

The Person That God Uses in Revival

by Michael Catt

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a spirit of discernment, a determined will, and a devoted heart in order to be used by God in revival.

Duration: 1:19:58

Scripture: Exodus 20:4, Numbers 21:9, Lamentations 3:22-23, Matthew 18:20

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of adapting methods to effectively reach people with the message of God. He highlights how movies, television, and music have a significant influence on people's lives, often more than the church. The speaker shares a personal example of a movie they made that resulted in 36 people getting saved. They emphasize the need to be obedient to God's leading and not cling to traditional methods, but instead, find where the Holy Spirit is working and join Him in that work.

Transcript

We're also going to look at 2 Chronicles 29. In fact, we'll look at 2 Chronicles 29 first, and then we'll look at 2 Kings 18. I want us to begin tonight talking about what has to happen before we can see God work in revival.

And it may not be what you normally think, because as I've studied this passage, and this is a passage that God burned into my heart years ago, and I have to constantly go back and look at it and say, Lord, is my walk with you fresh and new? Am I living on yesterday's manna? Am I trying to live on last year's experience? Am I walking with you in a current and fresh encounter with you on a day-by-day basis? Are His mercies new every morning, or is it old? Is my testimony old? I remember Manly Beasley. I hated to talk to Manly Beasley. Just hated it.

Because eventually, Bill, you know this, eventually, Bill, Manly would say, what are you trusting God for today? You say, today? Well, I say, about 2 years ago, I trusted God for something. And, you know, you almost had to make up something. You know, if you talked to Manly, or if you saw Manly coming, you'd say, all right, Lord, give me a line quick.

Lord, I'll ask you to forgive me for lying later, but I need to tell Manly I'm trusting God for something right now. And if I'm not, he's going to rebuke me, and he's going to put that gnarly finger in my face, and I'm going to be in serious trouble. And so, you know, I'm having to learn, and we all have to learn how to trust

God today.

How do we live in the moment of the time and the hour that God has given us? So 2 Chronicles 29, verse 1, Hezekiah became king when he was 25 years old, and he reigned 29 years in Jerusalem. And he did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.

And he brought in the priests and the Levites and gathered them into the square on the east. Then he said to them, Listen to me, O Levites, consecrate yourselves now, and consecrate the house of the Lord, the God of your fathers, and carry the uncleanness out of the holy place. For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done evil in the sight of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him and turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord and have turned their backs.

They have also shut the doors of the porch and put out the lamps and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. Therefore, the wrath of the Lord God was against Judah and Jerusalem, and He has made them an object of terror, of horror, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this.

Now it is in my heart, he says, to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel that His burning anger may turn away from us. Now hold your place in 2 Chronicles 29 and turn to 2 Kings chapter 18. 2 Kings chapter 18.

And let's look at verse 4. Hezekiah removed the high places and he broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. And he also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made. For until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it, and it was called Nahashtan.

And he trusted in the Lord the God of Israel, so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept his commandments which the Lord had commanded Moses.

And the Lord was with him, and wherever he went he prospered. I don't think the church needs to confuse waking up with getting up. And I don't think we need to confuse getting up with walking with God.

And a lot of times in revival meetings and in encounters with God, we wake up, we may even get up, but to maintain a walk with God, to be awake and alert to what God is trying to say to us, sometimes we miss. And the church today needs to be awake. I am convinced that this world at its worst needs the church at its best.

We need to be wholly sold out for God. We can sing Jesus is the answer, but if in the moment we don't live like it and stand on it, we'll lose our witness and our integrity. It is one thing for us to sing, for us to quote scripture, for us to say the things that we know to say in the church.

It's another thing for us to live up to those. So I want to talk to you tonight about the person that God uses in revival. What kind of person does God use? And surprisingly in this text, it's not a priest.

And it's not a preacher. It's a politician. Now that right there alone would give us an indication that there was revival.

I mean, if you could imagine that a politician could lead in a revival, that alone would shock the world. But this is not a priest talking. This is not a man ordained in ministry.

This is a layman who is a king. He holds a political position. He holds a position of influence.

And I want you to see the first thing is there has to be a spirit of discernment. Notice what happens with him. In the first year, in the first month of his reign, he goes out and evaluates the situation.

His first priority is we need to get people back to God. We need to return to holy things. We need to restore worship to the way it is supposed to be.

