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Sermon Transcript

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## Leaders for Tomorrow's World

On the President's day weekend it gives us a chance, I guess, to have a little extra time to be together, to fellowship. But I think we realize that for the world, especially for our country, we try to take a few moments out of our hectic pace and think about the great leaders that we've enjoyed here in this country, The United States of America. We try to focus on those courageous men including Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Eisenhower. I guess you could fill in the blanks of some of the men that you have studied and read and maybe learned about, and the contributions that they have made for the development of our country. It's also fascinating that even when our elections don't go as smoothly as we expect them, we still have a peaceful transfer of power. Now, not every country can say that.

So we certainly are privileged, don't you feel, to live in this wonderful, free country; that God has given us some good leaders? And that is only the small piece of the puzzle.

As a matter of fact, the latest booklet that has been published by the Church -- I don't know whether you've had a chance to receive this and read it -- but the *United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy* helps everybody to get a little bigger overview about this concept of Israelitish leadership.

I'd like to just quote from page 9 of this new booklet, when it's talking about the promises that God had made to father Abraham. And it says, "Considering the enormity of such a promise, it is little wonder that the Apostle Paul later speaks of Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, as the heir of the world," quoting of course from **Romans 4**. God obviously intended for Abraham's descendants to eventually dominate much of the world. Of course, that is only the prophecy about what would happen to the United States and Britain. But then there is the reminder that God promised the original twelve disciples that they each would be kings over nations of Israel and that all the world would be led by Jesus Christ and his people, Israel.

So I thought what a wonderful opportunity just to stop and think a little bit about that subject. About the leadership of God, Jesus Christ, and his people. That will

bring a new civilization to the planet. And I think everyone of us in this room realizes that our destiny is to have a part of that and that is certainly a major thing to contemplate.

I was thinking about the subject, obviously, and I couldn't help but think that God has used the targe - or I guess you could say inter targe - as kind of an anvil to kind of build leaders in the past. I guess Joseph would come to mind. If you remember that Joseph ruled Egypt during times of famine and I guess prior to that the time of prosperity when he was able by dreams to be able to get right in there to the nation of Egypt and help during a very interesting crisis in that empire.

And then later, of course, Moses came along. Of course, the Pharaoh did not realize that Moses was an Israelite. But he had much of his training right there in the court of Pharaoh. And you probably remember the touching story of Daniel, a captive, that was drug into Babylon. Not drugged. Maybe he was. But literally carried away into that nation of Babylon. Where there he was able to rule a world-ruling empire. At least for a period of time. Some think well, Nebuchadnezzar was acting like an animal, eating grass in his own courtyard. So obviously it must have been a powerful privilege for Daniel and others to use that incredible wide-ranging empire to build some character and some insights about how to rule.

Of course, later in Israel's own government Saul and David, and Solomon and others - God trained them and helped them understand lessons - but obviously the question for us today is how is God training the next round of rulers for the wonderful world tomorrow? And I thought on President's Day this would be a worthy theme for us to discover.

Well, open your Bibles if you will, to **Daniel 7**. Because Daniel, an Israelite, was interpreting a dream for Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonian king. The dream greatly troubled Nebuchadnezzar, and I guess if you would understand the substance of what was being discussed it would trouble anybody. Having to do with something that will happen at the end of the age. And **Daniel 7** chapter has some very fascinating things we can read.

We could pick it up in **verse 17, Daniel 7:17**. Where Daniel is interpreting the dream, "*These great beasts which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.*" **Verse 18.** "*But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.*" So whoever these saints of the Most High are, they are going to be given some rather dramatic opportunities in rulership. Of course, I imagine most of you sitting in this audience know who those saints are. They would be those that the Father calls and gives to Christ, and Christ prepares. He trains them. Just like he did the 12 original disciples, who he said would be kings. Kings over tribes of Israel.

I won't read all of this, but let's jump down to **verse 22**, same chapter. Talking about the horn. We won't get into all the aspects of his prophecy, but there's a power that will make war against the saints and prevail against them. At least ostensibly, until **verse 22**.

*"The ancient of days came and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High. And the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. Thus he said, the fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different than all other kingdoms and shall devour the whole earth." Carrying on, "...trampling it in pieces, and ten horns or ten kings..."*

And that explains some of the dramatic events that we're looking forward to. Maybe not with great anticipation as much as fear, that is going to come in the next few years as far as we know. Finally, in **verse 26** it says,

*"The court shall be seated. And they shall take away his dominion" -- meaning from this beast and false power "... to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the most high. And his kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey him."*

Now, that's not shocking news to this audience. But just because you know it shouldn't make it any less dramatic. That God is literally training us to be presidents if you will, of course the biblical title is king and priests, and expects us to administer his righteous government on this earth. Now, not very many people know that. And here we are a fairly small group of people assembled here in Branson, trying to have a few hours where we can socialize and encourage each other. And I think it's sometimes overwhelming to think that one day we may have more to do with world peace than some of the most prominent people in our government today.

