

**Learning Why Practice = Perfect**  
**We Value Biblical Authority**  
2/7/99

Thank you Dana! And all of the people said...Oh no, it is glory! And all of the people said...Glory! Now you have it right. I just needed to be sure you heard the song right this morning. That was beautiful Dana and we thank you for it so very very much.

Before I go any further this morning, in the fame words of Ricky Ricardo, I think have some splaining to do! I have a Band-Aid on my chin. It feels about this big right now! I have never in all of my years of ministry ever had to stand in front of a congregation preaching or teaching with any sort of an obstacle or obstruction on my face. Some of you have already looked and said where is his wife. I will confess to you that my wife and my son are both home sick with the flu but this is not the result of anything else going on in our family. I want you to know that this morning. I wanted to tell you that we had kind of a rough elder's meeting this past week and that was the upshot. But the reality is this – very early this morning as I was busy trying to get ready to get here, trying to actually get here a little early today, earlier than usual. I found myself focused, and concentrating, and thinking about what I was going to share with you this morning. I learned they have really refined the quality of the razor blades I am using today. I have not had such an incident with a razor in all of my adult life. It has been a very eventful morning just trying to get to the place where I could stand here and be sure that I could be covered and that maybe it would, not in too great a fashion, hinder my ability to share with you this morning. Of course, as this happened and as I was standing there with all kinds of compressions on my chin, because I took off most of the right section of my chin this morning, as I was standing there I couldn't help but think about a guy and I am sure many of you have heard about him. He was a pastor like myself getting ready to preach one Sunday and was standing shaving and cut himself. He went to church and stood up and told the people, I am just simply sorry, I was concentrating on my message and I cut myself while I was shaving. Of course, one of the self-appointed leaders of the church went out and met him in the foyer afterwards and said, pastor, I understand your predicament but next time why don't you focus and concentrate on shaving and cut your sermon.

Don't laugh too much! I might not take that well this morning!

The fact of the matter is that it is a shaving injury. I will survive and you will too. Just the same though, I have a big banner on my face this morning. Everything else is fine.

This past week I picked up the USA Today newspaper to find in the sports section something that I love. I found a picture of the State of Florida and a whole series of baseballs called grapefruits put on the pattern of the State of Florida. There was an extensive article talking about spring training. It was an article that talked about Florida having a winter grapefruit league, in which all of the major teams from all across America come and have an intensive time of training and preparation for the upcoming season of baseball. I love baseball so I had no problem enjoying reading the article and

getting all of the updates about what is happening in spring training this year. You know, there is something really fascinating about the baseball spring training program and that is the fact that when you really stop and think about it what happens is that major league baseball players, who are making astronomical salaries, come from all over America to the State of Florida during the months of February and March and they simply come to catch the ball, to throw the ball, to hit the ball, and to run the bases. That is basically what they do in spring training. They catch the ball, they throw, they hit the ball, and they run the bases. Now, the interesting thing about that is that I have a son who plays baseball. From the time he was about five years old, at T-ball level, I would go out with him and teach him how to catch the ball, how to hit the ball, how to throw the ball, and how to run the bases. That is the interesting dynamic. It is that this thing called spring training takes place and really what major league baseball players do is the very same thing the little league baseball players do. There is only one difference. They have mastered the skills of the fundamentals. The major league baseball player has so refined his practice and so affected his performance that in the midst of a very intense game competition a major league baseball player can watch a ball get hit from a bat, run across the middle of the field, extend his body, stretch and catch the ball falling to the ground, get up and make a throw back to another base and he makes it look like a piece of cake. But if you have ever tried to do that, if you have ever just tried to catch a ball hit at a fast rate of speed off of a bat, you know how hard it is to look, to position, to move your feet, and to catch the ball all in one big motion. In fact, for many of us, that is definitely a moment in which the lack of coordination could be demonstrated. But you see major league baseball players have so focused on practice and the fundamentals that they know that practice makes perfect. As a result, they come back year after year to the spring time of the year, to Florida, to be a part of spring training so that the practice sessions may prepare them for a winning performance.

The title of my message this morning is “Learning How Practice Makes Perfect.” That is almost too funny to be true in light of my face this morning that practice makes perfect. Anyway, just the same, God has a sense of humor so that is where I am headed today.

