

Are You Spiritually Healthy? Take the Test

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman explores the essential elements of spiritual health, emphasizing the importance of discipleship, truth, and a genuine relationship with God.

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Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Health"

Description

Shane Idleman challenges the congregation to assess their spiritual health by reflecting on the core values that have guided their church for the past twelve years. He emphasizes the importance of discipleship, truth, holiness, humility, and the need for a genuine relationship with Christ, urging believers to move beyond casual Christianity to a deeper commitment. Idleman highlights the necessity of passionate prayer and heartfelt worship as vital components of a healthy church, while also addressing the balance between truth and love in the Christian community. He encourages the church to focus on attracting God's presence rather than merely people, reminding them that true spiritual vitality comes from a deep connection with God.

Transcript

The title is, Are You Spiritually Healthy? Are You Spiritually Healthy? We're going to take the test. And what I mean by that is exactly 12 years ago to the day we started the church. We started the church in Lancaster.

200 people showed up. A lot of friends and family people. It was in the newspaper.

They did a quick story because I switched careers and now I'm a pastor. A lot of people can't believe that and neither could I. And within six months, we were down to 52 people. And I was questioning my calling.

Lord, what happened here? But you begin to realize that not everyone is a fan of that deeper life. When you talk about holiness and repentance and serving Christ with all your heart, with all your strength, morning worship, evening prayer, you start to separate those who have casual Christianity and those who are sold out. And I also grew in that.

I'm still growing. We never preach a perfect message. We preach a perfect gospel.

But in that, our opinions can come in and I had to grow through a lot of things because it's hard to be an angry, prophetic voice and still be humble. It's hard. When God gives you that zeal, that passion, you just read the news and I want to hit my computer because it's child abuse what they're doing to our children and what they're doing to God's Word.

And there should be. That's why I have to limit myself. And God's given some of us that for a reason to let that come out in our preaching and our teaching.

It's who we are. But then also having the brokenness and the humility and the gentleness. Boy, you try to find that balance.

It's difficult. It really is. That's why drawing closer to God and as the fruit of the Spirit comes out, that's the only way you can find that balance.

And what you'll see at each church, that's why we have to be careful, and I try, I'm not perfect, not to judge different churches, because God will raise up different leaders and that church will be bent or will be according to that pastor. The person leading, they're going to kind of, you know, for example, me with prayer and worship and preaching the way I do it, it's a different style. It's not how they were designed.

They went to maybe seminary and they have more of just in their sermon preparation, their delivery, just a monotone. It's just more conservative possibly. And then you have someone like me, and for you who don't know, my seminary was in a John Deere backhoe for three years.

I listened to 3,000 hours. 3,000 hours. All of Chuck Smith's cassettes.

Back then, James MacDonald. Remember him? Walking the Word. Alistair Begg.

Of course, John MacArthur. Chuck Stanley. Charles Swindoll.

Adrian Rogers. Probably one of my favorites. And they were just pouring and pouring and pouring into me.

And then also during that time, I would get home and I would read books on systematic theology. Wayne Grudem. Charles Hodge.

Calvin's Institute. Spurgeon's works. The Pauline Epistles.

Breaking those down from a theological view. And books on hermeneutics and homiletics and how to prepare sermons, how to study the Bible. And I was just devouring all of this information on both sides.

And that's why I often say I'd read the Jack Hayford and the John MacArthur. And there's some differences there if you're not aware. And so, to me, I had a passion for what does God's Word say versus getting caught up in one particular camp.

And that's why we're non-denominational as well. And that's just how God has me in this church. Doesn't mean it's the right way, the only way.

Just means that's how God decided to use West Side Christian Fellowship. And there's pros and cons to that, obviously. And so what I wanted to talk about was the exact seven things we built the church on 12 years ago.

We said this is what the Lord is doing. We met with our core group. We went over these seven points.

These seven points actually became seven core points of the church. A lot of times, we'd have meetings. We'd make sure are we lined up with these seven? Kind of like a mission statement.

And this is the spiritual health. This was the spiritual health of the church. So I thought it'd be good to gauge again are we on track? Or have we drifted a little bit? Now, the good thing is the practical application will be very, very helpful for you.

Because all of these points we can look at from an individual perspective. But I wanted to share a quote with you. I couldn't find the exact author.

I remember talking about this years ago. What would the church look like if it was not focused on attracting people, but on attracting God? And that's really stood out and stuck with us for many years. Because see, you can attract people.

There's big churches in Orange County and L.A. and metro areas. And you can attract people because people want to hear from God. Can you imagine the youth group area looking like a fun zone? You've got 12,000 square feet over there and a climbing wall and this and that.

And maybe there's nothing wrong with that. That might be kind of cool. But what are you doing? Is it attracting the people? Because as you begin to focus on attracting the people, you're going, okay, what do they want? The felt needs.

And what are they looking for? I mean, I remember getting something in the mail when we first started on how to plan a church, how to grow your church. And it was just bizarre to me because it talked about sending out mailers and doing a demographic study on your audience and finding out what they wanted you to talk about. Technically, that's pretty cool.

People are interested in end times. But if you get too far to that extreme, you're going to worry about what people think, what they want, versus what God wants you to say. And often, those contradict each other.

Correct? Here's what I would like to hear. Well, God says here's what you need to hear. And so that became our kind of focus.

