Well, these are practical things, and they all have to do with the church. I'm going to take them in the order in which Paul wrote them. I have 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17. *Rejoice always. Praying without ceasing. In everything giving thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ.* I want to read that again. This is spoken to the church in Thessalonica. *Rejoice always. Praying without ceasing. In everything, giving thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ.*

Then do not quench the spirit. Did you introverts hear that? In your overriding need for internal privacy, I say to you, and I say to you again, and I say to you again and again, you are in great danger of quenching the Spirit. Now, I haven't had time to throw all these things about how important the mouth is in our relationship to Jesus Christ. I'm tempted to go on to other verses, so I guess I'll yield to that temptation.

Pray without ceasing. Gene Edwards has an Edwardian theory about that. I don't think this is what Paul meant. I think he meant to pray without ceasing. Paul, you don't even remember this. We had a very religious brother in the church who decided that he was going to pray without ceasing. I'm not going to tell you what his name is. It was impossible to be around him. He would go, "Oh Lord, I'm just so nothing, and I'm just nothing, Lord. And I want to be here with you, Lord." That's what he did all day long. He was a single brother who got married and stayed single.

Some years later, he was sitting in my bedroom. I was in bed, sick. He sat down. Now, he did this for a solid year. He was spending 16, 15, 14 hours a day praying, and he told me what I knew. He said, "I did all of that because I did not believe in your ministry, and I was trying to bring it to a halt. You should not be a Christian worker." He took a group of people out of the church, moved them to somewhere in California, and I've never heard from them again. They really bought into his "pray without ceasing" message. So this word isn't small to me.

I'm going to tell you something. Benny Hinn said to me… this is just a private conversation going on between us. He said he saw Oral Roberts every day. I think they're next-door neighbors. He asked Oral Roberts something about prayer, and Oral Roberts answered, "My life is prayer." I immediately understood that. Not that I arrived at that state in any way, but I understand that. That everything you say and do is the Lord, but that's not the Edwardian theory, even if that's what Paul meant.

I have a question for you. Have you stopped praying? Now, don't anybody answer. I pose the question. Have you stopped praying? Have you stopped praying? Now then, if you have, or you're close to it, I have a word for you. Do not stop praying. At all times, pray. Don't let praying get out of your life. Don't you like that one much better? It's got a lot less guilt in it. Rather than praying 24 hours a day, I don't think any human on this earth can do that, whatever that looks like. Either your life is a prayer, and it takes a little time getting there, folks. Or the other one is you stop praying, go back and pray. Don't quit. So, I leave that with you.

The other one is giving thanks. I'm talking to individuals, and I spoke to you about this earlier, but I want to talk to you about the church. Nothing is more insipid than a meeting where people thank

God for what the Lord did. I think it's the hallmark of Wednesday night prayer meetings, and almost all house churches. Well, let's thank God for what He did…that is just…popping it out. I want to move on from that and say to you, saints, I don't know how to ask you to do this, but we need time to thank God openly in the meetings. We're not going to make a ritual out of it. We're not going to say…this is the day that the Lord has made…we're not going to do that, but there needs to be a giving of thanks in the meeting.

Get your mouths open and share with one another. We're not just here to sing and read a few verses and go home. We are here to be a very attractive lady who attracts God's needy people. We have to be a whole, W H O L E…that's good enough. Thank you.

Now, if you can't rejoice in the worst of times, you surely can't rejoice in the best of times. So, we are given bad times to see if we can really thank God and rejoice in *Him*. Church, we are to practice being in the spirit. Now, I really wish we'd add another week on just the spirit part of this, but now, that's not true. This is the church of Jesus Christ, His body, and you're a member of it; your joy is the Lord's joy. The body of Christ needs all the rejoicing, thanksgiving, and sharing, and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Now, this is Thessalonians. He said this to the church in Thessalonica early in his second journey. Now, saints, this is sacred stuff. Not quenching the Spirit, rejoicing, and giving thanks are what the church does. What good will it do to say this if the brothers and sisters in Atlanta, Georgia, don't sit down, face it, talk about it, and ask themselves how they can make it practical in and out of the meetings? Brothers, please don't waste this conference; make Jesus Christ first in everything, in our tongue, our singing, our rejoicing, and our giving of thanks. Please do not lose these things. Work at it.

