

Steps Out of a Mess

Sermon Title: **The First Step of a Mess**

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Welcome to Brothers of the Word, because, Brother, you need the Word.

Amen, amen. I just want you to stay with me today for just a few minutes. God has a message for you, and the message today actually came from a prayer request that came in. I actually wrote a MountainWings' issue concerning this prayer request. Basically, the person wrote in, and they said, "Please pray for me." They went down this list of things, and they summed it up with these words. They said, "Everything in my life is a mess. So please tell me, what do I do when everything is a mess?"

This is the first of a three-part series that's going to deal with messes. Some of you that are hearing my words right now, your life may be going fine and you have no problems whatsoever; but there are others of you, and right now you're in the midst of a mess. I'm going to tell you how to go about straightening it out and getting your life and getting out of the midst of a mess. The title of today's message is simply entitled "The First Step of a Mess."

People, there are times in our lives when all of us will go through periods, and there is a pattern of life that it just seems to be that when stuff happens, it's very rare there is one thing at a time. When stuff really goes wrong, it often cascades. Stuff will happen, and one thing after another will happen. Sometimes we become frustrated, and we simply will look up to God and said, "Lord, everything has gone wrong!"

Whenever you have reached that situation of where you feel like your life is a mess, the first step is to realize that everything is not in a mess. Too often in life, we make blanket statements, and sometimes we do that in relationships. Sometimes we say, "You always do that!" No, they don't. But we'll make blanket statements. Even when we say and even when we feel that everything in our life is a mess, the first step of a mess, the first thing you need to do is to realize that everything in your life is not a mess; there are some things that are right. I have found in life that the real key to true joy and to true happiness is not what you've got, because there are too many people that have just so much and they are still miserable. It's not what you have. But the real key in life is what you appreciate, not what you have. I've found and I've learned and one of the reasons why I'm so happy is because I appreciate all the stuff I've got. I've got some things that are wrong, but I appreciate what I have. The first step of a mess is, realize everything is not a mess.

"But you don't understand, Pastor. My bills are overdue. I'm out of money. It's gotten extreme, I'm facing eviction. My whole life is in a mess." "Still breathing, aren't you?" "Well, yeah; but" "You don't have a terminal illness, do you?" "Well, no; but...." "Your stomach is full, isn't it?" "Well, yeah; but...."

So, you see, sometimes we need to just start and look at what we have. That's why when you even look at what Paul said and in 1 Timothy 6:6, we heard the verse; the NIV Version simply says this: "But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it." Do all of you realize that? You can send it ahead, but you just can't take it with you. You brought nothing in, and you are going to take nothing out. And he says, "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." Then he goes on to say, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and are trapped, and to enter into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction, for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." Here, he simply says this. He said if you have food and clothing, he said we will be content with that.

Most people that feel that their lives are just in a total mess, they've got food and clothing. As a matter of fact, as a general rule, they have too much food. Very rarely do folks just, you know, about 92 pounds and skin and bones and their clothes are about to fall off. That's usually not the case. We have too much food. We are full to the limit. I have not seen anyone naked; just haven't seen it. I did see one man running down the expressway naked, but I don't think it was because he had no clothes. So I have not seen anyone naked for the lack of clothing, because they just didn't have any clothes. Nor have I seen anyone ...as a matter of fact, yeah, I can't think of anyone in this country that I have seen actually starving. I just haven't seen it. You can go in the poorest neighborhoods in America, park your car and watch folks come out the door. Go in the poorest neighborhoods anywhere in this country, park your car and watch people come out the door. Nobody is coming out of there, you know, just that big around. It's just not happening. So we have ample food and clothing.

There are so many other things that we have when we think our lives are in a mess. So if we just start focusing, whenever your life is in a mess, just stop and say, "Wait a minute. It's not all in a mess. I've got all of this." And you will be surprised that when you really start focusing on what you do have, even if you don't have some things, when you really start focusing on what you do have, you will find that you have a lot more than what you thought.

