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By Billy Ingram

Speaker 1:

Are we glad that Billy is here? Oh, am I glad Billy Ingram to preach the word.

Billy Ingram:

That's okay. Good morning. Good morning. How's everyone this morning? Who said, oh, there's, Miss Fantastic. All right. How many of you are blessed? How many of you are okay? How many of you are here? This has been a tremendous, tremendous time in my life. I have been overwhelmed by the love of this student body. It's been an inspiration to my life and I am honored to be here. I thank God for Biola. I love Biola, and I love you. And I thank the Lord for what he's doing in each of our lives as we yield ourselves unto Him. Let's pray. Our Father and our God, we are grateful unto you for the privilege that's ours. For the opportunity to come together and celebrate around your word. May you confirm to us your hand upon our lives. May you bring a sense of comfort to us and convict us and challenge us. We thank you for the privilege that's ours now in Jesus' wonderful name. Amen.

Last night, I was privileged to have my three children here in the evening session as well. And when we were driving home, my middle daughter, Marian, said to me, Daddy, I'm going to Biola. I said, Marian, she's seven years old. I said Marian, are you sure? She said, yeah, Daddy, I want to go to Biola. I think it's a wonderful thing for a child to dream, to envision, to imagine. I think it's a wonderful thing for us to dream, to envision, to imagine. What's on your mind right now? What's been on your mind lately? What has occupied your time? Has it really been God? Has it really been spiritual things? Or has it been things that if people around you could find out,

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you would be embarrassed? In the very first Psalm. Psalm number one is a very powerful section of Scripture. In fact, it talks about being happy. If you have a Bible like for you to open it to the first Psalm. Psalm number one.

The Psalmist said, Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. Now, can you do me a favor? I need five people to help me. I need five people to help me. God bless you. Come on down. And behind door number one. Okay. I got five. All right. Six. Fine. Come on. This is great. I want for you to read verse one, and then each of you take a verse down through verse number six. Can you do that, please? God bless you. No, not my notes. Okay. Here we go.

Speaker 2:

Okay. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Speaker 3:

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Speaker 4:

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit and his season; his leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever he do it shall prosper.

Speaker 5:

The ungodly are not so: but are like a chaff which the wind drives away.

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Speaker 6:

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Speaker 7:

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way the ungodly shall perish.

Billy Ingram:

Let's give them a hand. God bless you. Thank you. It's a strange thing about life and about human nature and about people. Most people don't know what they want out of life, but they know for sure they don't have it. Happiness is that elusive butterfly that somehow people can never grasp. It's that intangible something that we're being told it does exist and one day you'll get it. But the Psalmist said, Blessed, the Hebrew word OH-shehr literally means all the happiness of. All the happiness of. And so many people are struggling to be happy, struggling to be fulfilled, struggling to find satisfaction. But the reality is apart from obedience to God's word, you'll never find it. Oh I wish somebody could say Amen? The Psalmist says, Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly. It's an interesting thing. The word ungodly is the same word that was used to describe Sodom and Gomorrah.

Great wickedness has come up in the sight of God. It describes convicts. It describes criminals. It describes those people whose character is like the chaff of the wheat. There's nothing to them. And yet he advises us, we will be blessed if we avoid their ungodly, unspiritual counsel. By the way, you can get ungodly counsel from supposedly godly people. I think the real tragedy of our

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world today is that there are a lot of people who are behind pulpits who are giving advice to people that's ungodly. The message is today It's okay, everybody's doing it. It's okay. Live it up. Hey, you go around in life once, get all the gusto you can get good buddy. I was sitting up in the bleachers yesterday in one of the sessions and I saw a young lady who had a T-shirt on, and it was fantastic. And I remember one section of it was about tasting the brew of God's living word. Coming to a point where you recognize it doesn't get any better than this, and the choice is yours. Do you want the truth or just a bunch of bull?