Colossians 3:16. Does anybody want to read it real fast? It's amazing how much is in Colossians and Ephesians. Do not quench the spirit. There's another verse we need to read with that. "…and do not despise prophecy." Do you know why he put that in there? I know why he put that in there. When a brother who isn't one of the workers stands up and decides to share as a worker might, there is an excellent chance that someone will look down their nose at that brother. Saints, be so thankful if you have somebody in the fellowship who can talk…and who can talk about Jesus Christ. Encourage that man.

Who's got Colossians 3:16? Real quickly. Yes, sister. **Audience:** *Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom.*

Okay, wait. That's what I've been saying. Now, listen to what follows it. Go ahead.

Audience: *With all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

We're not here just to be a choir, a people who sing, but to admonish one another with the songs we have. Now, we're not playing. We really have something in a song, a psalm, a hymn, a spiritual

song. We don't fully know what a spiritual song is. We don't fully know what a hymn is, but we do know what a psalm is. Any time Christ's own word comes out of you, we are all enriched. Brothers in Atlanta, I ask you to sit down, discuss Colossians 3:16, and figure out how to practice, and not stop practicing, what is written here.

This is for the church…but it is also for you. This is more corporate than individual, no question about it, but brother and sister, there's a message for you in this, too: we become a singing people. We are a singing people, and we are a people who, when we open our mouths, open our mouths full of Christ.

Now, I'm going to confess something here, not for me, but for you. I've watched the church start speaking a lot outside meetings, and it invariably dies. I'm going to tell you why: because of introverts. Not that they don't do it. If they've got a little registration in them, that this is coming out as artificial. Can we not share? Can we not call one another holy ones? Can we not encourage one another? Last Sunday, did you watch Josh encourage me? You remember that? That was as genuine and as pure as it can get. It's not artificial. That wasn't a declaration; it was admonition and encouragement. And by the way, it admonished and encouraged me. I heard the Lord say something to that brother and me, and it was real.

Be so rich in Christ that these encouragements and these words come to us and they are real. I do not know if you've ever been part of…try to guess what group this is. I'll not use it, and they say, "Lord Jesus." It's as artificial as a brass monkey. You know something? They never stop doing it. I think they're better off than if you don't say anything. Yeah, I know they do. At least they're making noises about Christ, but it is a ritual. I don't want it to be a ritual. I want Christ to dwell in you richly and come out of your mouth. Well, but Gene, I have Christ rich in me…and well…I don't know it…unless it gets out to somebody's ears.

We have songs for ourselves, we have songs for one another, and I've asked you to be sure and read the songs. And Atlanta, when I come see you, I'm going to talk to you about how we use songs. We…you…not we somebody else, but we, you. Read songs, and saints, you are the pastor of the church you belong to. You don't have another pastor. You don't have any other reverend but you. Either you're admonishing, and you're working at this business of Christ, or you're not. And you're going to have to do that 25 years after I'm dead, until you yourselves are ancient people.

You have to pastor the church. Now, I'm using a term I don't even believe in, but it does communicate. If you sing at home, you'll sing at a meeting. If you give thanks in the home, you'll give thanks in the meeting. If you sing a duet with Sandi Patty, and you spend some time in Scripture throughout the week, you'll have a verse or two or three to bring.

Now then, when I get back home to Jacksonville, we're going to deal with one thing. That's all. Jacksonville, you're doing really well. It's that insipid one-sentence prayer in the meeting. Let's see, “Lord, we go up in the mountain and we dododo, and Lord, you're the mountain.” What’s the matter, didn't you have anything to say on your own? Brother, do you not have a prayer? A psalm?

Of course you do. You work at it all week, then bring it to me because I had a hard week. I'm desperate. I'm waiting for you to give me the Lord, and I promise you I'll give you the Lord.