So, if you will, I'd like to go through some of the scriptures and some of the ways that God is preparing his people as leaders. You might be surprised that we don't get the anvil, if you will, of the world stage. You know, we don't get to be on the cabinet of George W. We probably will never be in the government in an official capacity. At least I think that would be rather remote, don't you?

But, nonetheless, behind the scenes God is going to be working in our lives very individually. Because God says he is the author and the finisher of our salvation. And we know, because of the prophecies that God will do - the salvation of the world through the government of God that will come out of a city called Zion and out of the gates of the temple, each named by the names of the Tribes of Israel. And there will be kings and leaders of these Israelitish tribes that God will use whether spiritually or literally to bring his truth to the rest of the world.

I'd like for you to turn to a scripture in Isaiah. **Isaiah 24**. We obviously do realize that the nations of Israel, especially the ten lost tribes are not lost at all. They have been mentioned rather prominently in the scriptures. Their identity is known to us and maybe with the publication of this booklet maybe millions of others may begin to answer the question who are we. And I wouldn't be a bit surprised. I've kind of speculated on this in the past. That wouldn't it be interesting if our 15 minutes of fame - I don't know whether you're familiar with Marshall McLuen's idea that everybody in America will have 15 minutes of fame. It will be fleeting, obviously, if you only have 15 minutes. But maybe when we get our 15 minutes, if we could answer the question who we are as a nation, where these great benefits came from and what God intends to do with this nation - can't you imagine there would be an awful lot of interest in the minds of people who've probably asked some of those same questions? How is that two great nations, Britain and The United States ended up with so much of the world's wealth? Certainly an intriguing question. And I think there are many people out there that are very intrigued by that.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Kubik was mentioning in a sermon I heard him give that there are over 3,000 websites that have information about the identity of America being Israel. 3,000 websites. So it's not to say that there aren't people out there that have played around with this concept and are probably intrigued as to how we got to be, as one author says, "kind of a modern day Roman empire." We are more powerful than any other power that we've ever known. And yet we have a certain reluctance to use it.

So there's probably a great deal that God has in mind when he says, "*I will do a work in your day.*" And it may have something to do with the identity of some of the things I'm talking about today.

In **Isaiah 24**, let's read this. Because it's rather a sobering prophecy. **Isaiah 24:4**, we'll read a few verses here. The prophet is saying:

*"The earth mourns and fades away. The world languishes and fades away. The hty people of the earth languish. The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, the curse has devoured the earth. And those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men are left."*

I checked another translation - a more literal translation - this is the Bible in English Language. Obviously it has the very same meaning, but it's a little clearer. Let me read this to you. Same verses in **Isaiah 24**.

*"The earth is sorrowing and wasting away. The world is full of grief and wasting away. The high ones of the earth come to nothing. The earth has been made*

*unclean by those living in it because the laws have not been kept. The orders have been changed and the eternal agreement has been broken. For this cause the earth is given up to a curse, and those in it are judged as sinners. For this cause those living on the earth are burned up and the rest are small in number."*

I thought the author captured quite a few concepts that are very familiar to us. That after the Great Tribulation and all that is done to try to discipline the nations, there will be a few left. And God will begin his government on the earth as that proverbial grain of the mustard seed. But he will have leaders that he will have trained. Even using, perhaps, the last few years prior to that - the place of safety, or the place of final training - to get this cadre of people ready. And, of course, there will be others who have died in the faith who will be resurrected at the beginning of that incredible government. There will be leaders in place. And that's certainly inspiring. If not just a little bit sobering.

You know, not everybody really looks forward to being a leader. And I've known many people in my past who've done everything they could to not have opportunities to lead. I remember a man who came back from the Viet Nam war. I think he had achieved the rank of a Master Sergeant. And, you know, a lot of the responsibility that he had during those trying times in our nation's history were really troubling to him. And it changed his personality. And he was determined that he would never wear a watch again. Of course, he was often late to Sabbath services and every other appointment. He didn't mind serving people, but he never wanted to make a commitment that he would have to honor. So he may show up and he may not show up. But he didn't want any more pressure. He wanted to do everything his own, you know, time scale and at his own pace.