And that's all the world has to offer is a bunch of bull. And you have been sold a bunch of bull if you think you can find fulfillment and happiness and satisfaction any other place other than in Jesus Christ. That's the advantage of having godly friends and godly parents and godly grandparents and godly people around you. They'll keep you in the right path that will lead to God's way of happiness. I remember when I was here at Biola 15 years ago, I went to the Torrey Memorial Bible conferences as well. And I remember some students were very interested in what was being said. Other students were humoring the speakers by listening. Then others ditched, all of them. They didn't have time for God's Word. Let me tell you a secret. Apart from God's Word, you can't grow. Hello? Apart from God's Word, you cannot grow. In fact, the apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 2:2, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow by it. It was our Lord in fact, in Matthew 4:4 who said, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

In fact, Job in Job 23:12 said, Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. I have esteemed the words of his mouth, more than my necessary food. You can't grow apart from

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God's Word. And if you're not growing, you won't glow. And if you don't glow, you won't go. You cannot afford to allow people to convince you that to fool around with someone you're not married to is okay. And it's especially dangerous for Christians who are engaged. You figure, hey, we're getting married anyway. But is it God's way? Is it God's way? That's the issue. That's the question. See, you can never choose the right way and it go wrong. And you can never choose the wrong way and it go right. And you'll never get God's way and the right way from the wrong way by ungodly counsels is what he's saying. They have literally nothing to offer you. Why is it that when people are having marital problems, they go to a marriage counselor who's on his fourth marriage? Or a person instead of going to someone who's stabilized in the church, they go to people whose lives are shipwrecked outside of the church.

Now tell me what you think I ought to do about my husband or about my wife or about the situation. A person like that is not looking for the voice of God. They're looking for someone to tell them that it's okay to do wrong. And friend of mine, believe me, if you have people like that in your life, you're headed for a nosedive. Blessed all the happiness of such a man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners. The biggest obstacle today of the church reaching the world is not the message. The biggest obstacle are people who claim to love God and know God and walk with God, but act as though they don't. The New Testament calls them hypocrites. They're impostors, they're ventriloquists. They're people who are projecting a certain image. But their character depicts that there's nothing of substance to them at all. I remember in 1988, I was invited to do a pastor's conference in Benin City, Nigeria, with some folk who were from Tennessee, Nashville. And they were a part of the music industry. I had never seen them before.

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In fact, I met them in Amsterdam, and we had a brief meeting as to what our plan of strategy was. They wanted me to preach every day and then preach in the night, and they'd have big music concerts and workshops during the day. So my first message was and I always say what's on my mind, no matter where I am, no matter who's listening. I believe that God wants me to speak the truth. And so in this first session, I talked about what love is and what love is not. Then I went on to talk about the bold, brazen blatant hypocrisy that happens in our churches in America. And I talked about how easy it is for missionaries to go all over the world and minister to Africans, but they will not come into the inner cities and minister to African Americans.

And so after the session, they had a special meeting. They wanted to meet with this rubble rouser who's causing trouble. Me. And they said that your message is not relevant for here.

I said, Wait a minute. You're telling me that talking about the love of God, talking about the truth, talking about what is right is. What did I say that was false doctrine? What did I say that was heretical? To make a long story short, first time in my life, first time in my life, I was banned from preaching the gospel, not by Muslims, not by Jews, not by the cultists, but by Christians. That's a real sad commentary on the condition of our lives today.

Paul described them as having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. I'm convinced that when the power of God is really actively working in our lives, we do everything we can to get out of God's way and to get out of the ways of the people that God is seeking to bring into the Kingdom of God and he's bringing into his Kingdom people out of every kindred, every tongue and every nation. But he says, if you're listening to bad counsel and bad advice, you will find yourself being a stumbling block to people who are entering the Kingdom of God.

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So many tragic things that we listen to that are not true. I feel fortunate to have had my children to travel with me twice to Africa this past summer, and the summer before. And our three kids go into a French school. And in one of their classes, Billy has some of his friends who are from other parts of the world. One of his friends is Russian, one is Oriental, and one of them is from Kenya. God bless you, Jambo. So, his professor in the school told him and these students that you need to know about Africa and Africans. They are retarded people, and they wear G strings. And on and on he went talking down Africans. My son and his friends spoke up and said, no way. I've been there. And he proceeded to tell them how intelligent and in touch and creative and spiritual these people are. And the professor sat down, molded. You know why there's I think such a rift in the body of Christ today? It's because people just don't know. They're ignorant. They just don't know. I think one of the greatest things that happened in our church was when David Hawking spoke at our couple's conference.