It's the same thing that happens at most times in marriage counseling when couples come in. Normally, you always ask the people, "Write down all the good qualities, all the good things about this person, and then write down all the bad." What you will find in the vast majority of cases, the good list vastly outnumbers the short list, and the short wrong lists are oftentimes trivial things. They are things that really they are irksome; you know, "He just doesn't tell me he loves me like he used to. He works too much; he's never home." All those things will oftentimes be true. "She doesn't even compliment me on a lot of my stuff. When I get home, she nags me." Most of the stuff there, they are minor things that if couples just sat back

and looked at all the good qualities, they would find that it is not nearly as bad as they think. But we focus on the negative.

The first step of a mess, stop and realize that all your life is not a mess. See, you don't realize that until you visit people in the hospital and you see people hooked up to tubes that only have a week to live. You don't realize that until you go visit somebody, and their body is racked with cancer and they've got two months to make it. All your problems then become very small.

It's what happens when we have the prayer vigil every year. We will have 5,000 prayer requests, and we divide them among people. Every person that leaves has the same testimony. They say, "Shoot, I don't have any problems. After reading these prayer requests and seeing what folks are going through, I've been just whining and complaining about myself, I didn't realize I don't have any problems. You don't understand, and one of the reasons why even praying over all the prayer requests has helped me is, I get to peer into the agonies of so many people, I see I just don't have any problems at all."

The first step of a mess is to realize that everything is not in a mess. Even if your soul is headed to Hell, it still isn't in a mess, because you are still breathing; it means you have an opportunity to get it straightened out. Even if right now you are headed straight to bust Hell wide open, you at least have an opportunity to straighten it out, and as long as you have the opportunity, all hope is not lost.

Everything in your life is not a mess. You know, God even said that about food and clothing even in the Old Testament. We think that's just a New Testament thing. Even in Deuteronomy 10:17, He says this: "For the Lord your God is god of gods and lord of lords; the Great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing." He said God loves you so much that He gives you food. Even those that were alienated, He said He gives them food.

So if you have food and clothing, you've got the love of God. We don't understand what a great blessing that is until we visit other places where they are starving. It is one thing for us to go on a fast every year, and we know how we feel when we can't eat because of the fasting; but if you go on a fast and you can't eat because you just don't have any food, that's a whole different level of frustration. You don't have any today, tomorrow or next week, and you don't know when you're going to get any. Just food and clothing is a great blessing. But we have so much more than that.

The second thing you need to do is, you need to realize actually what you have. Let me explain that. We know the story of Moses, and over in Exodus, the 4th chapter beginning at that 1st verse, it says, "And Moses answered and said, 'But, behold,

they will not believe me nor harken unto my voice; For they will say the Lord has not appeared unto thee.” And Moses was trying to tell God, “Look, these folks are not going to listen to me.” “And the Lord said unto him, ‘What is that in thine hand?’ And he said, ‘A rod.’ And He said, ‘Cast it on the ground.’ And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent. And Moses fled before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail.’ And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.”

God asked Moses, “What’s that in your hand?” Whenever your life is in a mess, the first thing is to realize that everything is not in a mess; but the second thing is, look around and see what you’ve got that you can work with. The Lord asked Moses, “What’s that in your hand?” You see, sometimes we’re in a mess, and we have not looked at what is in our hand. Then when Moses answered, he saw what it was and he said, “A rod,” God says, “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground. It changed and became a serpent, scared Moses to death; he started running. This is the mighty Moses. This is the voice of God. He threw it on the ground, it changed, and Moses took off. It said he fled. Now, this is not to make fun of Moses because, first of all, I don’t imagine it was a small snake. Most of you are scared of small snakes. But it was probably a big rod, and as a result, it became a big snake. There are not too many of us that would have just hung around in the presence of a big snake, so don’t laugh at Moses. Turn to your neighbor and say, “Don’t laugh at Moses,” because there are not too many of us that would have hung around in the presence of a big snake, either.

So when the snake reared its head, Moses took off, and God told Moses, “Look, go back and grab the snake by the tail,” which is an improper way to grab a snake. You grab a snake behind the head, because if you grab him by the tail, he can whip around and bite you. God told Moses, “Look, go back; grab the snake by the tail.” When he grabbed the snake by the tail, it turned back into a rod.

Now, this is the point. As Moses stood there after that experience, he had a rod before the experience, and what did he have after the experience? He had the same rod. The only difference was, God had shown him the potential of what he had in his hand and taught him not to be afraid of his potential. He had the same rod; but now, he didn’t look at that rod the same. He had more respect for that rod. This was a special rod. But it was the same rod. The only difference was, the rod now had the touch of God, and God showed Moses the potential of what he already had.