Attracting the presence of God. And people over the years, even large businesses or corporations, people said you could work for a large corporation. You could draw a lot of people.

You know, if you just kind of toned it down a little bit. And one of the books you can grab out there, Desperate for More of God. Grab that one.

Funniest story ever. I'm praying the Lord's got this on my heart. I'm like, Lord, I'm not going to write another book.

You've got to motivate me. Because I just haven't. I have no motivation.

So out of the blue, and I don't remember, it was one of the big Multnomah, or one of the big publishers emailed me, like their head guy, and said, hey, we've been watching some of your sermon clips. Would you like us to publish your next book? And I said, okay, sure. What does that look like? And they said, okay, take a month or two, and then send us the rough draft, the manuscript.

I'm like, okay, so I worked my tail off. I mean, we're going to pray every day. And sent them.

It was a desperate need for truth. The desperate need for all the things I'm going to talk with you about. And he didn't get through the first chapter.

He said, wait, the desperate need for truth. And I still have the email. I think, Shane, you need to rewrite a lot of this because you're not really addressing a felt need.

Go to Barnes & Noble. Look at what T.D. Jakes is writing. Look what Joel Osteen is writing.

Look what Joyce Meyer is writing. That's what he told me. And look, you address the felt need.

I said, well, we need truth. The absolute and desperate need for truth. So I said, thank you, but no thank you.

I'm finished with it. I know a cover designer, an interior designer. I'll just take it from here.

And looking back, we thank God that He did that because now we're able to give the books out free. Now we can download thousands of downloads from our church website for free. And God wants to get that message out there.

And He started this with me on my very first book, What Works When Diets Don't. It was just health-related. I met with a big publisher in Orange County.

I just turned it down and said, I don't know why. It just doesn't fill that. I just want to do this myself.

And then what they chose instead was a book called The Maker's Diet. It came on to be a bestseller, multi-millionaire, Jordan Rubin. I joked with him last time I saw him.

I said, you know what, the reason you're here is because I turned that publisher down. But that's okay. The Maker's Diet is a great book.

God didn't call me to do that. He called me to do this. And so, my point was, God uses the character of the leadership to really thrust the church in a certain direction.

That's why the leadership that you saw up here, leadership has to be in tune with God because it's steering the ship. And we asked that question, what would we look like if we focused on attracting God and not people? And so it's good to do a spiritual health survey or take the test because Jesus did that in Revelation. Have you noticed that in Revelation 1, 2, and 3? Jesus gives them a health test.

Oh, you have this, but you're lacking this. You have this, but you're lacking this. So let's take a look at what we started with and see how we're doing.

See how you're doing. Number one, the desperate need. The desperate need for discipleship.

That has to be on the list somewhere. Because Jesus said, go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So we always look at that.

What is the men's ministry doing? Men mentoring men. What is the Titus and Thursday study doing? And a Thursday morning study doing for women? And what are we doing for Ignite? And what are me and Pastor Abram going to do with the young adults here coming up? There's always got to be a discipleship flow in the church. Something going on helping people.

Discipling them. Here's what the Lord requires. Here's what you should do.

And here's what this looks like. Matthew 10:33 says, if you deny Jesus here on earth, He will also deny us before the Father. And that's why baptism, to me, it's not a coincidence.

It's here because make disciples and then baptize them. So you're making disciples and then the baptism is a public declaration. I'm publicly declaring that Jesus is Lord and Savior of my life.

So, believe it or not, we filled this up yesterday. And I will change and put on clothes after this service if you'd like to get baptized. Even if you're baptized as a young child or you did it and it didn't really mean anything.

Or if you're like me in the Roman Catholic church which believes in infant baptism, which we don't believe the Bible teaches that. We believe it teaches a believer's baptism. A person decides, then they on their own choice make that decision.

And that's why many people get rebaptized because it really didn't mean anything when you're baptized as an infant. Preaching followed by individual one-on-one and group interaction is the main source for discipleship here at this church. I think a lot of people forget that one of the primary ways we disciple people is right here.

Do you know where God's Word is preached in its totality, counseling often drops considerably. Chuck Smith would say that often if you ever followed his ministry. But then a lot of the churches that have just bombarded with counseling, a lot of times they're not being clear on certain things in God's Word.

And people are confused. And so we look at this as discipleship in our message. And then we also have one-on-one interaction.

If anyone would need some discipleship or some help, we have deacons that can come alongside. Elders that can come alongside of people as well. How we live is the greatest discipling tool we have.

Correct? How we live. You truly want to disciple someone, yes, we have to speak of course, but let them watch how you live. And that's why it's good with home groups or interaction, or sometimes I'll take my kids with me different places and they see how you handle that negative Nelly or that mean driver or maybe the teller giving you back too much money and not enough and watching how you live.

It's one thing to speak it, but we also have to live it. And so I decided to help you remember every point is to do the hashtags. That all the young kids are in the hashtag with Twitter.

Are you discipling anyone? Spiritual health test. Are you discipling anyone? Is there anyone you're reaching out to? Because God's Word is clear in this area. Because so many people are saying, you know, if I wish I could know God's will, I wish I could know God's will.

Well, you do know God's will in some areas. This is one. My will is that you disciple others.