The first thing he does is not stand up and announce that we have a strategy for dealing with terrorism. He does not announce education reform. He doesn't say he's going to do something about the economy, that he's going to help the stock market.

The first thing that this king does is he calls the priest and the preachers to repent. Now imagine that. Here's a man who figured it out.

The priests are going through the motions. They're going through all the work of doing the work of the church. They're showing up.

They're doing their jobs. They're pushing the buttons. They're checking the box.

And in the middle of all of that, they're missing God. They've got the form and they've got the function, but they don't have the power. And so Hezekiah has discernment, and he doesn't wait.

This is why you know Hezekiah wasn't a Baptist. He doesn't wait for a committee report. He doesn't wait until the next business meeting.

He doesn't ask for anybody's approval. He just does it. He says this is what has to happen.

We need a spirit of discernment. I am convinced that there is something in every one of our churches that hinders us from being what God wants us to be, and God has to help us identify it so we can pray specifically and attack that where it is. There's a spirit.

There's an attitude. There's a resistance. I remember Laman Strauss, who was a great preacher who died in the late 20th century.

He was talking to a pastor one day who was just always dealing with trouble, just people just causing trouble all the time. And Laman Strauss was this little converted Jewish man, and he just was as calm-spirited as he could be, and he said, You know, I discovered when I was a pastor that I prayed for people to die, and God amazingly answered my prayers. I have a good track record.

Would you like me to pray that? It's amazing what that will do to get people's attention, but Hezekiah had a spirit of discernment. Secondly, he had a determined will. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel that his burning anger may turn away from us.

He had a determined will. This was a one-man operation. He had a fixed determination.

He had discernment. He had determination. He was not a quitter.

And everything about life in ministry today says, Man, let's just quit. Let's just give up. I mean, we're quitting stuff in church now all the time, and I'm not trying to debate with anybody about this, but, you know, we've got churches that give up Sunday nights because, well, people don't come.

Well, you know why they don't come? Because we don't think it's important. You know, I just know for me, this is just for me. I don't know if it's for anybody else.

For me, if I'm going to be the shepherd of a flock, I can't feed a flock one time a week. My job is to feed the sheep, to equip the saints to do the work of ministry, and I want to tell you, hungry sheep will come. Now, goats won't, but sheep will.

Hungry sheep will come. They will come to be fed because they're hungry. And if you lead them to green pastures, and if you lead them beside the still waters, they'll come because they'll be desperate to long for and to know what God is doing.

And you're never going to get the Sunday morning crowd to bring revival. They're not going to bring it. That crowd, they're trying to figure out today how they can miss church next Sunday.

You know, it looks like the weather report's good for the beach. I think we can go. Let's plan now.

Of course, see, I'm a positive person. You know, Jim McBride, who's our executive pastor, says, you're fooling yourself if you even think they're thinking about coming to church. You know, the average Baptist, according to statistics, the average Baptist is considered faithful if he's in church 35 Sundays out of the year.

That's considered a faithful member, 35 Sundays out of the year. I'm just trying to see if I can get that deal. You know, can I just be there 35 Sundays out of the year? I'm a faithful pastor.

I'm there 35 Sundays out of the year. You know, you can't sell that for the leader. You shouldn't be able to sell it for the people.

We give up. We quit. We just, you know, we get satisfied with a few people.

Well, you know, and here's what we do. We abuse this verse of Scripture. You know, we get together in prayer meeting on Wednesday night.

We have our organ recital. And we just, we get together, and we're praying. And they say, well, there are not many, but, you know, the Bible says where two or three are gathered in his name.

There he is in the midst of them. Actually, that verse is taken out of context when you do that. That is two or three agreeing on restoration and on church discipline out of Matthew 18, which is another sermon.

But we have settled for less than God's best and tried to present it to God and say, God, are you pleased with this? I have friends who are missionaries overseas, and I'll tell you what they'll tell you. American Christianity is an embarrassment to Christianity. It's an embarrassment to the call of God on our lives to forsake all and to follow him.

Here's a man that had a determined will, and he announces his decision, Chronicles 29. He announces his decisions to the priests and Levites. He says, you need to have a spring cleaning in the church.

You need to clean this stuff up. You need to get this junk out. You need to open up the doors.

He called sin, sin. Now, folks, that's not popular these days. It's not popular.

I preached at a church in a city south of Albany last year, and I preached on just a message. And we took some people from our praise team down there, and they sang, and I preached. And one of the deacons walked up to the pastor after I got through.