It was good for them to be exposed to him. And it was good for his church to be exposed to me. See if we don't mix it up and interact, we'll never sharpen each other. We'll never polish each other. And how will we ever show to the world that we're fulfilling the mandate of Christ having love one to another if we're not coming together, striving towards that. But if we're constantly believing the myths of the media and the lies that are being told about one group as opposed to another group, then how will we ever come together and reach the world? What has happened today is Christianity has become and been reduced to a subculture of people talking to themselves. The theologians talking to themselves as scholars talking to themselves. And Christians in their own segment of society, their own ethnicity, talking to themselves while the rest of the world goes to hell. I wish somebody could say, Amen. Bad counsel leads to an

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unhappy life and it leads to a life that's a stumbling block. Then thirdly, he says, Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, the scornful are those who are.

They weighed in rumors and gossip. And I know that we don't have any gossipers here at Biola, but perhaps you can spread the word at Azusa or Point Loma or whatever about what I'm talking about today. But gossip. Gossip is one of those things when you have part of the truth. And then when you finally get to it, it's an exaggerated lie about someone that you've not gone to confirm regarding and you refuse to substantiate it. It's interesting. People very rarely come to me with gossip. You know why? It's like the fellow said, hey, my mind is made up. Don't confuse me with the facts. People don't really want to know what's the real issue. What's the core of the problem? But notice the transition in verse two, he says, but his delight is in the law of the Lord. Can I ask you a personal question? Hello? May I ask you a personal question? Yes. God bless you. I was going to ask you anyway. What gives you the greatest thrill in life? Talk to me.

It's okay. What gives you the greatest thrill in life? Yes, ma'am. Your happiness is to spend time with the Lord. Wonderful. God bless you. Seeing your kids grow up. Wonderful. Yes. Who's that? Praising the Lord. Yes, sir. Preaching God's word. You should have come and helped me read these scriptures. God bless you. Excuse me. Okay. Next time. Yes. Seeing your brother come to Christ. God bless you. Someone else. Yes. Way at the top. Feeling what? Feeling proud of yourself when you stand firm for God's Word. Wonderful. We haven't heard from this side over here. Yes. Your friendship with your parents. Excellent. God bless you. Yes, sir. Being able to lead someone to Christ. Wonderful. Yes. I'm sorry. Repenting and coming back to God's Word. You know, that's an interesting concept because there's nothing in the Christian life that's

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automatic. Have you noticed that? I mean, we don't automatically pray because we're Christians. We don't automatically read God's Word because we love the Lord. Some things require discipline. It requires that even when we don't feel like it, we do it anyway.

But it becomes our source of delight. It becomes our source of pleasure. It becomes our source of satisfaction. I'll tell you a secret between me and you. One of the reasons why more Christians don't articulate their faith is because they have no faith. Out of the abundance of the heart, the scripture says the mouth speaketh. And if God's Word has not been tucked away inside of you, don't expect that by osmosis some way just out of somewhere hocus pokus is going to come out. It must be programmed into you. And this is what he's talking about here. His delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he meditate day and night. In other words, he's talking about your imagination. Meditation involves your mind. It involves your imagination. It involves your thinking process. It involves your daydreaming. We are told that 85% of the learning process happens by visual aid. By what we see. 85%. And it strongly suggests to us that if we're not seeing God's Word in our imagination in our mind, there is no way for that which we cannot see.

That which we're not pondering and reflecting upon and meditating on. There's no way for it to transform us. Let me ask you another personal question. What do you treasure most in life? Is it being on the Dean's list, making the varsity basketball team? Getting out of Biola with a 4.0? Finding a husband or a life's partner? Or do you treasure most God's Word? Friend of mine that's where the action is. That's where the power is. The Psalmist in Psalm 119:89 said forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven. You want a life that's stable. You want a life that's steadfast. You want a life that's sure. You'll find it only in God's Word as you meditate on it.