Now I know we're busy and many can't take on too much, but there should be somebody in your life you're helping them in their walk with the Lord. Some of you even more. And I'm amazed at the number of people even that come here that are retired that are too busy to help anyone.

And to me, that doesn't make a lot of sense. And so if you're convicted right now, let us know because we need the help with mentoring a lot of these young men. And the older women are to teach the younger women as well.

And so a sign of a healthy church, and we're on track spiritually, are we discipling someone? Because here's how this often works. Sometimes we get too busy, too self-focused. I want to go to every night of rent in heaven, so I don't want to help in CM or nursery.

Right? A little plug there. And we begin to be so self-focused, it's all about me. And you have an inlet, but where's the outlet? And that's where we also grow is in the outlet, in the serving.

Now be careful because you can have too much outflow and not enough inflow. And I gave a message a while back on worshipers versus workers. And if all we're doing is working, working, working, and we lose the momentum or lose the excitement or lose the time of being a worshiper, we will become very off balance.

And that's why we become critical, angry, frustrated, even as a worker. Isn't that amazing? Some of the people who are the busiest in the church, not just this church, I just mean in general, the busiest, they are sometimes often the most frustrated, the most upset, the most angry, the most not gracious with their words, because they're working. You've got to have the inflow of the Spirit.

You've got to be a worshiper and a worker. But this can happen too. If all I'm doing is I'm just the worshiper.

No, I can't serve. I just want to be fed. Oh, I just want to be fed.

Nope, nope, nope. Children's ministry, not my thing. Little babies, nope, don't like little babies.

Mentoring, nope, nope, nope. I'm just here to worship all week. Then that becomes very prideful and self-focused.

And you become just stagnant as well. Many of you know with the high Sierras, that Mono Lake, very salty and there's no life in it. Yet, it has this wonderful river full of life flowing into it, but nothing flowing out.

Something needs to change today, guys. Take that step. And then, obviously, this is no secret.

None of these are any secret. It's just a good reminder if we're on track. Number two, the desperate need for... Wake up! The desperate need for truth.

1 Timothy 3.15 says that the church of the living God, this is an exact quote, I'm paraphrasing here, the church of the living God is to be the pillar and the foundation of the truth. So that's why I often say the church is the answer to our national crisis. The Gospel, revival, that's why, because we are to be the foundation and the pillar of truth.

Men in construction, you ever built anything? How important is the foundation? That's everything. Without that, you cannot really move forward because that holds and secures everything together. So the church is supposed to be pillar and foundation of the truth.

And that's why we will fall into other areas, whether it's a political arena or Hollywood, or locally, or even in our own walks, our own story with the Lord, our own journey. The truth is going to permeate all areas of

our life. And you can't separate this.

Well, I keep my faith private. You ever hear people say that? I don't know how you do that because your faith is an outflow of who you are in all areas. So we have to remember this church, that's why I said the living God, the true church of the living God, those who are truly following Christ, those who have not succumbed to the woke agenda or political correctness or sexual perversion, those who are truly following God, they are the foundation and the pillar of truth.

They are to hold the truth up in this culture. Jesus said, I tell you the truth. John 17, sanctify them by your truth.

Your Word is truth. So here's the key. I hear this sometimes.

People say, some of Paul's writings I'm not real sure about, what he said back then, that was more the culture. Be careful of the Old Testament. That was an angry God.

We live under a new dispensation. We live under the age of grace. A lot of the Old Testament stuff.

Well, if a lot of that is not true, what makes you believe in Jesus' words? What makes you believe in all of the New Testament? If some of that is questionable, what makes you think some of it is absolute truth? God messed up in some of the spots, but God is right in others? It's all of God's Word. Now some things, when they say cultural, there are a few cultural things. I mean, we don't worry about clean and unclean food anymore.

The ceremonial laws, the dietary laws were fulfilled already, many of them. But it's interesting, it's still good to follow the dietary laws. Did you know that? Health-wise, it's good to follow those.

And I believe one of the areas when Paul talks about even women wearing a head covering, that was of the culture of that day. The whole point is not usurping the authority of the man and his submission. And in that culture, you can see what's going on in Iran right now, in the Middle East, is that covering would represent something.

And it would represent the submission aspect. But if you just come and start wearing a head covering, it doesn't mean what it meant then. That would be one example of the culture.

However, there are churches that still practice that very thoroughly. People have actually left this church because of that. Making non-essentials inessential.

And so we do see some areas where the Bible, the truth never changes. Moral truth never changes. And you have to look at some of the things in the culture of that day, but that doesn't change any moral truth.

No moral truth. If God said, thou shalt not, it still means thou shalt not in the same area. And just a side note, on the head coverings, I've met a lot of people over many years where they're so forceful about the head coverings is they miss the whole point.

They're not gracious and loving and humble. So you can't just put a doily on your head and then think that you're covered. You have to have the character.

You have to have the character that represents it. But if you feel called to do that, and by all means do it, but understand the culture of that day, that's what that would represent. It would represent submission to

the husband and to the marriage vows.

And then a loose woman, they would call it, with no head covering, just out would be more of a prostitute. And so it sent a certain message. A woman not covering her head is not good, Paul would say in the church, because what did it send? It sent the wrong message to people.

And so, that was just one long rabbit trail. Truth is not flexible when it comes to absolutes. It is unyielding.