The first person that met him in the lobby and said, I want to tell you what. You bring anybody to preach on sin like that much longer, and you're not going to have a job. And they're everywhere.

By the way, folks, they breed. They have puppies. They have litters.

They don't just have one. They just breed. And it's like Warren Wearsby said.

There's a guy in every church that his attitude is as long as I'm a member of this church, there will be no unanimous votes. Now, let me tell you, we have to be dead to their opinions. And they can hurt us, and they can bruise us, and they can say things that grieve us.

But the bottom line is we have to be dead to flattery, the people that think you're the greatest thing since skim milk. And we have to be dead to flattening, the people that could care less if you're there or not. Every one of us, especially pastors, I'm talking to you, that are in the ministry, we know this.

There's always somebody that walks up and says, I was here before you came, and I'll be here after you're gone. I've done a few of those guys' funerals. I'm still there.

I'll tell you, 17 years in the church, there were about 20 times it had been easier to leave. You know, the grass looked greener, but it was astroturf. At least in 17 years in a place you know who your people are that are going to be with you, and you know who's going to cause you problems.

You've got to know what you've got. You've got to have a determined will that's dead to people that flatter you and think you can't do anything wrong, because that's not true. And you've got to be dead to people that think you can't do anything right, because that's not true.

The only person that we have to be accountable to as laymen, as people in ministry, is the Lord Jesus. If I don't please him, it doesn't matter how many other people I make happy. I have to please him.

You say, well, what if they fire me? Hey, my friend Gary Miller will tell you right now, he says, sometimes it's a compliment the kind of church that fires you. In fact, Charles Stanley says, any church that's had a problem with three pastors in a row, the problem's not the pastor. The problem's the church.

It's a troubled church. And so here's a man with a determined will, and he's not stopping. Then he has a devoted heart.

2 Kings 18.5, he trusted the Lord. There's a statement about his character, about his integrity. He trusted the Lord.

Look at the three evidences of his trust. He clung to the Lord. He did not depart from following, and he kept the commandments.

He clung to the Lord. He did not depart from following, and he kept the commandments. You remember Peter and John? Peter and John are standing there.

Jesus has come up in John chapter 21, and he says, Peter, you follow me. And then he tells him how he's going to die. Well, that's a great enlistment campaign, isn't it? Let me tell you, Peter, I want you to follow me, and I want to tell you how you're going to die.

People are going to take you that you don't want to take you, and they're going to take your life. And Peter looks over, and he does what all of us do. He looks over at John, the beloved, and he says, well, what are you going to do with him? How's he going to die? And if you'll allow me to use the cat paraphrase for just a moment from the deep south, Jesus says to Peter, that's none of your cotton-picking business.

I told you to follow me. I didn't tell you to look around and see what I was asking everybody else to do. You follow me.

You do what I tell you to do. That's the forgotten beatitude. Blessed is the man that minds his own business.

You follow me. You do what I tell you to do. You go where I tell you to go.

You stay where I tell you to stay. You do what I've called you to do. I'll take care of everybody else.

I'm in charge. You're not. You just follow me.

Here's a man that stayed with God. I remember when I came to an awareness of just what God demanded of my life. I was a teenager.

I was very fortunate that this happened to me when I was a teenager. Vance Havner came to my home church. Now, if you ever heard Vance Havner, he was an interesting little guy.

He was about this tall. He weighed about 80 pounds, and that was if he had a full suit on with a vest. And he had a North Carolina nasal lengthening.

Vance Havner would say, I used to say the world was going to domes, but I quit out of respect for domes. He'd say, I promise you, if you leave your tobacco out on the front porch, no hog nor dog will mess with it while you're in church. First Sunday at my home church was Easter Sunday.

Here's what he got up and said, honest to goodness. This is a killer love offering, by the way. He got up first Sunday, and he said, Easter Sunday.

Well, I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas. Because I know we won't see you again until Christmas. So he got invited back the next year.

I mean, you know, he was fearless. He did not care. In fact, he said, if I'm not weeding out the crowd, I'm not preaching.

He got up the next year, Easter Sunday again. My pastor was a glutton for punishment, and he needed it. But it was Easter Sunday again, and he got up and he said, well, morning, glories.

I say morning, glories, because morning glories bloom in the morning, and they wither up in the night. And I know that most of you will wither up before the night service. He preached youth night.