There's hardly anything here that's corporate, but what it's also individual. There's very little here that's individual, but what it can be made corporate. *Don't get drunk with wine, for that's dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.* Isn't that the other side of the coin of "Don't quench the Spirit?" To be filled with the Spirit.

What do you do then? You speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your hearts to the Lord. Always give thanks for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and give thanks to God.

This is Ephesians 5:19. This is Colossians 3:16. This is 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19. Those are the main passages we have in the New Testament, except for 1 Corinthians 14. That pretty well does it, and I think it would be wise for all of us to read that section in 1 Corinthians 14.

These are things you and I are supposed to do to make them possible. To rejoice, to sing, to give thanks, to not quench the spirit, to release the spirit, to bring a song, bring a psalm, bring a hymn, and to talk to one another with songs, and with one another with psalms, and to admonish, and to edify or build up, and help me here, Josh; what are the rest of the words here? You don't have to look this up. We talked about it. Comfort. We've got one more. Exhort. Thank you very much. I knew I was overlooking something.

Alright, and that's in every meeting. It's not just singing and a few pitiful little one-sentence prayers based on the song you just sang. Real prayers. If necessary, I warn you, Atlanta, I will ask you to go write out a prayer that means something to you and pray it in the meeting without writing it down, so that we can have something longer than "Lord, you're our mountain. Hallelujah." That's the lowest common denominator of spiritual expression. You went into the meeting spiritually unprepared, someone sang a song, and you threw a grenade. That is also insipid.

Saints, we must come together every year to renew these things. We live by revelation. Someday I'm going to be gone, and I'm expecting some brothers in this room to stand here and give you Jesus Christ till your teeth ache. And show you things about Him you never knew or dreamed of.

I don't know what the first-century Christians had, but I'm going to tell you what the 21st-century Christians have. They're going to have a songbook that is thick. 1,255 songs. We will use this to talk to one another. We need this. You know why we need this? Because God chose our spirits and our lives to be strengthened by them. These are the elements given to us to make Jesus Christ preeminent in our lives and in the church.

Now, if you don't agree with this, I ask you: what else in the New Testament don't you like? Saints, I'm saying this to every person in this room, without exception. Deal with this, will you? Deal with it. Jacksonville, go back home, take what we've already learned, and do it again; we'll just be

bigger. Make Christ preeminent in your life, and make Christ preeminent in mine. I must tell you something: if you open your mouth and do these things, you'll gain ground in life.

I talked to you this morning about my own private life, and if I shut down in those areas, I'd be way, way, way behind. These are what keep me a Christian in my private life and because I'm in the church. You sometimes make a mistake by thinking that we are here ministering and blessing you when we speak Christ. We are so strengthened. It is Christ who strengthens us. Sometimes we are speaking, and you're getting a revelation; I will tell you, so are we.

Not everything we prepare is what comes out. Sometimes there's just this beautiful explosion of light, and you suddenly realize what the Lord's been saying to all of us. So, I'm going to end this part by saying, please do not neglect the reading of Scripture, but I beg you, don't leave it there. If something is in your heart, and you read this and it means something to you, please put it in a wheelbarrow, bring it to the meeting, and tell the rest of us. I promise you, as a member of Christ's own body, that if it has helped you, it will help us.

We need you. I need you. We need one another. The body builds herself up by her sharing. I cannot help you. If you say the church is really going through a dry spell, well, I grant you it's a spell. It looks like this. It's a self-induced spell. Saints, brothers here in Atlanta, you got to come back and say, "Look, we're not doing what God tells us to." It was not Gene, but this is…what are you going to do with…what are you going to do with these passages? They were written to a Greek church, and they were written to a church in East Asia. It’s an area we know virtually nothing about.

They were also written to another Greek church. Shall we not build our spiritual life on it? Do you know of any group of people in this world who come together and admonish and exhort and comfort and edify one another in the meeting with something that is living? I do not know such people. Yet that's exactly who they were, and we call them first-century Christians.