It is solid. Truth liberates, it releases. Truth rebuilds and it tears down.

Truth restores and it breaks. Truth clarifies and it convicts. Truth heals and it divides.

You don't change truth, truth changes you. And so, the point is, times change, truth does not. So you've heard that if you listen to the radio network.

91.9 you can get locally. 91.9 or if you're listening, you can listen 24 hours a day, seven days a week on the app. And that's the motto.

Times change, truth does not. Somebody has to contend for truth. And so, if you ever say, how does that happen in the life of a Christian when they begin to embrace this stuff that's just not biblical? Or in the life of a church, do you ever ask that question? How is this church? What's happening many times is because the leadership is getting away from that time with the Lord.

They're not praying and humbling themselves in the prayer closet looking to God being filled with the Spirit. So as a result, they're kind of led astray. Because it's the anchor of the Holy Spirit that leaves you grounded to the truth.

And keeps you grounded to the truth. And then the next point, the desperate need for holiness. The desperate need for holiness.

Psalms 96.9, Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Tremble before Him all the earth. There's something about holiness.

Even the utensils in the temple, God said, are holy. Even the clothes that the priests would wear going into the Holies of Holies were holy. There was something set apart for them.

And that's why I think Christians get confused. They say, well, you know what? I mess up now and then. I'm not perfect.

And I guess I'm just destined to fail and I'm not really holy for God. Well, it never means perfection. Now, I'm not giving permission to sin.

I think the Bible is clear that we can choose not to sin. We can choose to follow God. But holiness is a life devoted.

It says come hell or high water, I'm going to pick myself back up. I'm going to repent. I'm going to ask God for help.

I'm going to remove these things from my life. I'm going to begin to follow God like never before. I'm going to be holy and set apart for Him.

And that's the person that God will use. 2 Corinthians, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Be separate, says the Lord.

From the temple in the Old Testament to even the book of Revelation. In Revelation, John says, come out from among them. Or God is saying to him, come out from among them and be separate.

And so see, that's the hard part is we live in the world. That's why I say not of the world. We live in it, but I can't be of it.

So I live in it, but my trip to the store is going to look a little different maybe than others. My trip to Cinemark, my choices might be a little bit different. What we do at home, the home environment, what the home looks like.

There's difference there. I'm in it, but I'm not of it. All the water in the world, no matter how hard it tries, will never sink a ship unless it gets inside.

And then it goes on to say, all the sin in the world, no matter how hard it tries, will never sink a Christian's soul unless it gets inside. That's why holiness is so important. It's not weird.

It's not extreme. It's a life set apart for God. Making choices that are different.

That look different. That sound different. And people will mock you because of it.

I don't understand. Why do they not watch this? Or listen to this? Or go there? Or do that? They're just weird. Well, no, often it has to do with holiness.

I mean, it's a good time to explain this to you as well. We want to make sure at this church we didn't fall into this legalism camp. Legalism versus wisdom.

It's very simple. I have to versus I want to. Legalism.

At the core, it's following a lot of rules. And let me get my tape measure out. Let me make sure the women's dresses are down to the floor.

Now, that's good for modesty. But see, let me get there. Let me make this.

Let me measure by what you're doing and putting rules on you. You can't do that. And homes where the parents are legalistic really hurt the children as they get older, because they don't like God.

They don't understand God. Their parents are telling them this, this, and this, but they see the true colors coming out. But it often looks the same.

You know, you could say, legalism, you can't go to that movie versus here's why you shouldn't go. It's going to jack you up spiritually. And your relationship with the Lord is going to suffer.

Say, you know what, Lord, I don't want to do that. I love You enough. I love my relationship enough with You.

I don't want to do that. See, that's not legalism. But then people will say you're legalistic sometimes.

But that's between you and God as long as your heart is right and tender and good. And it really is adding rules to the relationship with Jesus. Jesus plus, don't do this.

Don't do that. Don't do this. And don't do that.

And the holiness camp can be thrown into that sometimes. And have you ever heard of the holiness movement? And there's a lot of good things in all of this, but sometimes, I remember, I think it was the 80's, and reading books about some of the things, and there are churches, you know, the holiness church. It's all about holiness, but if you're a woman and you came in wearing makeup, the youth couldn't come in.

And if you were wearing pants as a woman, no, you're wearing something. You're wearing a long dress. But you can't wear pants to church.

Long dress. And of course, they would take from Leviticus and dressing like a man. So you can see kind of where they're coming from to some degree, but all of it was about this legalism and rules and forcing that on others versus letting God change their heart and change their life.

Now, but when modesty issues come up, we have to address it. We have to talk about these things, of course, but we don't force rules down the throat of people. They should want to do these things because of out of a relationship with God.

I mean, I could stay on legalism for a while. It's like what Jesus said, do what they tell you to do, but don't do what they do. You know, going through all the motions.

Jesus said you swallow a camel and you restrain a gnat from going in your mouth. You're making the traditions of men equal with Scripture. It's a self-righteous attitude that says look at what I do.

Why don't you do it as well? I'm so spiritual. I read the Bible two hours every morning. Why don't you? I have a three-hour prayer time at night.

I've never went to the movies in 16 years. I mean, it's legalism. Now, there's a lot of movies out where you shouldn't go, but that's not legalism.

That's wisdom. This is a wise decision. And so, I know I've been called legalistic over the years, and sometimes you have to check your heart.