I share that with you, that analogy and that illustration, because that is really what Sunday worship gathering should be all about. Whenever we come together in a gathering like this the intent of this gathering is much like the intent of spring training. The intent is that the outcome of what takes place in this gathering will enhance the performance of my life and of your life in such a way that we will live our lives by a higher standard of measure, which is God’s playbook called the Bible, and that as a result of the way in which we respond to the teaching and training of the scripture, we will go out and be winners in life. Every worship service should be a practice session to increase and to enhance my ability and your ability to win in that season of life. But, the fact of the matter is that many believers are not winning in their seasons of life. The fact of the matter is that far too many of us have come and hung out at practice but the practice we have received has not in any great way affected our performance.

James made it crystal clear in James, Chapter 1, and in verse 22, and that is going to be the very heartbeat of where we are headed today in our study. James makes it clear that

one of the most crucial things that every one of us must value in the Christian life, if our faith is to be an authentic faith, is that we must value a practice that makes perfect.

Let's read together from the Philip's Translation. You can be turning there but I want us to read this together. It says, don't merely hear the message (we are talking about this message this morning) but put it into practice otherwise you are merely deluding yourselves. Don't just hear the message. Interesting – we have learned through all kinds of studies that people forget 95% of what they hear within 48 hours. Do you know how that makes me feel as a preacher! Do you have any idea how many hours of preparation I put in to try to shape and fix the words and concepts of the message to deliver to you only to know that some scientist has figured out that you forget 95% of what you hear in 48 hours! Therefore, it is obvious that if the messages that you hear from this pulpit are to have any lingering value, there is going to have to be another dynamic so, for that reason, I try not only to let you hear it I try to let you see as much of it as possible. I try not only to let you see it I always try to encourage you and would always encourage you to get out a pen or pencil and a piece of paper and take notes because you will remember even more that which you see, what you hear, and what you write down. But, if you really want to maximize the benefit of what takes place in this gathering Sunday after Sunday, it cannot only be caught up in seeing, hearing, and writing, it must be caught up in what we do in living.

I guess what I am trying to say to you is just as spring training camps are full of people who are fans but not players, full of baseballs but baseballs that benefit only those who learn to practice with them, so are church services. Church services are full of people who come to be spectators but who have not necessarily come to be servants of Jesus Christ. Just as baseballs are in abundance during spring training so Bibles are in abundance when you go to church. I would venture to say that in this building this morning that we have a tremendous number of varieties of sizes and shapes of Bibles. We have a tremendous number of translations of the Bible. I find that to be one of the most challenging things in preaching today. Now I use the New King James Translation but there are many good translations that are out there and people are using those translations. There are over 150 to 200 different individual types of study Bibles out on the market today. Never has there been such a tremendous availability of Bibles, Bible knowledge, and Bible helps. I would suggest to you ladies and gentlemen that the truth and the practice of the Bible are in a dirth in America in our churches and in our communities. That says to me there is something wrong with our practice sessions. Somehow practice is not making perfect. Somewhere the practice is not being translated into performance. Therefore, I want to spend the remainder of the moments that I have with you this morning trying to help you and to help me to understand how practice makes perfect.

I am prepared to do that in a very specific manner. Just as a coach would have to wear his hat I have brought my hat and I am ready to play the game today. I want you to know before you have a heart attack that your pastor has put on a hat in church. I have been in the Holy Land, I have stood in the streets of Jerusalem, I have been in the worship gatherings there. I have never seen a man there who didn't have his head covered.

Okay? To the Jew the lack of the covering of the head is a failure to remember that everything we do is in the presence of God. Have you noticed how Jewish men of the Orthodox variety wear hats, little yamakas on their head, as a reminder that they are in the presence of God? Let me just help you to understand that while this is not a yamaka it will just be a reminder throughout this service that the practice we are going through is intended to change your performance and my performance in life.

Okay. Having said that let's get down to business now just for a moment. Let's begin to read with James, in Chapter 1, and verse 19. It also helps to hide the Band-Aid just a little bit I think this morning as well. James, Chapter 1, verse 19 says, "So then my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God; therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls." The key word of all those words I just read is the word receive. It is literally the word welcome. What the Bible is saying here is that when you come to this gathering, this training camp called the church, there needs to be, as though it were, a welcome mat put out in your life that says, I have come to welcome the word of God into my heart. I haven't simply come to watch I have come to welcome it. A crucial part of practice, any practice, is preparation. If there is going to be a real value as to what you get out of a church gathering like this one today, it is going to be in direct proportion to the preparation you make prior to hearing and receiving the word of God. So James makes it clear there are several steps, several stretches, warm up exercises, if you will, that we need to engage in if we are going to maximize our readiness and our performance.