I remember another man who was actually a deacon in the church. And he had worked for 30 years in the grocery business. And many times, because he was a competent man, they tried to make him the store's manager. And at every opportunity that it came his way he declined. He was very, very content. I think he was the produce manager. And he felt that, you know, stacking the tomatoes and the pears, and you know, rinsing off the heads of lettuce - whatever it was - was what he wanted to. And he didn't want to take any of the burden of the whole store. Now maybe you can't blame him. He'd been around the business for a number of years and probably knew the headaches. But he was a little bit that way at church. He never really wanted to take on duties. If you asked him to do something he was more than willing. But he really didn't want to take on extra responsibility. Do you know people like that? Or maybe you're like that. And especially when you're thinking about things of grievous importance, and such amazing consequences of solving world problems, maybe you feel a little inadequate. Actually, I think we all feel a lot inadequate. Yet, all things are possible through Jesus Christ who strengthens us.

And nonetheless, he is going to use us as his people to teach others. We'll show people a way of life that will bring them to peace, the joy and happiness that's been so elusive to mankind. And He'll do it in some interesting ways. **Revelation 5:9**, again an interesting and probably familiar prophecy for many of you, talks about, *"they sang a new song"* now this obviously is in the section of the Bible where the seals are being unfurled and knowledge is coming to the earth. *"They sang a new song, saying, 'You...' referring to Christ, '... are worthy to take the scroll, to open its seals. For you were slain and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And have made us' as it should say, 'kings and priests to our God. And we will reign on the earth.'*" Now that's **Revelation 5:10**.

Not very many people read and believe that scripture. Do you? Well, I assume you do. So there comes the next logical question. How do we do that? How is God preparing us, right now, as a small group of people with little or no training in the formal art of government? Well, I'd like to talk about a couple of the things that are absolutely preeminent. Things that we are maybe masters in. Things that maybe you haven't thought about. That God has given us and God is expecting us to use, and I assume that we are using them. Maybe slowly, but surely. And as the years go by, and I know we have a lot of people who've been veterans in this struggle for decades now. But it's becoming closer to the time when God will reveal who we are to the rest of the world and His way of life will become the way of life people will live.

I guess we could start with that familiar scripture in **1 Corinthians 1:26**. I guess I could call on just about any of you and you would know that scripture wouldn't you? Wouldn't you? **1 Corinthians 1:26**? For you see your calling. It's interesting what it does not say. It doesn't say I see your calling. Or does it say you see my calling? You know, in many cases, we don't see it. Or we think we see it and it isn't there, because there used to be a whole lot of people that fellowshiped with us that are not with us now. And in **John** it says, *"They went out from us because they were not of us."* If they were of us they no doubt would have remained. Well, I thought they were with us. They sure acted like they were with us. Why aren't they with us now? I'm sure we've all kind of puzzled over that.

So I guess the bottom line is we got to get out of the business of trying to decide who is with God and who is not with God. And who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. In one sense we're all the bad guys. And God is going to work with us to help us become one of the good guys. And that is somebody who has His mind and can become converted and actually have the name of God. But the point being is that you should see your own calling, whether or not you understand these things and you feel that God is working in your lives. And I guess only we individually can answer whether God has been there for us when we've called out to Him, answered our prayers, healed our children, given us the breaks, or the trials. Sometimes the trials are exactly what we need to be able to

move on. It is an amazing calling. It's one that's going to take a great deal of devotion and dedication. And I think we need opportunities like this to kind of buoy our spirits. Because it's very difficult out there.

I read a quote recently that was kind of interesting about our country. Of course there's a lot of interesting dichotomies in our country, a lot of ironies. But did you know that in our country we have over one million graduates of law school and over a million people that are behind bars? Which is kind of interesting. Because here we are training people in law but we have just as many people that have broken the law and are in prison. Of course, those are only the felons. So obviously there's some problem with our concept of our how do you live your life. And God is going to start by helping us realize that, "*There are not many wise, according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, but God has called the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.*" And God has called the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty. Or might add, might think they're mighty. The base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are. "*That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of Him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.*" All that is possible by Jesus Christ. That it is written, "*He who glories, let him glory in the Eternal.*"

I think we have to start any discussion on something as broad and as profound as government with an understanding that we would be just like everyone else. If you were in the Garden of Eden you would probably have done the same thing that Adam and Eve did. And that God has to help us see that there is another way, a way in which we have to reach out and get something we don't have naturally. And that is His spirit. We have to have an understanding of what God is doing and then a willingness to follow that. Now I think that's pretty basic, isn't it? We call that conversion. But I think that it's important to remember that we have to start out with a good foundation, one that starts with the premise that I don't know. I don't have all the answers. And the people who think they have all of the answers, maybe they'll run for president. Maybe they'll convince people they do. But they usually don't last very long. Because somebody else comes along and thinks they have better answers. And they convince people to vote for them and then they try it for a few years and there's just as many problems when they finish their tenure as there was when they started in most cases. And we keep the cycle rolling.