This was when Vance Hefner was 72 years old, youth night. Hello. I mean, this little bald-headed man, scrawny bald-headed man.

And, I mean, for some reason, my heart just connected. I mean, I got it. I got it.

Because my pastor used to preach for 30 minutes, basically quoting stories from Reader's Digest, and he'd get to the end in the last five minutes and say, I said all that to say this. And I'm sitting there thinking, if you'd have said it quicker, we'd have beat the Methodists to lunch. But Vance Hefner didn't pull any punches.

And it was youth night. And he said, now I want you to get your hymnal out. And he said, I want you to open up to the hymn.

And I want you to read these words with me. I have decided to follow Jesus, though none go with me. I still will follow him.

Here's what he asked us to do. I've never seen anybody give invitations like this in my life. He said, if you're a young person in this church, and you've decided that you're going to follow Jesus in front of your peers, in front of your parents, in front of your friends, in front of this church body, I'm going to ask you to take that hymnal, and I'm going to ask you to walk up here and stand at the front, and I want you to turn around, and I want you to sing that song to these people as a witness that you're not going to turn back, that you're going to put your hands to the plow, and you're going to do whatever God tells you to do.

And he said, I'm not interested in your voice. I'm interested in your heart. I want to hear your heart.

And I want to tell you, I thought about that. I was sitting on the third row in my home church. Debbie Hagler was the first person that got up and came.

Heard from her for the first time because of Facing the Giants about three weeks ago. She married a guy involved in the church. She's the first one that came up, and he said, I don't want any duets.

I don't want any quartets. I don't need any trios. I want a solo.

You sing this verse. Though none go with me, I still will follow. And I remember standing in front of that church with that hymnal, feeling like the whole spotlight of the world was on me, and saying, I have decided to follow Jesus.

No turning back. No turning back. And folks, there are days in our ministries when we think anything would be better than this.

But I remember a little scrawny preacher telling me, you better mean business when you do this. And I don't want to disappoint the Lord by saying it would be easier to do something else. Because before I was ever formed in my mother's womb, he called me, and he set me aside, and he said, this is what you will do with your life, and I want to be obedient to that call.

You have to have a determined will that says, no matter what God calls me to do, I'm willing to do it. I'm willing to do it. All right, let's look at the next one.

You have to be willing to destroy idols. Now, this is where it gets interesting. Because in 2 Kings 18, verse 4, he removed the high places, broke down the sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah.

He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made. For until those days, the sons of Israel burned incense to it, and it was called Neheshtan. Now, the high places are obviously, that's pagan idolatry that had infiltrated the people of God, and he got out all the junk, all the evil, all the stuff.

And we stop there and say, oh, great, we dealt with sin. We dealt with the stuff, the junk, the sin that builds up in our life. We've dealt with that, and we stop right there.

But then he mentions, and this is no accident, if you believe that God never wastes words, and he puts words where they're supposed to be, the bronze serpent. We haven't heard from that in 750 years. Remember in the book of Numbers that Moses lifted up the bronze serpent, and when they looked at it, they lived.

Now, this was a tool that God had used one time. One time. And God had provided healing and deliverance for his people by this bronze serpent which had been lifted up in the wilderness.

Now, they're burning incense to it. They're worshiping it. They have taken something that God used one time, and they built an altar to it, and they're burning incense to it.

They're not doing the other worship like they're supposed to be doing. They're just burning incense to this. They have taken a genuine spiritual experience and started to worship it.

Now, what is a bronze serpent? Let me tell you. First of all, a bronze serpent is worshiping a past experience. It is worshiping a past experience.

It is saying, boy, whether it's me at that altar, I have to move on from that. Tozer said the problem with some of us is we got saved when we were 12, and we gave Jesus a 12-year-old heart, and now we're 50 and we're still giving Jesus a 12-year-old heart. We're not giving him our heart today where we are now.

It's worshiping a past experience. For young people, it could be a camp or a disciple now. For us, it could be a revival or some meeting we were in, some preacher that we heard, and we begin to worship that, and we build an altar to it, and we think this is just the greatest thing that has ever happened.

But, folks, I want to tell you, God has yet to do his greatest work. The best is ahead. If the best was behind, why are we in this? The best is ahead.

I'm believing that the best is ahead. You say, well, I don't believe the best is ahead. Well, he's coming back, so I think the best is ahead.

So whatever else happens, the best is ahead. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, so the best is ahead. These bodies are deteriorating, and they're dying, and we're decaying, but the best is ahead.