There are some preparatory things that we need to do. I like to think of them as warm up exercises for worship. So, you just might want to jot these down. These may help you today and in the days to come as you come and as you prepare to be a part of the training session in the church each Sunday morning.

What are these warm-up exercises? What are the stretches that we need to go through? You know, I know that when a baseball team gets ready to play they don't simply just all run out on the field and take a position and play. An hour before the game they are stretching, they are loosening their arm, and they are running, they are swinging the bat, they are getting ready. In the same way we have to get ready to let the word of God have impact in our lives. So, how does it happen?

Let us look at what it says in verse 19. "My beloved brethren let every man be swift to hear." What does that mean? Very simply, listen up! God is saying when you get ready to come and be exposed to the word of God don't walk in the door with your attention somewhere else. You walk in the door with a sense of being ready, to listen up, and to hear what the word of God has got to say to you because God's word is important and God is not interested in us coming to church to play little religious games. He wants us to come and to learn the word of God so that it will make a difference in the game of life. That is what it is all about. So there is a sense in which we need to pay attention. We

have a serious attention deficit in the church. People come and are exposed to practice but who never begin to get the word of God into their lives.

I will never forget my early experiences in coaching Little League. The hardest thing for a serious competitive adult to get over when you coach Little League boys and girls in baseball is how difficult it is to get their attention. I will never forget going through all of these practices, all of this preparation, and going out there and putting my team on the field for the first time. The second batter is up. I look into the right field and there is some little boy down on his knees digging in the dirt picking clovers. His glove is 15 feet over there. I am thinking, would you just get up you are going to get hit in the head with the ball! Pay attention, son!

In the same way, ladies and gentlemen, when we get ready to come to the word of God a part of the preparation is to come with a sense of attentiveness. Listen up! But that is not all, look at what he goes on to say, “Let every one of us be swift to hear” and then the Bible says, “but let us be slow to” what...Uh huh. Can I just be real straightforward and tell you what that says? Shut up! That is it. Shut up! Don’t you know there has to be times when God hears us talking, doing our typical little church chit chat, and God just wants to look out of heaven and say, would you just shut up. Because the problem is that we like to talk. We love to get in the stream of the flow of spiritual things with other people and we love to talk almost as though it was something where we just kind of chew gum. Church is kind of a gum chewing experience where we come and just kind of chew the gum of spiritual truth but with no real intent of taking it in and letting it nourish and strengthen and change our lives.

It was Eno, the philosopher, who said that God gave us an incredible object lesson in our anatomy. He said that God gave us two ears and one mouth that we might listen twice as often as we speak and even then he put the tongue behind a cage of teeth so that we would be reminded of how dangerous that animal really is. You see, ladies and gentlemen, one of the reasons we cannot learn is that we are always talking. A country preacher said, if you’re talkin, you ain’t learnin. That is just the truth! Too many times what we caught up in is wanting to talk but not being ready to internalize the truth. We have to learn what it is not just to get in a Christian environment and get used to Christian chit chat, we have to understand that a part of the practice session of worship is quieting our spirit so that we might genuinely hear what God is saying to us. So, listen up! Shut up!

Then there is something else the Bible says, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to” what, “wrath” or anger. Wrath or anger. These are the two things that will keep the word of God from gaining penetration into your heart when you come to worship. One is anxiety, worry. The other is anger and wrath. One of the reasons that many people never get anything out of worship is that they are harboring in their life and in their heart a worry, or even worse, a wrath and an anger of agitation toward someone else. Frankly, the word of God cannot get close to you and cannot get into you when you are harboring that kind of spirit. Many people just come to church mad. They are mad at their families. They are mad at their bosses. They are mad about what is happening in