Okay, gosh, Lord, I don't want to. I remember when I used to write about all the vampire movies and stuff that the kids were watching, and I'm like, how can darkness entertain you? How can we go, oh, I can't wait to watch a series of Twilight and Harry Potter all backed up together and all this levitation and spiritualism and opening up to the... And you know, I just don't think it was healthy. And so now I'm legalistic versus no, I just don't think it's a good idea.

I'll never forget, one lady told me, she goes, well, just before you judge, watch Harry Potter. So I rented it, and there's this person levitating like this, and then they swallow this big snake. And I'm like, I don't know about you, but that does not build me up.

That was just weird and bizarre. But see, there's this desire for the occult and witchcraft and darkness. Even Walmart has the little witchcraft casting spells.

And you begin to open yourself up. That's a slippery slope. Where do you close the door? Familiar spirits, you begin to open yourself up.

And so to me, it's just wisdom. Plus, it doesn't resonate well with me. And I still can't understand Christians who can't wait to see the next horror film.

Like I just watched the trailer and get sick. Like what is that? Why am I going to want to sit there? It's like I'm sitting in hell for two hours. Being tormented.

But people love it. Well, number one, you have to really check your salvation. I mean, if you love darkness, and you don't like the light, or have you been quenching and grieving the Spirit? Because the things of the darkness should not entertain a true believer filled with God's Spirit.

They should be broken over it. They should be just crushed by it. Again, the key, God uses us not because we are perfect, but because we are surrendered.

Hashtag the surrendered life. That's what we focus on here. And then the next point, the desperate need.

I kind of lump these together. The desperate need for humility. But beyond that, it was a desperate need for love, and unity, and humility.

It's that aspect of the church. In Bible believing, truth elevating, God honoring churches, this part is sometimes missed. Because we can be so focused on doctrine that we forget about brokenness.

We can be so focused on the truth, but it's the truth, and forget the importance of humility. And from this, this is where that term Bible thumper comes from. You know, that pulpit pounder, Bible thumper, which I've of course been called all those many times.

But it's okay to thump the Bible or pound the pulpit if there's also some humility under there and righteous indignation. But you have to check yourself, Lord, am I truly... I mean, you look at 1 Corinthians. Read it tonight, 1-7.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become like sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. So Paul's saying even though I can speak well, like men, possibly even like angels, I have a great oratory ability and I've been so gifted. You know those people who are really charismatic and great speakers.

And Paul says, but if you have not love, you have nothing. You have great faith to move a mountain? If you have not love, it profits you nothing. You can give all of your stuff to the poor.

If you have not love, it profits you nothing. And when the Bible says knowledge puffs up, that's why many Christians have to watch it in this area. We can get so puffed up with pride and know what the Bible says.

And the more you know about the Bible, I learned this lesson. Oh, this was a tough one. The more I begin to read the Bible, learn about the Bible, quote the Bible, memorize the Bible, the more I realize how many people fall short.

And you like to point it out. Oh, didn't you know the Bible says this? And we become this judge and jury. Puffed up with pride, knowledge.

Forgot to look in the mirror. And so, we just always want to make sure are we on track here? John 17 is heartbreaking. Jesus is saying, Father, that they know that they're one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.

The whole verse was on unity. Unity. It's hard for the enemy to divide a united church.

It's hard for the enemy to get any foothold in a united church because a united church says that's gossip. I'm putting that on my mind. You go to them directly.

You talk to them. I'm not going to down talk. I'm not going to put down.

I'm going to elevate. I'm going to err on the side of grace. And the devil has no foothold in that environment.

But it's when we get together... Anybody get together and pull down others? Don't make me go around and raise your hand. But that kills unity. Unity sends a clear message that Jesus is real.

The enemy divides us over non-essential spiritual pride. That is spiritual pride. The enemy comes in.

Think about most division in the church. Most division in the church is not over foundational doctrines. Absolute truth.

I mean, those are clear, obviously. You wouldn't be probably going to the church if it wasn't true. But it's the little things that begin to come in.

And so the desperate need for love and unity and humility. And those things don't come naturally. They come supernaturally.

What comes naturally? The flesh. The works of the flesh. And I love the Scripture I shared with you months ago.

Isaiah 57, for thus says the High and Lofty One, thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. I dwell in a high and holy place with Him who has a contrite and humble spirit. I will revive the spirit of the humble.

I will revive the heart of the contrite one. Hashtag humility leads to revival. Humility leads to a humble church.

Humility leads to a healthy church. So take the spiritual... How are you doing in this area? How are you doing? Did you come in already down talking to someone? Thinking negatively? Gossiping? We have to fight for unity. And then the desperate need.

The next point we want to make sure we're on track here. The desperate need for spiritual power. Spiritual power.

Not political power. Spiritual power. The power of the Spirit, it's neglected, but it's needed in the church today.

How many of you are familiar with this verse? Acts 1.8 But you shall receive power. You shall receive power. Not might receive power.

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. There's a power source. When any of you have electric appliances, what do you have to do with it? And many Christians are not plugged in to the power source.

Power is directly related to the connection. The outflow is directly related to the filling. The fire is directly related to the fuel.

The power of the Holy Spirit. Has the Holy Spirit truly come upon you? And the reason this is so important is this, this is where the church changes lives. Without this, we don't really change a lot of lives.