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God's Word will only become yours, and it will only be real when you meditate in it. I'm convinced that one of the reasons why so many Christians are depressed is because they're not spending time thinking about God's Word. They know more about we who all the young and the restless in the days of our lives as the world turns.

They know more about the soaps which are a source of death and despondency and despair and depression than they do about the delights that come from God's Word. David said, Oh, how I love thy law. It is my meditation all the day. What about you? Do you have time in your busy schedule to think about God in between assignments in the Bible? Do you have time to deliberately say, Lord, I'm going to think about your Word. This may be difficult for some of you to believe, but all of my life I have been afraid of public speaking. Literally all of my life I've been afraid of public speaking. In fact, there was a time in my life when you could never get me in public to say anything, not even Hi or Hello. I remember when I was first converted, god brought a man into my life whom I love dearly. His name is Ernie Fisk, and he challenged me to memorize God's Word and to meditate upon it day and night. And as I began to do that, he began to focus in on areas of my life where and I was weak and defeated and deficient.

And I told him the fear I had of being in the public and speaking and he challenged me to begin to focus in on scriptures that gave promise of victory in those areas. Like Solomon said, the fear of man brings a snare, but whoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe. Every night for three months before I went to bed, I'd think about that passage of Scripture and I would chew it over and mold it over in my mind. I am safe in God. God will keep me safe. The fear of man is a snare, but I am safe in God. In the morning, I'd do the same thing for three months, and I think

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about passages where it says God is working in me both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Over and over again for months until that Word became mine and released me of my fear so that I could do what God called me to do with boldness. I had a problem with my self-image.

I thought that there was something wrong with me. It took me a long time to realize that God made me tall, dark, and handsome. But if you've never been in the boat where you have a low self-esteem, you have a sense that you're not worthy, that you're not worth anything, that you don't count, that you don't matter, then you don't know what I'm talking about. But if you've been there, then you understand what it's like to have low self-esteem, to feel as though there's something wrong with you because of you. I begin to meditate on scripture that talked about who I was in Christ, a new creation. The old things are passed away and behold all things have become new. You know what happened in my life? God began to free me of the shackles that had kept me in the bondage. And a strong confidence began to emerge. A confidence that said, I am my beloved, and he is mine. A confidence that recognizes that it's not by my might nor by my power, but by the power of the Spirit of God. A confidence that said, not that I'm sufficient of myself to think anything as of myself but my sufficiency is of God.

When I understood that God loved me as I was and accepted me as I was, it all clicked when I began to chew on the scripture, when I began to eat God's Word and ingested and digested and assimilated and processed it so that it became a way of life. Listen, Biola. The one danger that yet lurks on your horizon is the day you leave this school, a graduate, you leave without an awareness that now it's time to get busy. This is just preparation for life. Once you leave, you've got to live, you've got to deal with a real world where there's all kinds of stimulation for lustful

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thoughts. Fellas, how's your imagination? How's your thought life? If we could put a video monitor in your mind and then bring that screen down and show what you've been thinking the last week, would you allow for us to get into your intimate thoughts? Oh, no, not my. Stop, stop. Please stop. It's one thing about thoughts. They have power. And Jesus said, whosoever looketh unto a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

And the issue is not looking at women. I had a major problem with that when I first got saved. Major problem. Because growing up in high school and part of college in the world, you get exposed to a lot of stuff that you have to unlearn and get rid of once you come to Christ if you're going to live right. So when I first got saved, I didn't even want to look at a woman. I'd see a woman coming down the street. I would literally turn my head. The problem is I'm looking this way, and there's another one, I had to turn my head and walking down the street like this, not wanting to look at a woman. Stevie Wonder's younger brother with no shades. And then one day it dawned on me that I was in a web that God did not create for me, for if there were anything wrong with me looking at the opposite sex, then why did God give me eyes and why did he make them tangible and not invisible? Now, you may laugh, but it's a real issue with a lot of people.