their lives. Obviously James has already addressed that up in Chapter 1, when he said, “Count it all joy when you fall into trials.” But, you see many of us get upset with God. We get ticked about our life circumstances. We get mad at other believers. Frankly, there is no value to us even being in church because we are just mad. The Bible tells us that what we need to do is to grow up. Because just as a child who cannot control his circumstances and cannot control his emotions throws a tantrum, we have a lot of Christians who are walking with little spiritual temper tantrums going on inside. There is no value to what they are able to hear, to learn, and to receive because inwardly their spirit is in conflict. James just writes it off. Listen to what he says. He says, don’t you know that the wrath of man doesn’t work the righteousness of God? Do you want to come to church and get mad about something? Understand that your wrath will never work God’s righteousness. It will never happen. It doesn’t happen when people are mad with one another. It doesn’t happen when pastors are mad at people or people mad at pastors. It just won’t happen. What we have to understand is that we have got to cool down and we have to grow up and not have our little temper tantrums. Because the word of God is hindered in penetration when there is a barrier in our spirit.

James goes on to say, let every one be swift to hear (listen up), slow to speak (shut up), slow to wrath, and grow up for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, laying aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, receive the word. Laying aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness – that is kind of a big phrase. Let me tell you what the key word is. The key word is a word that at its root means ear wax. The word that is used in this phrase of expression of those things that clutter and hinder is the same concept of something being wrong with our ear, that our hearing is being hindered by an obstacle called the undue buildup of wax in the ear. Every one has at one time or another probably used a little object like this, called a Q-Tip. You have taken that Q-Tip and you have used it in order to try and clear some of the wax out of the ear that tends to build up. Well, the Bible is saying that one of the other reasons that we are not prepared to worship God is because we are willing to allow the buildup of sins in our life to just exist and to never deal with them and to never get right with God. We are simply willing to try and come and hope that maybe God will kind of zap us on Sunday. But we have not been willing to clean up our ears and to clean up our act and to open our hearts to him.

I have often wondered if it might not be more valuable on Sunday morning to have hosts at the doors to hand everyone a Q-Tip rather than a worship guide to enter the building. Because when it really gets down to it ladies and gentlemen, it really matters a lot more that you prepare your ears to hear than it does your eyes to see what is happening next. You see, what the issue really is when I come to church on Sunday is what does God want to do next in my life. What do I need to hear from him? You see all of that is a part of the warm-up. All of that is a part of the practice session and practice starts with preparation and God wants us to be prepared to hear his word when we come together. Show up with your equipment. Show up ready to work out.

There is a second concept that we see in this passage this morning. That is, not only that we need to understand that practice starts with preparation but also we secondly need to

see that practice is strengthened through evaluation. It is strengthened through evaluation. You don't just stretch and try to get ready but a part of practice is examining and evaluating how you are doing. Here is what the Bible says in verse 22, be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves for if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer of the word, then he is like the man observing his natural face in the mirror for he observes himself and then goes away and forgets what manner of man he is. Do you know what he is saying here? He is saying that if you just hear the word of God and you don't do the word of God there is no value in being exposed to the word of God. Just like a mirror.

A mirror has some marvelous points of ministry in our lives. The number one ministry of a mirror in my life and in your life is revelation. It reveals to us how life really looks. Sometimes that is hard to face the first thing in the morning isn't it? But, you see, when we go to the mirror in the morning there is a reflection, a revelation, of how we really look. But then the mirror has another ministry in our lives and that is the ministry of restoration.

You know, the Bible says, in the beginning the Spirit of God moved upon the earth because the earth was without shape and was void. The idea was that the earth was in chaos and then God moved and out of the chaos came cosmos, order and arrangement. That word cosmos is the word where we get our word cosmetics. If I could just transfer that into what happens in your life and in my life every morning it would be that we come to the mirror and in the revelation of the mirror there is chaos. To the mirror you have to stop and say, ooh, is everything okay? You see that is the third ministry of the mirror. It helps us to reinforce and to enhance again, to rearrange what may have gotten out of shape and out of order.

In a baseball practice today it is not uncommon to see a video camera. It is not uncommon to see a coach with a book who is taking note of every pitch and its speed, of every batter and his hit, and then of every player and how they perform because the whole goal of examination is to give an evaluation that says, if you will change the position of your bat just a little bit, if you will change the release of your ball just a little bit, if you will lower your glove, raise your glove, change your footing you are going to be a better player. In much the same way the word of God is intended to provide us in its practice sessions evaluation and examination for life. There is to be a critique that comes out of the word of God. While you may read other books, this book reads you. One of the hardest realizations of life is that when you get exposed to the Bible, the Word of God, is that it has a wonderful but a very faithful ministry of reflection and it faithfully tells us the truth. Every time you look in it the same image will come back truly and clearly, helping us to see what is in order and what is out of order in our lives. Consequently, that is why many people don't want to spend time in the word of God, because to look in the word and to see what is wrong is to have responsibility.