So, obviously, there has to be another foundation, a foundation that God knows that He has to start in the lives of every human being. And that's found in **I Cor 3**, if you'd like to turn there. I think it's important we rehearse these things. It's so important to who we are. **I Cor 3:11** says, "*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold or silver or precious stone, or wood or hay or straw, each*

*one's work will become manifest."* Meaning that God will try it, to see whether it actually is built of quality material on the right foundation.

Now, how would you understand that in maybe a practical sense? You know, you might be able to be very, very successful in this world, but if you've based all of that investment of time and money and education on something that is not built on the laws of God, will it last? And I think we all are kind of writing our own little diary about how that works as we see and maybe our lives and the lives of our friends and co-workers that it's never going to stand the test of time unless it is built on this right foundation.

Now there could be many, many people who build with tremendous amounts of quality materials. They may have their doctorates and their master's and they may have an awful lot of inherited money. They may have run with the people who are the intelligentsia of the world. They may get all the breaks, or work for the fine companies. But if it's not built on this foundation that we're talking about, guess what? They've got to start all over. So even know maybe we've come from a rather humble background by way of our education and our experiences, hopefully it's real. And it has been tested. And it has been refined. So from this foundation will come a slow process of building that will live on forever.

Let's just stop and think about that. Because sometimes I think we do compare ourselves among ourselves in the world. And God says that's not wise. You don't realize that they have to start over. It's like somebody running a race. And this has actually happened at the Olympic competition. Maybe it's not a marathon race. It could be a swimming race. Or it could be even weight-lifting or some other competition in the games. And they may actually have been declared the winner and be given a gold medal only to discover that maybe they cheated. And that happened even in the last Olympics where some medals were taken away because steroids were used, or other illegal substance and they had to then revoke their medal and somebody who thought they weren't as good became the winner.

You know, that's very interesting. Because in many cases people who think they're gaining the advantage, God is saying no, no, no that's a foul. I'm sorry, you'll have to do that over. Get to the back of the line. So let's understand that this is a valuable concept. *"If anyone's work, which is built on endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned he will suffer loss. But he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."* Which could refer to God's tribulation. Notice **verse 16**.

*"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you? And if anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are."*



There's a fascinating analogy to this spiritual temple and to the building of temple of old. I think most of us have read about how that temple, Solomon's temple, was constructed. How that every big building stone that was used in the temple itself was crafted off-site, so that there was no sound of the hammer and the chisel at the base of the temple. Because that was holy ground. And that all of those stones were then transported and erected. And how they did that is truly remarkable. I mean, you're talking about pieces of rock that could have weighed several tons. They had to actually build earthen embankments so they could roll and use leverage to get these blocks and put them in place. All done very quietly. Almost privately. And I can understand how that God is doing that in our lives. Because most people have no idea that you're one of the saints of the Most High God. And I might just caution you if you want to run out and tell anybody they're probably not going to believe you. And they might even call those guys dressed in white who might come and get you. Take you away to a nice little place up on a hill.

Turn with me to **Ezekiel 22**. Again, a sobering scripture about God working with ancient Israel. Of course they were given God's law. They were given the case law. In other words, the statutes, the judgments. And helped explain how God was dealing with his people. And you would expect that they would have done a lot better job than they did do. And without rehearsing the whole story of Israel, I think we can jump to this kind of final conclusion in **verse 30 of Ezekiel 22**. Where the prophet Ezekiel is saying, speaking for God,

*"So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land."*

Meaning God was looking around for all of the troubled people and all their problems, and looking for somebody who had the courage to stand tall and say the way that we're going is not right; we need to change the way we're administering justice and law to our own people. We need to obey God and do things in a different way. I guess we could say that in different ways in the prophecies of the Old Testament are filled with examples of illustrations. But anyway, the sobering statement here is one that I'd like to use to help us realize the problem that God is up against.

*"I sought for a man among them who would make up a wall or stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land that I should not destroy it." And it says, "I found no one."*

So God realized that he had to start with people who were going to have access to his spirit. Even if God gave us all of the trappings that were necessary for wealth and power and peace and safety, just like he has to the United States and Britain, and the leaders are not tied into God's Holy Spirit, aren't dependent on

his spirit, it will come to nothing. So we need to realize that's where we need to start.