We have a social gathering, but it's the power of the Spirit that keeps us together in unity. It's the power of the Spirit who gets the prayers answered in the prayer room. It's the power of the Spirit who gets us to our knees, and we work on all these different things, and we see the Lord moving in powerful and profound ways.

I was just watching the other day the 10-year anniversary video we did. You can find it on YouTube. And I noticed, I didn't see this before, but a lot of people were saying you can feel the Spirit there at the church.

And I know that bothers some people that haven't really felt much at all. And here's what I think people are saying why this is so important. Can you sense evil? I've been in some places.

You can sense evil. I mean, you just want to get out of there. Or you feel it.

Why couldn't the reverse be true? Think about it. You ever watching something at home and you're like this is not right? Or going to a movie theater. I remember I went into homes of just... One in L.A. I'll never forget to minister to this guy.

I mean, you feel like you need to take a shower when you leave and just like the smell, the darkness, you can sense it. So on the flip side, can you sense the light? Can you sense God moving? And so that's what people say they can feel the Spirit there. Have we ever stopped to consider this for a moment? That God created emotions? God created neurotransmitters.

God created serotonin. His idea. All the other hormones are different.

He created all those things. And I believe through our emotions, through our feelings, we can feel God and experience God. There are times when I don't and I still have to come.

There are times when I don't and I still have to worship. And we just have to be ready in and out of season. But there are profound and meaningful times where you can feel the power and presence of God.

I don't understand why that's a bad thing. And you'll watch some videos out there of guys who'll say that's just emotionalism. Well, here's the difference.

I want to clarify this. I think it's important. God created emotions.

Come and make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Anytime people would encounter God, they were changed. They would fall on their face.

They would raise their arms. They would weep and be broken. Emotions were engaged.

Emotionalism though, is making decisions based on my emotion. And I think that's where people get confused. They'll say, oh, that church, that's just emotionalism.

You guys are up here at the altar and you're all emotional. That's just emotionalism. Well, if that guy repents and leaves and goes home and becomes a better father or a better husband, how is that a bad thing? See, the problem is, these people have never experienced God and they're putting you down when you do.

They've never experienced God. Or they'll see people acting weird and say, oh, it's just emotionalism. Okay, I got it sometimes for sure.

You know, people get carried away because you have to be careful there. But I don't understand, if God created emotions for when you have a child, when you experience something great, or your wedding day, or whatever it is, these are how you experience life. Wouldn't it make sense that He would want you to experience Him? As long as the experiences line up with Scripture.

So when people say, people up here at the altar, that's just emotionalism, I can give you lots of verses about that. Bowing down in the holy presence of God. Laying prostrate in the holy presence of God.

Crying out when they would feel the presence of God. Being taken back by the presence of God. Crying out for deliverance in the presence of God.

Being drawn to worship in the presence of God. Waiting in an upper room until the Spirit of God fell upon them, and then they left that room speaking in a language and glorifying God, and they experienced God. There's so much joy.

The joy of the Lord was their strength in the New Testament. So, I think that you have a problem with emotions in God. I don't think you've really ever experienced Him.

Maybe pride has prevented that. I know for sure in my twenties, I didn't experience God. I knew Him.

I was a Christian. But I never had that deep and profound filling and moving of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because I was quenching and grieving the Spirit.

It's the Spirit that gives me joy. It's being full of the Spirit. Full of joy and peace and gentleness and kindness.

Can you imagine if God would fill us completely? People would want to just get away from you. What is wrong? They're always smiling. They're always all bubbly.

Everything's going good for them. Good for them. And you know those people, the joy of the Lord is my strength.

Joy and peace and longsuffering and gentleness and kindness and grace is flowing out of them. They're experiencing God's emotions. But again, you gauge your emotions by Scripture.

So, you're not going to marry someone and just say, well, it just feels right. Jeremiah says, the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? So the emotions must sit under the filter or go through the filter of God's Word.

Did you know anger's an emotion? And not a good one sometimes. So it has to go under the filter of God's Word. What about that anger now? You know what? I'm so upset.

I'm going to start a blog on such and such. Ah, good. See, now you're doing something.

I am so ticked off. Anybody ticked off what's going in the news? I am so upset. Next Sunday, I'm going to be here when the doors open at 6 a.m. See, that drives you.

I mean, there's so much stuff going on with Russia. That guy's a madman. Experiencing the power of God.

Ian Bowne said, it is the presence of God's unction on the preacher that stirs and creates friction in many congregations. Oh boy, is that true. People think a healthy church will not have any problems.

It's actually often the opposite. Because a healthy church is focused on these things and the demonic realm hates these things. So somebody comes in and they don't want to hear you.

They don't want to shut your mouth. Who is this guy? What is this church? Why are they so excited during worship? See, it's stirring things. And I don't know if you guys caught the Wednesday night service.

Make sure to watch it this week. It was almost three hours long with all the teens giving testimonies. I don't know how many of you saw it.

Maybe half the room probably. Many of you were here. I don't know, is Connor here or did he go next door? He's next door, but I've got to share this story.

So I remember, I'll never forget where I met him out in the parking lot. We were just new to the area. He comes up, was he 12? Maybe? And he's like hugging me.

I don't even know who this kid is. I watch you on YouTube all the time. I love it.