If I look in the mirror this morning and see that my chin is bleeding profusely and walk away and just let the blood pour that is a pretty irresponsible thing to do. So, I did the best thing I could, I put a bandage over it to try to cease the bleeding and to do everything

that I could try to help the healing. In the same way there is a need of response. I didn't do this just for the sermon mind you. I don't go quite this far I want you to know! What I am trying to say to you is that God wants his word to get into you. God wants his word to get a grip on your life. A part of the practice of the word of God, the coming to the word, reading the word, reflecting on the word, is that the word of God will begin to provide evaluation and effective communication of needed changes in your life.

How can you and I really maximize our time in the word of God? The Bible says that if we come and we look and we go away and do nothing then we have just deceived ourselves, we have forgotten what kind of person we are. But verse 25 says, "but he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed at what he does." The whole reason that God wants you to use his word in your life on an ongoing basis is that the blessing, the benefit, the winning performance, might be enhanced in your life. God only wants to provide the reflection of the things that are injurious and that are obstacles so they may be moved and that your life might be able to be more reflective of what you are intended to be for Jesus Christ.

When you open the Bible how can you strengthen the grip of the Bible in your life? How can you strengthen your response to the reflection of the mirror of the word of God? I think there are some simple things, some very basic questions that you need to ask and that I need to ask as we look into the Bible. That word, it says, he who looks in the Bible literally could be translated research. We are to look at the Bible as though we were researching to really understand the intricacies of life as it is meant to be in the word of God and life as I may be living it. There are some things that can help me in my research.

1. When I open the Bible I need to ask myself this question, is there a promise to claim? Just look at this passage today, is there a promise to claim? Sure. Look in verse 25. It says, if anyone looks in the law of liberty, continues in it, is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. You want your life to be successful, you want your life to be blessed, and you want your life to be full and meaningful. Then get into the Bible! Because the promise is that that is the source of strength and success in life.
2. We can ask ourselves another question. Is there a truth to believe? Is there a truth that I am to believe as I read the word of God? There is a truth here that says that the word of God that is implanted in my spirit when I receive it right is able to save my soul. That is, it is able to deliver me from the chaos and corruption of the thinking of this world and it is able to make me healthy and strong in the way in which I view life. It changes my relationships. It changes my sense of role and response in life.
3. Then I can ask myself the question – Is there a warning to heed? Let me ask you a question. Is there a warning in this passage today? The Bible says that if we hear the word and we don't do the word then we are just deceiving ourselves.

The Bible warns us against self-delusion. The delusion of simply being exposed but never exercising.

4. Then we ask ourselves the question, is there a sin to avoid? Is there a sin to avoid in the word of God? Each time I read a section of scripture I must ask myself, is God telling me avoid this because it will destroy you?
5. Then I ask myself the question, is there a command to obey? Is God telling me something that I must do to obey him to bring my life in compliance with him?

You see, every passage of scripture I get exposed to I need to ask myself those questions, and similar questions, so that the word of God cannot simply bounce off of me but that it might get into me. That was the passionate desire of the Psalmist who in Psalm 119 said, "How can a young man keep his way pure by living according to your word. I seek you with all of my heart. Do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." The whole goal of the Bible is to get into my heart so as to change both the thinking and the affections of my life. You see, practice has to have this dynamic of examination to show us how our life needs to be brought into compliance with the word of God.

There is one final very simple thing that I want to say to you before I close this morning. That is, that James makes very clear here, practice not only is strengthened through preparation, practice not only supplies a means of examination, but practice is to lead to a stronger and a sharper performance.