Right? We worship a past experience. I think the greatest sermon is yet to be preached. I think the greatest revival is yet to happen.

I think there's an outpouring that God wants to do in one last stroke of grace before he comes back in judgment, and I think he wants to do it now. I certainly don't think he wants to wait. I think God wants revival in the church more than any of us want it.

We worship a past experience. Secondly, not only that, we can confuse the form of power with the source of power. They thought the power was in the bronze serpent.

Power wasn't in the bronze serpent. The power was in God. It was just a tool that Moses had used.

They had worshipped this thing, and they had come to believe that in and of itself it had power, and so they're worshipping it and burning incense to it. Now, Gary Miller and I had the privilege, both of us had the privilege, of serving at Sagamore Hill Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Gary had the privilege of pastoring there.

My first Sunday at Sagamore Hill was in 1985, and we had 1,575 in Sunday school. They've probably got 100 now, maybe 100 today. Fred Swank was the famous pastor of Sagamore Hill, pastored there 42 years, 42 years.

Fred Swank had two sermons, tithe and witness. Tithing was more important than witnessing. They did youth camp before anybody knew you would do youth camps.

I remember hearing Swank stories, and there were a lot of stories about Fred Swank. There were a lot of guys in ministry that came out from under Fred Swank's ministry that are now in their 50s and 60s, and a lot of guys that God is using came out of that, but I remember this Fred Swank story. They'd have youth camp, and of course in those days, youth camp, if you could get all the kids squalling and bawling on Thursday night before they left on Friday, that was a real movement of God.

Well, first of all, they hadn't had any sleep in three days. You could sing Mary Had a Little Lamb or Fleece was White as Snow, and some girls would say, I'm so sorry for the way that I've been living. I didn't know Mary had a little lamb.

I'm just so sorry. So one night, revival broke out on the ball field, on the softball field. Now the one thing Swank loved more than Jesus was softball.

And so they had these softball teams, and so revival broke out late at night. Kids went out to the softball fields, and they started singing. So you know what Fred Swank did the next year? The next year he got the counselors together, and he said, now we've got to get those kids out on that softball field so revival will break out.

Well, guess what? They ushered them out there. They orchestrated it. Kids sitting around going, why are we out here on this softball field? Man, I want to be in bed.

Why? Because that was a one-time deal. He was trying to recreate it and make it a tradition. Well, a few years later, it broke out in the lunchroom.

Kids started singing in the lunchroom. I mean, they got so full of Jesus, they forgot softball. Now if you've been in that church, you know what that means.

Forgetting softball is like giving up everything. I mean, they just forgot. They just sank.

So you know what? Fred did the next year. Now in the lunchroom, who's going to start the singing? It needs somebody to start the singing so revival will break out. Well, guess what? They started singing.

The kids are going, isn't it time for softball? Because you can't orchestrate the Holy Spirit. And you can't recreate Pentecost. My home church did a musical called The King is Coming.

They stole Bill Gaither's music and took credit for it. And they did this thing called The King is Coming. Of course, you knew it was a setup because the preacher's son played Jesus.

And I knew him. And he was more Judas than Jesus. I think he's been married three times.

I mean, the guy was a mess, and he played Jesus. So we got the deacons to dress up and to build these sets on the side and everything. Hey, I'm going to give Gary credit here.

No matter what you do with a pageant, it's a bathrobe and a bale of hay. I mean, that's really all it is. And then if you get a donkey in there, who knows what happens? That's usually the chairman of the committee on committees.

But, you know, so you get those things going on. And so we would do this thing. And I can remember the first one.

I remember the first one. Boy, we got together, and we were building these sets. We had these little curtains to hide the sets.

And we had a fake rock for Jesus to pray over. And so before it got started, everybody's in the choir room. The choir's praying, Oh, dear God.

Oh, please, Lord, please just let people be saved tonight. Let lives be changed, Lord. Just use our voices.

Help us to remember. Help us to represent you well. Help us to give you glory in what we do.

And they did it. I mean, it was powerful. I remember people got saved, and it was just the choir singing and these little drama things going on on the side.

That's pretty cool. Never seen anything like that. We'd always done cantatas, you know.

Now we've got drama. And I think we even had the guitar plugged into the wall. I'm not sure, but I think it was.

And so we did this thing. And so the next year they said, We're going to do The King is Coming again. And I think we did it for about ten years.

