse 22. We have to draw close to God. And let's understand that if we're not close to God, guess who moved? It wasn't God. It was us. We moved away from God because God doesn't change. Christ doesn't change. Hebrews 10 and verse 22 says:

Hebrews 10:22. Let us draw near with a true heart [draw near to God] in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (KJV)

Let's understand that.

And David said—we won't turn there, but—in Psalm 73 and verse 28, David said:

Psalm 73:28. But it is good for me to draw near to God: (KJV)

"I have to be close to God," he said. Psalm 73 and verse 28.

Now let's go to Romans 12 and verse 12. This phrase that we're going to cover sometimes is misunderstood. Romans 12 and verse 12, Paul says:

Romans 12:12. Rejoicing in hope; patient [when we have trials]; (KJV)

And we have hope and we are patient in trials because:

Romans 12:12b. ... [we can continue] instant in prayer; (KJV)

Now the word "instant" in the Greek means to be glued to somebody. It means to adhere. It means to be glued to somebody. That means you're so close it's like you're one; you're glued together. Or it can mean to be devoted or constant to another—to be devoted so close to somebody that you're adhering to them.

And what this is telling us is that we should be so close to God during the day that we are in communication with Him all during the day. And I've learned over the years that if God isn't part of us every minute of every day, shame on us!

When I pray to God, I'm communicating with God every few minutes really throughout the day because you don't want to do anything that's not from God. You don't want to have a thought that's not from God. You don't want to have an act that's not from God. You don't want to put anything in your mind that's not from God. And so, we need to be instant in prayer in the sense that prayer is our communicating with God. And then God communicates back by putting thoughts in our mind. If we're instant, that means it's continuous and we need to do that. And so, we need to understand that God is always with us. We should, likewise, always be with Him.

Let's go to Psalm 139 and we're going to close out this Fifth Point of making God an integral part of our lives, every facet of our lives with this Psalm. We're going to read the first fourteen verses. Now let's read this with the idea "Are we this way? Do we understand this as David did?" Psalm 139 verse 1:

Psalm 139:1. O LORD, [you have] searched me, and known me. (KJV)

And God does know us. He knows our blind spots. He knows everything we do.

He [David] says:

Psalm 139:2. [You know] my downsitting and [You know my] uprising, (KJV)

He says, "You know when I get out of bed. You know when I get up from the table. You know when I sit down at the table."

Psalm 139:2b. ... [You understand] my [thoughts far] off. (KJV)

Oh yeah! He understands everything that we think.

Psalm 139:3. [You compass] my path and my lying down, and [You are] acquainted with all my ways. (KJV)

"Everything I do, You know!" He says:

Psalm 139:4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, [You know it altogether.

5) [You have] beset me behind and before, and [You've] laid [Your] hand upon me. (KJV)

Yes, God did to David.

Verse 6:

Psalm 139:6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. (KJV)*

He says, "I don't know how you it, but I know you do." And he says:

Psalm 139:7. *[Where] shall I go from [Your] spirit? or [where] shall I flee from [Your] presence? (KJV)*

We can't—unless we just burn God's spirit in us. We kill God's spirit. We quench God's spirit.

Verse 8, he says:

Psalm 139:8. *If I ascend up into [the] heaven [if I could fly like a bird, he says, You are] there: if I make my bed [down in the grave, if I dig a hole in the ground and jump in it, he says, You're] there.
9) If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
10) Even there shall [Your] hand lead me, and [Your] right hand shall hold me. (KJV)*

God is with us no matter where we go, no matter what we do.

Psalm 139:11. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light [to] me. (KJV)*

He said, "You can be a light no matter what."

Psalm 139:12. *Yea, the darkness [shall hide] not from [You]; but the night [shines] as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to [You].
13) For [You have] possessed my reins: [You have] covered me in my mother's womb.
14) I will praise [You]; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are [Your] works; and that my soul [knows] right well. (KJV)*

The fact is that we should be beside God every minute of every day, walking beside Him. Not Him walking beside us. We walk beside God because God is walking down the true path. And we need to be walking with Him. So God should be an integral part of every facet of our life.

So in closing, let's understand. Let's don't come to the night of Passover feeling unprepared and wondering where all the time went and how we wasted time. Let's don't do that.

But if we apply ourselves starting now we've got five weeks and a day. If we apply ourselves now, what this could be is the most important Passover we have

ever kept in God's Church—the most meaningful, the most important, the most dramatic, the most spiritual Passover we've ever kept.

So let's get control of our lives, get control of our time, establish our priorities, and let's use the time wisely between now and the Passover.