**Hebrews 4**, interesting promise. It remains a promise of entering His rest. That of course is referring to the time in ancient Israel's history when they were going to go into a promised land. And they were going to be a powerful nation. But yet, they disobeyed God. They committed adultery. They broke God's Sabbath. They did everything that God told them not to do. They went into the land and they followed the practices of the people in the land who knew not God. So obviously we know what happened in that period of time. Yet, there is a promise for another rest. This one brought about by Jesus Christ at His second coming. Let's read that in **Hebrews 4:1**.

*"Therefore since a promise remains of entering his rest, let us fear, lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them, but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest and as He has said, 'So I swore in My wrath they shall not enter My rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way and God rested on the seventh day from all of His works. And again in this place they shall not enter My rest, since therefore remains that some must enter it. And those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience.'"*

So God is now waiting until He put in place His leaders. And then this promised land, this opportunity for people to really have the abundance and the peace that they all desire will finally come to pass. We called that in our camp program "The Zone." Which is a type of the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a type of the millennium, the thousand years of God's rule on the earth.

Well, in the remainder of the time I'd like to talk about 3 areas that I think we probably understand already, but put them into a context of this President's Day weekend. We, as leaders in training, have been given certain things to work with that we should not take lightly. That we should value a great, great deal.

Number 1 is our faith. God gives us faith. And another word for that is a vision. That we realize that there is something beyond just the here and the now that we are training for. You know, it's sad that there was a time in our recent history when many people were turning their back on that vision or that dream or that faith. And I hope that all of us have maybe cherished this opportunity to get back together with those who have the same understanding and make sure this vision or this faith does not die. Now I'm very encouraged that many of our young

people not only understand it, but very much are on board with our camp program. I've already eluded to that, dealing with the concept of "The Zone." We absolutely talk about God's kingdom on the earth and the way that will bring the peace, the joy, and the happiness for you and for everybody else who's willing to follow God. They not only see that, they ask us, "Well, how can we get prepared for that; will you teach us, will you help us?" As a matter of fact, one Q&A that we had, Mr. Blackwell referred to our famous, or infamous Q&A's at camp. Someone looked at the stage where the ministers were sitting and said, "You guys are old. And we're young. We're going to have to take your place one day. You have to get us ready." I mean that was very interesting, if not rather sobering. If not just a little bit shocking that they all thought we were so old.

But I think we are blessed with people who do have an understanding. You know, speaking about great presidents, I'm reminded of Abraham Lincoln when he had the opportunity to be our president during a terrible time of conflict, civil war, and I know that many people think that war was about slavery. But for President Lincoln and others it was really the fact that our Union was going to be divided. And he had a vision of a United States of America that he thought was worth fighting for. And that was probably the core issue, at least in the mind of that great president; that he wanted us to see that we had a mission to accomplish. One that perhaps others did not see. And if you read carefully a lot of his writings, he felt very strongly about keeping this Union together whatever it cost.

Well, in many ways that's the kind of vision I'm talking about. That we realize that we have to keep together as a people of God. That we have to submit to the tutelage of our elder brother, Jesus Christ, and get on with it. Because the world is waiting for us. The world is waiting for people to be prepared to follow God and to bring in a way of peace, joy and happiness.

I'm reminded also of Joshua, one of my heroes of the Bible. When he finally got to lead the Israelites into the promised land, remember he had to take only those who were 40 years or younger than him. Remember, all of those who were complaining, other than Caleb, I guess, God said had to die in the wilderness. A day for a year. So 40 years went by until all of the Israelites of that generation died out. So that means that those who were remaining were the children of those who had to die in the wilderness. And I've given a sermon on that called "The Wilderness Kids," who happened to form the most successful army in Israel's history. Where they had to wait until their parents, who lacked vision, died. And that has to be somewhat bittersweet. What do you do wake up in the morning and say how are you feeling Dad? Are you feeling okay? You know, they couldn't get on with their lives until their parents died, so they could move on into the promised land. That's kind of a bittersweet thought.