God has placed within every one of us the potential to fulfill whatever destiny God has placed in your heart. You already have it in your hand! And oftentimes, we have even thrown it out. And we cast the seed out, and we saw it come up; but it scared us, and we never handled the thing right; we fled from it.

People, don't you know whenever you've got to go in and really handle a mess, sometimes that thing will scare you? But you have to ask yourself, "What do I have?" You see, God didn't tell Moses; He asked him. Turn to the person sitting next to you and ask him, "What have you got?" That's basically what God asked Moses. "What have you got?" When we start, the first step of a mess is to ask yourself, "What do I have?" You see, normally what we do in the first step of the mess, we focus on what we don't have. "Lord, I don't have this. Lord, I don't have..." "Well, what do you have?"

See, that's what Moses was telling God. "Lord, I can't speak well. I am not eloquent when I talk." God said, "Well, what do you have?" "I got a rod." "Well, throw it on the ground." And when he threw what he did have, God never changed Moses' speech; never made him eloquent. He still stood before folks where he was afraid he couldn't half talk. "Well, K-King, I want to tell you, I -- I -- I have a rod." He still never straightened out his speech.

Some of your weaknesses, God is still not going to straighten out. If you were born a certain way, you are going to die that way. Some stuff, He still not going to straighten out. He didn't focus on what Moses did not have; He focused on what Moses did have. You can never use what you don't have, do you realize that? You can't use what you don't have. The only thing you can use is what you've got. There are two things you can't use: you can't use what you don't have, and you can't use what the other man has; and that's often what we focus on. "Lord, you know I don't have this. You know what they've got." You can't use either one of those. You don't have to be thinking about other people's money; but you have to have some sense to even figure out how to use other people's money. See, that's an investment skill. But cannot use what you don't have, and you cannot use what belongs to the other man ... not legally, and not with a blessing.

So these are some points: just when you're in the midst of a mess, realize everything is not a mess, and you have to realize what do you have in your hand. You will be surprised when you learn how to master what God has given you. God has given every man and every woman a measure of something. Now, it may not be as good as the other person's; but that does not matter. And you say, "I've seen too much in business. I deal with people too much." Virtually everything that I have seen, it is a result of the under-utilization of what they have. It is not a result that they didn't have it; it is a result that they didn't go out and fully utilize what they had or they ran from the snake. God has given some of you sitting out there right now some awesome talent, some awesome ability, some awesome skill; but you've thrown the thing down. You've seen it come up, and you know you have it. But you wonder, "Well, Lord, why is stuff still in this mess?" You know you're smart. But it's just, "Lord, why is everything I'm touching just messing up? What's wrong?"

There are some keys to understand what to do when stuff is in a mess, and I want you to understand some of these keys. I'm going to give some keys on how to get out of the mess in the next two messages. I want you to understand sort of the nature of a mess in this first mess. See, even a message has a "mess" in it, do you know that? You see, a message is mess-age. In every message, there's a mess that usually the message comes out of. So out of your mess also is your message. When you're in a mess, God is trying to send you a message. But we often don't hear the message. We see the mess, but we don't hear the message.

If you are in a mess, God is trying to tell you something, because it's not supposed to be; so you have to learn, and that's the third point of this: all messes have a cause. All messes have a cause. The Bible puts it like this, as it says in Proverbs 26:2, "As the bird by wandering and the swallow by flying, so the curse causes shall not come." The Bible says no curse comes without a cause. When you understand the curses and the blessings of God, there are certain things that were blessings and certain things that are curses, and most of the messes are curses. All messes have a cause.

In order to fix something, you need to understand first what's causing it or else you may fix the wrong thing. If you have a headache and you take aspirin, that's not fixing the headache; it's covering the pain. So unless you fix what's causing the headache, all you do is cover up the pain. And eventually, the cover-up becomes damaging to your system, and you get to a point where something else breaks because you never understood and fixed the cause. All messes have a cause. The more I deal with people in life and the more I understand that and even when I look at my life, everything that goes wrong, when I honestly look at it, I can see the cause of it. And everyone that I deal with, now, from a distance, I say to myself, "I can't understand why." But when I get involved in it and when I started getting the facts and seeing the history and all -- I'm not talking about on the spiritual plane; I see the stuff in the natural -- every mess has a cause, and you have to realize it.