About the second year, the Lord said, I've had enough of that. And by the time we got through doing it, the deacons are standing out back smoking. You know, the women in the choir are griping about the other women in the choir that they don't like, and somebody won't sit by somebody else, and they don't want to stand, and they should have gotten that part by now.

And if they knew who I was, and they knew how much money my husband gave, they'd have me have that part. I'd be playing Mary, the mother of Jesus. Just look at me.

You can tell. I mean, they were just so shy. I mean, just got mean.

And they'd stand up there and sing about Jesus. And they said, You know, nobody came. People don't even show up to watch us anymore.

Well, guess what? It was just one time. Folks, sometimes we can confuse the form with the force. And we begin to try to create something that God says that's through.

I'm through with that. Now, there's some folks from Sherwood here, and they've heard me tell this story, so I'm not saying anything that they don't know about. But we used to do a singing Christmas tree, and it was very good.

But, you know, we'd work. We'd sweat. We'd spend thousands and thousands of dollars.

I'm not against singing Christmas trees, but we'd work and everything, and we'd do it, and we'd fill the church up, three or four performances. We just packed. And nobody gets saved, or a few people get saved.

We never did baptize them. Never could find them again. And one day I realized all we're doing is entertaining the alto section at the First Baptist Church in Albany who come to see us and compare if our musical is as good as their musical.

And so I remember the Sunday. It was in our old building. And the tree, of course, the tree had to be built the week before.

So I had to preach in a spot like this. You know, we had to stop everything to have the singing Christmas tree because that was the most important thing. So I had to stand in a little spot like this to preach.

And I can remember, I don't know if it was the Lord or if it was I just hadn't had any sleep that night, but I just remember I turned around and patted the tree, and I just said, Folks, y'all get a good look at this because this is the last time you're going to see it for a while. Because if we're not going to do this to reach people for Jesus, we're not going to do it to entertain Christians anymore. That's not our purpose.

Our purpose is not to entertain Christians. Our purpose is to reach lost people. And when we start inviting lost people, we may start doing this again.

And so we did. We didn't do it for about three or four years. Moved it out to the parking lot, lit it up, put music on it.

I remember a guy came up to me. We had the choir up there singing. They got their little things on, you know, little shiny things, got the lights on, you know.

You're just praying that there's no water in the parking lot with all that electricity. I mean, you're just, Oh, dear God, don't let us have all the choir gone in one moment, you know. So I'm just standing back there, and we're serving hot chocolate, and we're just trying to minister to people.

We got people sitting in their cars because they don't want to walk on the church property. And I remember there was a guy standing in the back. He's doing this.

And a guy walked up to me and said, Pastor, do you know that guy smoking while our choir's singing? I turned around and looked at him. I said, At least he's here. You know, I guarantee you one thing.

He probably never walked inside the church. At least he's here. At least he's hearing the gospel.

So let's go give him a cup of hot chocolate, see if he'll stay until that cigarette's through. Maybe he'll listen. You see, we can get all wrapped up in these things.

So what do you do with them? Let me get through this quickly. First of all, you call it what it is. Nahashtan means literally a thing of brass.

Moses said, This is just a thing of brass. It's just an instrument that God uses. There's no power in it.

A.W. Tozer said, I would rather have no religion at all than have just enough to deceive me. Just call it what it is. It's a thing of brass.

It's just a tree. It's just a pageant. It's just an event.

It's just a program. You know how it is in a Baptist church. I mean, once we've done something twice, we've always done it.

I mean, we can't let it go. Folks, let me give you a biblical principle. If the horse is dead, dismount.

I mean, we've called it church training, discipleship training, training hour. We've called it every name in the book, and people don't come to it. And we just say, Well, we've still got to do it because we've got this board up at the front that says how many we have come into that.

And we've got to do it. Find effective ways to do ministry now. And what may work today may not.

I'm not talking about changing the message. I hope you will understand before this is over. I'm not talking about changing the message.

The message is as powerful as it has ever been, but the methods can change. Do you know if we'd have tried to make a movie in the 1950s, we'd have probably been run out of the Southern Baptist Convention because Hollywood's of the devil. So rather than being salt and light and thinking outside the box, we would have been liberals.

Now everybody's thinking it's a great idea. Why? Because we said, All right, what are people looking at? We read a survey that said that people are more influenced by movies and television and music than they are by the church. Is that good? No.