Anyway, Joshua, when he finally led this victorious army across the Jordan River, and of course, God's blessings and miracles were everywhere. He gave a speech

in the **24<sup>th</sup>** chapter that maybe you could turn and read with me. **Joshua 24**. I'll just pick it up in **verse 13**, where Joshua is kind of quoting what God had said to Israel. "

*I have given you a land for which you did not labor. Cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them. You eat of the vineyards and the olive groves, which you did not plant. This is **Joshua 24:14**. "Now therefore, fear the Eternal, serve Him in sincerity and in truth and put away the gods which your father's served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the Eternal." **Verse 15**. "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Eternal, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve."*

Think about it. Think about the consequences he is saying. Whether the gods which your father's served, which were on the other side of the river, the Jordan River, or the gods of the Ammonites, in whose land you dwell. Notice what **Joshua** said, *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Eternal."* Now that's vision. That's somebody that saw that there was an opportunity that lie right around the corner. He knew it would be difficult. As a matter of fact, remember the spies that went into the land in **Numbers 13** came back and said, *"Oh, no we can't do this, there are giants in the land."* And they didn't go over because of their unbelief. And God kept Joshua alive because he had a certain spark. A certain fever about something that he believed in.

And I have to give credit to those in this audience who are here today because you didn't lose that vision. And you are passing it on. And I think to the credit of many of these young people they understand it. And they are accepting it as well. And that is very encouraging to me. And who am I? But I think more importantly, to Jesus the Christ. That God's plan is working in a small group of people. He's getting us ready for leadership. He is doing that through the gift of faith.

Now I could take you to the scriptures there in **Peter** where it says you then have to add with all diligence to this faith other qualities. As a matter of fact, I even thought about doing that today, but for other reasons I decided to just focus on two other points. And maybe you can take away from this weekend the fact that God has taught us a way of life. And in many ways, the way of life that God has taught us encompasses many, many sub-points. We could talk about the Sabbath Day, the Feast of Tabernacles. We could talk about tithing. We could talk about the dietary laws. We could talk about the things that other people look at and they say well you're a little peculiar because you do these things and others do not.

But you know it's more than that. It's much more than a bunch of thou shalt nots, and thou shalt. It's more of an understanding of a quality of life that comes when we put our trust in God. You know, there are a lot of residual effects that come

with those who obey God. Because of God's blessings. As a matter of fact, I was telling my oldest son here not so long ago, who makes a very good wage, that he should never ever think about not tithing. Because tithing helps you enter into a relationship with God and you would much rather have God's blessings than all the money that they're offering you to do other things. Meaning come in on the Sabbath, not keep the holy days, etc. Would you agree with that? That God's blessing is worth more than a pay raise? For some of you might think long and hard about that. But even more important than that, God said that a trial is more important than gold. So God's blessing and God's involvement in our lives teaches us a way of life that is pretty hard to kind of put down with a lot of bullets, little sub-points.

But overall, I think we could go to what Christ says, in **John 17. John 17**, this of course is when Jesus Christ is still on the earth, prior to His crucifixion, when he will leave His disciples and He prays a very heartfelt prayer. You probably know it well. I'll just break into the thought **verse 13**, it says:

*"But now I come to you and these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."*

Now, most people don't have any joy. Anything close to what Christ is describing here. But He realizes that before they can, they have to change the way they think. They have to realize that real joy comes from obedience. Peace, joy, comes from God's law. It doesn't come from the things that you get for yourself.

*"I have given them your word," this is Christ praying to the Father, "and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that you'll take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world."*

Then where in the world are we? Well, we're right here in Branson, plugged into a mind that is greater than any mind on the Earth. A mind that will show us things that even now we can't fully grasp.

In a nutshell, God has given us a way of life. He is going to show us a way of life. We call that a lifestyle. You know, most people today who think they live this rich and luxurious lifestyle actually live a death style. How many people haven't thought about that. That they have to die and then come back to life and learn a lifestyle. And that is what God has given us. A way of life. And I hope that every aspect of what God has taught you through your various trials you pass along to others. That's one of the benefits of us getting together with a family weekend like this.

You know, we had a marvelous opportunity as a camp team to seek the accreditation with the American Camping Association. I'm sure many of you know about that. Some of the men in this room participated quite heavily in it. I could just, by way of overview, tell you that it was no small feat to try to attempt within a two-year period of time to accredit eight camps and score them on one score sheet. As a matter of fact, there was a fairly new concept by the ACA and many people said, "Well, let me tell you, Mr. Greider, if you attempt this the odds of you passing would be very, very difficult." Because you get one score sheet out of the eight camps -- they chose at random four camps to send four different teams to. Every time you miss one standard it would go on the score sheet. Meaning it would be a cumulative effect. That the other three camps may not miss that standard but you've already missed it as a group. And if you miss, or you get a score below 80% in nine different areas you cannot be accredited. And one of them was site and facilities and we didn't own any site and facilities. We had rental property. So that means we had to make all of the rental property come up to the standards which is a very difficult process.