By the way, men aren't the only ones who have that problem. Men aren't the only ones that have that problem. Ladies, they lay in their beds at night and they plot and they scheme. But what I discovered was that God created us as we are and that there was nothing wrong with admiring the opposite sex. We've been so. That I got Amen up there. God bless you. He said, Yeah, I'm an admirer. Go for it. Preach it, Pastor. There's nothing wrong with admiring the opposite sex. And I think the day must come when men realize and accept the fact that women are not objects to be

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used. I knew I'd get some Amens from the ladies on that one. But to be admired, to be appreciated, to be respected, and yet you're the only one that has control of your thoughts. You know what happens. You think about things that you shouldn't be thinking about for a long time. And the next thing you know, like, David, you're going for it. You're sending for Bathsheba.

You're making arrangements to get together, to score. That's where a lot of people live, even though we don't always like to talk about it. Even though it's not the most comfortable discussion, it is reality. There are some probably under the sound of my voice now who have gotten caught in that web of lustful thinking. And now they're hotly pursuing what deep down inside they know is wrong. But the enemy has convinced them of ways to justify and manipulate and con God into making it right. Hey, I'm only human. I have needs too. I'm not getting any younger. You believe the lies straight out of hell. The real transformation comes when we recognize that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. They're not in the flesh, but they're mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations said the apostle Paul and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. We cannot allow our minds to drift in casual thinking because you like all of the rest of us if you do, you find yourself drifting in the wrong direction.

So he says His delights on the law of the Lord and his law, that he meditates day and night. And he shall be. Why that's important? Because the preoccupation of the average Christian today is what does God want me to do? I'll tell you what God wants you to do. God wants you to be something. God's more interested in your being than in your doing. God's will for your life is more related to your character than your career. Your personal development than your

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performance. The illustration is the tree that's planted by the rivers of water. The doing will take care of itself. The leaves will sprout and the fruit will be born when one has deep roots. I challenge you. I challenge you to take God's Word seriously. God willing I'll be leaving for Nigeria to a pastor's conference this Sunday. And if you could see the hunger of these people who don't have the type of educational institutions like Biola, don't have the resource of professors that you have here at Biola and Talbot, but the hunger for God's Word. The hunger and the keen interests and the alertness and the attentiveness and the desire to know God.

I think what has happened in America is that we have too much. We have too many good Bible teachers and we have too many Christian programs and too many of most everything. I think probably if God removes some of our resources, we'd be forced to take God's Word seriously. They're parts of the world when they only have a page of the Bible and they treasure that one page because they know that's all they'll ever get. This is my Word from God. Yet we have Bibles in every conceivable translation. Many of us have four and five Bibles and we lose them and misplace them. And hey, it's only God's Word. And my, how our attitude should change about the Scriptures because, as it says, the entrance of Thy word gives light. It gives understanding to the simple. That is, God's Word will make a person who has no discernment, the simple is from a Hebrew word that describes a revolving door. A simple person is a person whose mind nothing ever sticks. God's Word will make you wise. Give you discernment, give you a perspective and a perception about life that you can gather and glean from nowhere else but from God himself.

So that, like Paul said, we have the mind of Christ. Tell you what I'll do. I'm going to ask you one more question and then I'm going to make one more statement. What are you going to do

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with what you're hearing at this conference this week? I'll give you the rest of your life to answer it. Let's pray. Our Father and our God, we're thankful to you for this day. We're thankful for the privilege that is ours to be able to share around your word. Thank you for these wonderful students. Thank you for the love that is so evident here. I thank you for convicting us today for challenging, for comforting, for stimulating our thoughts, for steering us back in the right direction. I ask Father that you would give back to some the first love they had for God's Word. Did you make it possible, Father, for them to fall in love with you all over again? We love you. O Lord, we appreciate you. We affirm again that God's Word is true. Give us a hunger for it and an appreciation for the truth. We thank you in Jesus wonderful name. Amen. God bless you.