Is it right? Probably. So what do you do? Do you sit there and complain that people don't go to church, or do you take the church out to where they are and say, We're going to do ministry in your backyard, and we're going to be out there where we're going to demand your attention? Last week I got an email from somebody that had shown Facing the Giants in the church. Thirty-six people got saved in that one showing of that movie, and this church had only had about 300 people in it.

Thirty-six people got saved. Listen, folks, there's 36 people in the kingdom because of a movie that we made that we didn't even know whether it would succeed or not. We just did it to obey what God told us to do.

We didn't know if anybody would watch it. We were surprised anybody watched it. We're still amazed that anybody is watching it.

We're surprised at what happens, but guess what? It may be that five years from now God says, I don't want you to do that anymore. Are we going to be obedient and say, Now, Lord, we're sure with pictures. I'm an executive producer.

Mark wrote the score. I mean, what are we going to do, Lord, if we don't make pictures? Everybody is asking us, What about a third movie? Well, we're working on it. But what if God said no? Would we be willing to obey God, or would we cave in to the pressure of people saying we've got to do something because we've always done it? See where I'm going? Just because you did something doesn't mean you have to keep doing it.

You have to find out where the wind of the Spirit is blowing and you have to get with him. The Black Abbey says you find out where God is working and you go there. We've got to find out what God wants to do and how God wants to use us.

All right, last thing, destroy it. Destroy it. He destroyed the brass serpent.

He didn't take it to the Smithsonian. He didn't give it to the WMU headquarters. He didn't donate it to the executive committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

He didn't give it to denominational headquarters. He didn't have a plaque put on it and put it in the library. He burned it up.

You can't find it today. Why? Because Hezekiah knew that that had become more important than Jesus, than God to them. Now, this is my humble and accurate opinion, which I highly respect.

I think the reason Jesus came when He did is because if He had come in the days of cameras, we'd all have pictures of Jesus on our refrigerator and we'd be worshipping the image instead of worshipping the Son. When I pastored the First Baptist Church of Trivial Pursuit, we had a Jesus room. I called it the Jesus room.

I don't know what they called it, but it was a room behind the sanctuary, and there were literally 30 pictures of Jesus in there. There was one, I promise you, it was as big as this pulpit right here, and a woman in the church had painted it, and Jesus looked a whole lot like her husband. And I found out he posed for it.

I mean, it was ugly, Jesus, too. I mean, Jesus needed a makeover on that one. It was bad.

And so they had the blonde-haired Jesus. I mean, there's a church in Texas that's got a picture of a blonde-haired, blue-eyed Jesus sitting on one of the rivers in Texas by a cactus in the baptistry. That's the baptistry picture behind the church.

I was preaching. I went, I didn't know there were cactus in Israel. I've been to Israel.

I've never seen cactus there. I'm sure there must be, or it wouldn't be in the baptistry picture. We had all these pictures of Jesus.

We called it the Jesus room. See, I don't think God gave us an image. I think God gave us his word, and we see Jesus alive in this word, and Jesus is not to be created in our image.

We're to be recreated in his image. Let me tell you what the purpose of this week is. There may be a bronze serpent in your life.

This is a great moment, a great event, a great time that you need to take to the altar of your heart, and you need to lay it down. I've got to be honest with you folks. There have been days in my life when it has been more important to me that Vance Havner mentored me for 15 years than that I know Jesus.

There have been days in my life when it has been more important to me with my friendship with Ron Dunn than that I know Jesus. It's been more important to me some days that somebody's name was on my resume than that God had given me his seal of approval. And we can get caught up in what men think means success or influence in ministry.

I wrote an article a number of years ago, and I've thought about it often these last few months. The Lord just keeps bringing it to my mind. And I wrote a story about a preacher who decides that he's going to push all the buttons and climb the denominational ladder and get influence and get popularity and get credibility and be in a place and position of influence.

And so he pats all the right people on the back. He does all the right things. He says all the right things.

He goes through the system. And one day he ends up speaking at his denominational convention, and there stand 20,000 people applauding this great preacher who has come to preach to them at their denominational convention. And then that preacher hears a still small voice that he hasn't heard in a long time.

It's the voice of Jesus. And he hears him whisper in his ears as he approaches the podium for his moment of glory. Well, son, you got yourself here.

You get yourself out of it because I'm leaving. I want no part of you getting glory for yourself. I only stay where I get all the glory.

Would you pray with me? Father, I pray that you would bless us all.

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