So it was interesting for us as a camp team to attempt it. And we spent a lot of hours. I'd have to say that our men performed brilliantly. Of course there was a little murmuring and complaining when they saw the paperwork. And all of the things required. I see a couple in the audience smirking a little bit. When it was all said and done we had the Director of Professional Development come to the home office in Cincinnati, and give us our score as eight camps scored on one sheet.

The United Youth Camps. 98.3%. Which is to her recollection the highest score anybody has ever attained for that classification.

And at our camp meetings I was mentioning that I felt the reason we were able to do that is our legacy of excellence. Maybe some of you know, and maybe others of you might not know, that Mr. Armstrong set quite an interesting legacy of excellence for many of us who attended Ambassador College. We called it the Ambassador standard. Sadly, many of us were educated to where we enjoyed a champagne lifestyle on a beer budget ... that's a joke. We were taught to enjoy things we couldn't afford maybe, but at least we had an exposure to things that many of us had never known anything about. Mr. Armstrong wanted the grounds to be impeccable. Obviously, many awards were won. Mr. Armstrong felt that good art, good culture, good literature was a part of a good liberal arts education that taught us the mind of God.

Oh, many people ridiculed him for that. But you know, looking back, it really is quite obvious that that standard of excellence is still very much in the blood of many of us. One of the sayings in the ACA and many of us had a chance to visit other camps as part of our training. And when there'd be a standard very difficult

to attain some of the camp directors would say I'll just take a no on that. They call that a calculated no. In other words, they realize they only need 80%. Well, you know, 85 is as good as a 100 to them.

Well, when we mentioned that to the camp team it was almost like an insult. What do you mean take a no? Does God allow you to do that? Can you imagine when you stand before Jesus Christ and he's judging you and He says, "*You know those Ten Commandments of Mine?*" And you say well a couple of them I took on. I don't think it works like that. God said we are to strive for perfection. "*Be you perfect,*" Christ said, "*as your Father in heaven is perfect.*"

Now we can't do that by ourselves, we all know that. But it doesn't mean he doesn't want us to stop trying. That's a way of life. You have been taught things that maybe you don't even know. Yes, we could talk about some of the things I mentioned. Tithing, and the Sabbath and the holy days, clean and unclean meats. And those are the things that everybody likes to run to and point out. But oh, you do those things. Well, that's just the beginning, isn't it? We have a quest for excellence because we do want to be like our heavenly Father.

Let's keep that vision. Let's realize that in the world tomorrow we won't be going around to various cities and say well that's close enough for government work. You know? Well, that's all right. It's a policy, but you know, you don't have to do all of it. You know, just do whatever you think you have to. I just don't see - our teachers, who appear out of nowhere say, hey, "*This is the way, go this way.*" I don't imagine many of them will say well, this is the way but kind of head in that direction a little bit. I don't think so.

The third point, and this is absolutely vital and I think looking out over the audience there isn't a person here that doesn't know it. But let me say it anyway. God expects us to grow. God expects us to grow and there isn't a more dynamic concept in all the Bible than God not allowing us to settle for mediocrity. We're not allowed to say, well I've been at this a number of years, that's hard for me and I'm just going to coast the rest of the race. I'm not going to get serious about things that I know about. I'm just gonna .. you know, everybody has problems, and you know, God will understand. Do you realize that most of the Christian world has adopted what Allen Knight says in his book on primitive Christianity --if you've had a chance to read that - is the mystery of lawlessness. Which is basically cheap grace that says God loves you just as you are. That's the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. That goes way, way back. He says it goes back to the Greeks and the Romans, but we know it goes back to Babylon. The Babylonian Mystery Religions. He's saying that the mystery of lawlessness is very much alive and well on the planet in Christian churches today, because this attitude is, well you know, God's a good guy, He loves you just as you are, which probably is true. But guess what? He expects you to overcome. He doesn't want you to stay that way. He wants to see progress. He wants to see growth. Now that's a dynamic

principle that I hope that everyone in this room understands. We are expected to keep moving forward.

I remember Mr. Armstrong said to Bonnie and I one of the last times we got to see him in person, and I think it was in a conference in Oklahoma City. And he was moving around through the ministers, we had kind of a little reception there for him. And I could hear him say basically about the same little speech to everybody he came up to. So when he finally got to - and he was looking for everyone of us as individuals, as couples, he knew our names - and he came up to Bonnie and me and he said, "Are you still growing?" He said, "Every year you have to grow and grow and grow. Don't ever stop growing." And he would talk about how many things he grew, how many things he learned after, you know, he was in his 50s and his 60s and his 70s and his 80s. And he told some stories. Then he moved away to another couple. And I could hear the same thing, "Are you still growing?" And I think we all got the point. Mr. Armstrong felt that the legacy that he was trying to leave behind was this quest for excellence, but also this desire to keep improving ourselves. Are you like that? Are you overcoming? Are you working on yourself? Are you examining yourselves to see whether you're in the faith? And how much you're in the faith? And how much of you are not in the faith? Christ said when I return will I even find faith; will I find these people of vision? A few years ago I guess we all wondered. What about you?