You know, I just love what you're doing. And then the last couple of years, he does not like me. I'm like, I haven't changed.

And now he likes me a lot again. And he just shared that. What happened? What happened? Conviction.

I'm living for God. This is great. It resonates for me.

I've drifted from God. I don't want to hear that. I love the world.

I hate what you're saying. Repents and comes back. Now I love what you're saying.

And that's a healthy church. And that really used to upset me. Like I thought a nice, loving... Why do we have problems? Golly, I'd run into spouses.

Oh, my husband, he'll come someday, but he just doesn't like you. But I love what you have to say. Or you meet the husband.

My wife is not happy with you. But I need to hear what you have to say. And then it causes friction in the family.

I don't want to go to that church anymore. I want to go to this other church over way out there that's real soft and easy. I don't want to go to that church.

Now you've got family friction. I'm like, I didn't mean to start any problems, sorry. And then you drag the high schooler here who definitely doesn't want to hear what I have to say.

And now there's more friction. I don't want to go to church. I don't like that guy.

And see, all this friction's going on in that very healthy church because of conviction. Because a healthy church, the Holy Spirit says, I don't care who I upset. I'm going to say what needs to be said.

And so you have to fight for that. Now, woe be to the pastor that thinks everything he says is right. We learn from each other.

Iron sharpens iron. We grow from each other. But when you talk about God's Word, and if the power of the Holy Spirit rests upon this church, man, it's not going to be comfortable sometimes.

I mean, I've had people storm out of the prayer room. If there's a demonic manifestation, or people come, you know, I was going to go to church. I just drove by.

I saw the part. I just, some of this came over me. I don't want to go to church.

And they turn around and let go home. And then God keeps drawing them week after week. And see, it's a spiritual upheaval.

It's a spiritual battle. And people come up and they say, I don't understand the shame. Right, because you're full of the Spirit.

You're going, amen. Where the other guy's going, when is this guy over? Man, I just got drunk last night. I love my porn and he's challenging me.

I don't want to come back again. And it took me a while to learn, okay, this is okay. This is okay to get my feelings hurt.

You would be just amazing. Yeah, my mother-in-law, I've told you this before, now she's learned it over the years. She'll introduce it.

She'll go, well, let me tell you about West Side. You're either going to love it or you're going to hate it. So when she invites people, that's the truth.

But if an unbeliever is open and their heart's tender, God's drawing them, they don't know why, but they go, I've got to come back. I've got to come back. And I don't quite like everything, but I've got to come back.

Or if the unbeliever comes and is hell-bent on rebelling against God, they will never come back. They'll be upset and angry. And that's where a lot of undue criticism comes from.

It's just the work of the Holy Spirit. Let me talk about this for a minute. Filling the Holy Spirit and experiencing God, what this is, it's the presence of God deep in the heart of a believer.

Now, I don't want to get too off on this because I would need an hour to talk about the Trinity, but obviously the Bible teaches one God, but three distinct persons of the Godhead is how theologians would break it up. And you can talk about Elohim, the plurality of God, versus Elohim. You see that in the Hebrew, and you can say, wow, this is interesting.

But you don't want to get too far off on either side because you can get into dangerous theology where you're not worshipping three gods, and then the other side is modalism or oneness, Pentecostalism, where they think it was just Jesus only. You just baptize in Jesus' name. God the Father, everything was on the cross.

It's just Jesus. When the Spirit descended, the Father spoke. That was like a ventriloquist.

It's just Jesus only. But again, I see that God reveals Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now how that works, I'll wait until we're in heaven.

But again, based on what I read, the Father sends the Holy Spirit. If Jesus was here with us, can you imagine these words? Jesus, we love You, we love You. I must leave.

No, no, no, please don't leave. Because if I don't leave, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, cannot come. And that Comforter is going to be inside each believer.

So it's God inside the believer. A theological headache. God the Father, the Holy Spirit of God, the part of the triune, is actually inside a believer in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit comes in you, but the problem is many people have not allowed Him to come upon them. It's a different word, epi, E-P-I. It's an overwhelming presence of God in their life and their emotions.

Obviously, if that happens, your emotions are engaged. There is just no way around it. And so that's all we're doing.

We say, Holy Spirit, You are welcome here. The hard, arrogant critic will say, well, He's everywhere. Well, no kidding.

He's also at an ACDC concert. He's at the Metallica reunion. If you want to get technical, He's everywhere.

But there are times when His distinct presence is clear. I remember my back pain is gone. I've been healed during worship.

My eyes, God is moving. His presence is here. The altar is full.

The atmosphere you can cut with a knife. We don't want to stop worshipping. God is moving among His people.

He's convicting. He's drawing. That's a manifest presence of God.

Holy Spirit, You are welcome here is theological. Because what we're saying is You're welcome to come and fully fill my heart. I'm surrendering before You right now.

And the people that get upset about those types of lyrics are because they've never experienced that. Because if you've experienced that, you're never going to want to go back. Lord, please visit us this morning.

Please, in a tangible way, touch us this morning. And I don't understand how He moves in this area, but I know He does. Ask the early apostles, what happened on the tenth day as you were waiting on God? Do you believe the Bible? Well, it says, like a wind.

What about if you felt that and the chandeliers were just moving? But you just feel that. People say, oh, that's too weird for me. Well, I just want more of God.