Please hear my heart this morning! If all we do is come together on Sundays and I keep your interest for 30 minutes, or I entertain you with a seasoning of salt and peppered stories, anecdotes, and jokes, then really there is no value in this gathering. Frankly, you might as well go somewhere else. But if what happens in these gatherings Sunday after Sunday is that the people known as the Boca Community Church begin to take more and more the sharper image of Christ into their lives and into their world, then ladies and gentlemen, what we are doing has consequence for time and for eternity. Because the only thing that really matters is whether or not when we get through on Sunday, there is a sharper image being portrayed of who Christ is in this community. If as coming together we are only creating a duller image, then we are the losers and the world is the loser because the church is not the church of Jesus Christ. We cannot build a church without people who believe and practice the Bible in their lives. An education, spiritual education, and Biblical authority are not seen in coming together, saying the right words, nodding our heads, and going out and living any way we want to. Biblical authority is affirmed when I submit my life to the principles and the true teaching of the word of God and where the practice of what I heard brings about a new performance in my life. That is the only purpose of this kind of gathering. That is why Paul said in Ephesians, Chapter 4, verse 11, it was he who gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the

fullness of Christ. God wants you to be a spiritual champion. God wants you to go through the practice sessions of worship and gathering that there will be a different performance in your life.

Every Sunday when we meet I watch you as you take care to mark your Bibles, key words, and key notes. What I am saying to you ladies and gentlemen is that it is not important how many marks you put in your Bible, what matters is does the Bible ever mark you before you leave here on a Sunday. Has the message of Christ gotten into your heart? Have you seen that you are a sinner who needs a Savior? Have you, as a sinner, given your life to Christ and now then willing to obey Jesus Christ? You see that is all that really matters. Because when you value Biblical authority what it really means is that the practice begins to make a difference in how we live, the performance of what we do every day in life. You are to be and I am to be a living Bible that whoever sees us may see the one who lives in the Bible, Jesus Christ, and that they might know the life and the hope that Jesus gives.

Father, grant that we would be people who practice what we proclaim, what we profess, and what we preach. Father, there is such a need this morning in this room for us to come into alignment with your word. I don't know all of the needs and I don't know all of the conditions of life around me today but I know there are people here who need to make an adjustment. Lord, for some that adjustment is the serious one of repentance of their sin, of letting go of their life, of seeing that they are losing in life and that there is only one way that they are ever going to win. That is coming to Jesus Christ, the one who conquered death and giving them their life that they might be able to be freed from the penalty of sin which is death and receive the gift of eternal life. Father, I pray if there is a man, woman, boy or girl in this building today who has never received Jesus Christ, this moment, this hour, would be the hour of salvation and that right now they would believe on the name of Jesus and that they would be saved.

Father, I pray for others this morning who have broken relationships that need to be mended, for others who have taken things that do not belong to them and need to be restored, those who have withheld from you the gifts that you would have them to give either in service or in investment. Lord, they need to give.

Lord, there are those who need to follow you in baptism because you commanded it for those who follow Christ. I pray that today they would just say, "I will, I will follow Jesus."

Lord, there are those here today who need to get committed in a church not just to be a spectator on Sunday but to serve and to be a part and to make a commitment and I pray you would speak to their hearts.

Father, I pray that this practice session would change the performance of our lives. I pray that we never be content to come on Sundays and to miss the power of the word in our lives. We give you these moments of commitment in Jesus' name.

While heads are bowed and eyes are still closed in just a moment we are going to stand for just a very few minutes and we are going to sing a hymn of invitation. Today maybe God has spoken to your life; perhaps there is an inward tug of need to correct something in the course of your life. I simply want you to know we are here to help you with that. The pastors of our church will take their place at the head of each of these aisles and host and hostesses who would love to share with you, to pray with you, and to help you to know Christ. They are going to come and be available.

This morning I just want to invite you to come as you are, not go get cleared up and then come. No. Come right now as you are and be willing to present yourself to follow Christ and to take a step with God wherever he would have you to follow him. We are not going to in any way embarrass you or point you out. We have prayed for this moment and for God to work in the lives and hearts of people. It is a very sensitive moment and a very tender moment. We gladly extend this moment of invitation to you. To all of the rest of us this is a moment of prayer. It is a moment of spiritual warfare. I plead with you, don't dismiss this service or your pastor by getting up and walking away. These are moments where people and God are getting connected. Don't be a disturbance in that connection. Let's let God have his way in this moment.

Would you stand to your feet. Quietly join me in singing with a heart of prayer; Come Just as You Are. Whether you are a man, woman, boy, or girl, near or far from this platform area, just step out and come and we will just privately meet you here and spend a few moments to help you in your spiritual life.

Let's sing together. Come just as you are. Hear the spirit call. Come just as you are. Come and seek, come receive, come and live forever. Come just as you are.

Sermon presented by David McKinley  
2/7/99