**James 2:14**, very interesting. **James 2:15**. While you're turning there let me just give you a quote from another president of The United States. A man who went through an interesting time of our history, World War II. And then later became the President of The United States. Of course, I'm speaking of Dwight D. Eisenhower. He said, and I quote, "We must be willing individually, and as a nation, to accept whatever sacrifices may be required of us. A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both." Now that's pretty profound.

That means complacency doesn't fit into our vocabulary. That when God shows us areas where we have to grow, guess what? You gotta do it. You gotta overcome it. You gotta change. I could give you illustrations of that. I remember reviewing a case here just a few weeks ago. And, people were writing that they'd had these problems for years, actually decades, and probably brought into this relationship problems that their parents had, that they had meant to overcome but evidently hadn't. Too bad, so sad. But all the years had gone by and they still never did change the problem. Now the question is, is that what God expects of any of us? Do we get to just stay stuck in a certain problem or habit or do we have to overcome it? Well, you know the scriptures as well as I do. We all have to overcome. *"He who overcomes, the same shall be saved."*

Let's just read **James 2**, because this kind of fits. **James 2**, a lot of people don't like to read the book of James because it kind of goes to this point.



*"What does it profit," verse 14, James 2, "What does it profit my brethren, if somebody says he has faith, but does not have works? Can faith save him?" Good question. Well, let me give you an illustration, James says. "If a brother, or a sister is naked and destitute of food and one of you says to them, 'depart in peace, be warm and filled,' but you do not give them the things that are needed for their body, what did that profit?"*

I mean, just having the knowledge, or just wishing things would go away. Is that going to change anything? No. **Verse 17.** *"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead."* You know, many people when they read that in the scriptures wanted to tear the book of James out of the Bible. There are still groups today who don't feel that James is a legitimate book of the Bible because that is just too heavy. It doesn't fit the mystery of lawlessness. Although it goes by other names today. But if somebody will say you have faith and I have works, show me your faith without your works and I will show you my faith by my works. Watch me is kind of the motto of a true Christian.

You know, one time my wife gave me an anniversary card that really hurt my feelings. She said in my card you're not the man I married. And I thought oh, boy, she's really disappointed. She felt rooked, you know, frauded or something you know. I thought well she loved me when she married me and I'm not that man anymore? I mean my mind was just racing. We had to have a serious talk. And then she explained to me that I had grown to become better than the man she married. And I thought that was about as nice of something you could say to somebody.

But you know there's a scripture that if you're still, you know, partying hardy like you used to, you run with those who riot and do all those things, shame on you. We're not supposed to be like that anymore. We're supposed to grow up. Be mature. Be balanced. Change your life. Why? Because we're going to be leaders. We're not in it for ourselves. We're supposed to be servant leaders. Not just presidents. But kings! Don't lose your faith or your vision for why God called you. Don't lose that vision that there is coming a better world. We all need that, and there is an awful lot of helpless, hopeless people that need the Kingdom of God.

Learn the way of life that God has called you to and all of its dimensions. And that would take more than a sermon to flesh out. But thankfully you've had hundreds of sermons, hundreds of articles. And you know what I'm talking about. There is a quest for excellence that God is expecting of this group. And we didn't start out that way. Many of us came from very humble beginnings. And we were shown things that we've never seen before. Speaking of those of us who got the privilege of Ambassador College and maybe even being with others who had been taught a way of life. And we're expected to pass that on.

Finally, are you growing? Are you learning? Are you applying the lessons in your daily life? You know, God isn't going to weigh all of your notebooks at judgment day and say, "Oh, you're a good note taker." That isn't going to fly. God wants to see how much of it you put into practice in your life.

Well, brethren, I know that we're all anxious for that day to come. For that rest to come to the planet. And one day Jesus Christ will speak to everyone of us. And he'll say, hopefully, "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*" And by that we understand that He's expecting us to become then the servant leaders of all the nations. That we will teach them a way of life. We'll share our vision. We'll help them learn how to become a different person. A converted person. A person that can have the name God and live forever. That is our destiny. We are to be leaders.