So if your world is in a mess, you need honestly to be able to stop and examine yourself and look at yourself in the mirror and need to say, "Look, honestly, why am I in this mess?" You have to be able honestly to accept the answer, because sometimes our egos just don't want to hear anything negative about it. You know, we just get so offended so easily. Look, if you are in a mess, something has gone wrong. That's just the point-blank truth about it. I like to preach all those, you know, nice, good things; but if you're in a mess -- and you're saying, "The Lord is going to come" -- but, look, if you are in a mess, you have done something wrong, 99 out of 100. Now, there are some Job situations, you know, where the Lord said, "I see my servant Job down there. He has done nothing wrong; he is righteous. I'm just going to send this to him" -- there are some Job situations; but I have never seen one. There are some, but I have not seen one. Every mess that I know, when I got in, there was a reason for that mess in the natural.

So you need to be able to look yourself in the mirror honestly or find someone that you trust who is not in a mess -- and I emphasize that, "who is not in a mess." All of you say, "Who is not in a mess." You see, too often, what happens is, we are in a mess; and we go to somebody else and they're in the same mess, and we ask them, "Could you help me, give me some advice on how to get out of this?" They can't get you out of your mess if they are not out of their mess. So you have to go to someone who is not in a mess themselves and tell them, "Look, I'm not going to get offended" -- and you have to mean that, because sometimes we cannot see ourselves -- tell them, "Look, I am not going to get offended. You know me. You know my situation. Tell me what I'm doing wrong." They've seen it, I guarantee you that. They know; but they may not tell you, because they say, "I'm not going to say anything, because I know how she is." You know I'm telling the truth! They are scared to tell you, because they know how you are. But that's a part of why you are in the mess.

So, go to them and honestly ask them, "Look, tell me, what am I doing wrong?" And then you have to have the openness of spirit to be able to accept the answer and to act upon it. But the first thing you've got to do is find the cause. And oftentimes we can't see the cause when we are in the middle of the mess; but every mess has a cause, and we take aspirin without ever fixing the cause. And if you never fix the cause, it will just pop up somewhere else, because there's just so much Excedrin can do, and too much of that stuff is painkiller. Sometimes even our sermons are painkillers. I am not a pain-killing man. I like to fix the cause in the roof, so you don't have to pain to start with. I don't have any aspirin. I don't want headaches beating on my head, so if I do have one, I want to know, "Why do I have a headache?" And whenever I find out why I've got it, then I figure out what to do to fix it.

The first step of a mess, understand that everything is not in a mess. Understand what you've got And then you need to know that every mess has a cause, and you need to find the cause of your mess because, until you find the cause, you just keep repeating it and you will never fix it. We will be talking over the next two weeks about actual methods that if you've got a mess in your life, what do you do? Those are just realizations today, but that's the first step. Whenever I have a business or a mechanical or an engineering problem, the first thing I have to find is the cause of the thing before I can ever fix it. I've got to know what's causing it, because if I don't know what's causing it, it keeps reoccurring; those reoccurrences are a mess, and most messes are repetitious patterns.

Have you got headaches? That isn't your first headache. You've been having headaches, but you never fixed the cause. Until you do, you'll never stop the pain. So in the next two messages, we will be dealing with some things, because God wants your life straight, people. He does not want it in a mess. God wants you prosperous in all of the things of Him. He doesn't want your money in a mess; He doesn't want your relationship in a mess; He doesn't want your body in a mess; He

doesn't want your spirit in a mess. God doesn't want anything in your world in a mess. He doesn't want it. He is a parent! And I don't want any of children in a mess. He doesn't want it. God doesn't want it. God does not want me to have a bit of pain. But sometimes I know He has to send me through some pain to keep me from some more pain.

Brother Gerald Render had an awesome message on yesterday dealing with just your money, and if you weren't here, I really encourage you to get the tape from yesterday, to listen to it and begin to put it in practice. Now, I told you one of the reasons why I haven't attended it is because I didn't have a money shortage; that's partly true. The other truth is, God told me to let James handle all my money. He said, "Let him handle all your money," and there's a reason for it. You know why? Because I had gotten my money in a mess. Now, what I mean by that is, all my investing, I have too much of a high-risk nature in me. I like to just make a killing, you know what I mean? That's just the truth! So I had lost all this money in the stock market. I just couldn't buy a little bit of something. You know, I just wanted to make a million dollars, just a killing.

God knew my nature, and He spoke to me one day. He said, "Boy, you can't handle it." He said, "Let James handle all your money." Now, the problem is this. I heard Him just as clear, told James about it; but I still handled my own stuff. And I lost a bunch of money. After that, I looked at my statement, I said, "I hear you, Lord." I turned over all my stuff -- the passwords to the accounts, everything. I told him, I said, "I don't even want to see it," turned over all my stuff. And just a few days ago, James told me, "The money that I've been handling of yours, last year I made 28% on it." If I had been handling it? I had to go through pain -- and I heard God's Word, but I had to go through pain. So I listened.

And all of us are like that. That's the whole story with the children of Israel. All of us are like that. We hear the Word, but sometimes God has to send us through this mess, because we don't listen and we don't do what He said we should do. Some of these things, you don't have to come up to me and ask me, "Lord, what does the word say about me shacking up?" You don't have to ask me that!

All messes have a cause. So if you are outside of His Word, you don't have to ask me about it. It is going to produce a mess. All messes have a cause. And when you don't do what this word says or whatever the Word of God speaks directly, when I lost all that money, I couldn't go back fussing at God. I couldn't say, "Well, Lord, you know I tithe, because I know that's what You told me." "You know, I told you what to do. Yeah, you tithe; but you didn't listen to what I told you to do; so, yeah, you lost a pile of money."

Sometimes when you hear from God, the thing isn't easy. I have a situation in my business even now. There's a person I've been wanting to fire for a while. He just

keeps messing up and messing up and messing up. And God spoke to me and said, "Don't fire them." I said, "But they're messing up! They're messing up, they're messing up, they're messing up. Now, I'm a nice man; but I have a business to run. They're just messing up, they're messing up!" He said, "Don't fire them." I said "But these are" -- He said, "Don't fire them." And I'm sitting there, I said, "Now, Lord, they messed up again." I said, "Lord, this just is ridiculous." I said, "By all law of business, I should have already fired them." And God asked me, He said, "What was your first quarter like?" I said, "Well, we broke records." He said, "What was your second quarter like?" I said, "Well, the second quarter did better than the first quarter." He said, "What was the third quarter like?" I said, "Well, the third quarter did been than the second." He said, "What was the fourth quarter like?" I said, "Well, the fourth quarter broke all accounts." He said, "Every quarter broke records. So I have prospered your business to a record-breaking level. So if I tell you don't fire somebody..."

So some things, we don't understand. I don't know the story of what all is going on in their lives. See, I know that they are going through some stuff right now. They are going through a whole lot of stuff with their family in their home. I know they are going through it; but they were messing up my business. Sometimes, you don't know how God has intervened on your behalf. You don't even know it!. The person don't even know that God has told me, "Don't fire them." They don't even know it! All they can see is the mess that they are in at home, and they have no idea that God has stepped in and is protecting them.

Now, see, sometimes, you are in a mess, all you see is the mess you've got. You don't even see the hand of God that shields you. And if you knew that He protected your body and protected your sanity and protected all of the stuff that you do have, and all you can fuss about and complain about is some of the things that's going wrong, if you knew how God -- see, God, He is faithful with His promises, and He is merciful with his curses. See, even though the curse does not cause this problem, it's very rare that curse comes on your first violation ... very rare. God has given you grace after grace after grace after grace after grace after grace. You don't pop up pregnant on the first time, very rare. He'll give you time after time after time after time after time His mercy. If you just knew what God was doing on your behalf, you have seen His hand is over your life. It's not all in a mess.

But God wants you in the Promised Land. It's where He has always been trying to take His children: to the Promised Land. And He wants you prepared when you get to the Promised Land for you to be able to stay there without getting a big head. That's why some of you can't go right now, because you'd get the big head. You can't handle it. You cannot handle the Promised Land right now. Some of you right now, if you just had three house notes in the bank, you'd be so puffed up, nobody wouldn't even know you ...