However He wants to reveal Himself. As long as it lines up with Scripture. See, the problem is many things could happen.

God could do things that line up with Scripture, but you're so offended because you've never experienced it. And you have God in this nice little box. As long as I keep Him in this nice little box with conservative written all over it, and He doesn't rock my world too strong, too hard, and I don't want to raise my hands.

I don't want to go to the altar. I just want an hour of God. I just want to buy a few cents of God, please.

Not enough to explode my soul. Just enough to keep me warm. And anytime the church attempts to take God out of your box, you get offended.

But that's on you, not us. Because we have the truth of God's Word. We're grounded in the truth.

Anytime, show me a passage when they would encounter God. What would happen? What would they say? Oh, you must be God or Jesus. Okay, well, here's my request.

They couldn't even talk. Isaiah, I'm a man of unclean lips. John would fall to the ground.

Elisha would just be ripped apart by this experience. Moses would just, Lord, turn. Others would say, Lord, stay Your hand.

I'm going to explode from Your presence and just the power of God upon their lives. And that's all I want for others is to experience that. And it's okay to pray, Holy Spirit, come.

Holy Spirit, stay. Oh, I need to feel Your fire. I need to see Your gaze.

Holy Spirit, You are welcome here. He leads us. He draws us.

He convicts us. He comforts us. He renews us.

He revives us. He restores us. He reconciles us.

He resurrects us. He rejuvenates us. He reinforces us.

He refreshes us. He repurposes us. And He recovers us from the brink of destruction.

And what has happened, that's why Francis Chan even wrote a book 20 years ago or so on the forgotten God. Churches have been so polarized by maybe weird activity that they've completely withdrawn and said we don't want anything to do with that. Well, I don't either.

I don't either. I just want God. I just want God.

Can you imagine if God just filled us completely? I'd probably have to just stop preaching. Worship team, would you come up in the altar and be full? Because God is breaking and moving and convicting us and reviving us and we begin to experience God in profound and powerful ways. That, my friends, is revival.

It's a spiritual awakening. The intellectual person and the carnal. The Pharisee and the lukewarm.

The theologian and the simple-minded must cry out, fill me or kill me. That's another hashtag for you. And somebody asked me about this.

Do you really want God to kill you? Context. It represents a desperation. God, I am so desperate.

I don't know about You, but I can't go through life like lukewarm. I can't face the demonic realm like this. There's a one world government and everything's going cryptocurrency and they'll buy and can't buy or sell or trade or shut.

I can't continue to lead my family, lead this church with a mediocre, just a little flicker of the Spirit. Lord, fill me or kill me. I am so desperate.

I am so desperate to hear from You. Listen, if you guys can't make it at six in the morning on Sunday, at least get up out of your bed in your house and get on your knees before God and put on some worship. You've got to start telling King's stomach to shut your mouth.

Oh, little sleepy baby, put yourself back to sleep. No, you need to wake up and let the alarm of God go off in your mind saying, I'm tired, but I'm going to seek God like never before. Lord, fill me or kill me.

I need to experience Your power and Your presence like never before. Let me tell you just a personal testimony. All throughout my 20s, yeah, I'm a Christian.

I'll pray in private. Don't let too many people know. But when I just cried out to God and He filled me, the Word of God comes alive.

I can't get enough of it. Worship, give me. I mean, back then it was Darlene Czech.

You know, shout to the Lord and these are the days of Elisha. And I'm going to put Him just, oh, God, He's pouring into me. And I'm going through more brokenness and pain than I've ever experienced in my life.

But I have so much joy in crying out to God. Where has this been all of my life? Oh, God. And I begin to just speak the name of Jesus.

And my life was radically changing. And shouldn't you want that fire to fall upon others? Shouldn't you want that desire, the desire for God and the deeper life to fall upon others? Wouldn't you want this church to be on fire for God? I'm going to go through quickly. And then, the desperate need for passionate prayer.

The desperate need for passionate prayer. Matthew 6, 6, But you, when you pray, go into your room and say a quick prayer. Now you're awake.

Jesus is telling you to shut your door. There's a prayer clause that remove the distraction is in. Remove the distraction.

Get with God the Father. And He's in the secret place. God who's in the secret place will reward you openly.

I talked about this, I think, a month or two ago. But this still, I've always read this, but it finally stuck. That the God of the universe says, Shane, if you get into a position where you will close the door and you will seek me like never before, you will repent and you get in that secret place and want to hear from all the Father.

I will begin to speak to you. And the God of the universe can begin to speak to your heart and begin to lift you up and encourage you. How powerful and profound is that? No wonder the enemy wants to stop us from praying.

Because that's the powerhouse of the church. That's the powerhouse of the Christian life is the prayer closets. That's the war room.

The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man will availeth much. Ian Bound said, what the church needs today is not more organizations, not more methods, not more potlucks, not more programs, not more to the schedule, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use. Men of prayer.

Men mighty in prayer to turn the direction of our nation back around. Get into the prayer closet and begin to allow God to direct your life. You know, marriage counseling, we get the calls every week.

The best thing you can do is get into the prayer closet. Get into the prayer closet. Get bare before God.

One hour with God can do more than a year worth of counseling. Let God change your heart. Leonard Ravenhill said, what has hell to fear other than a God-anointed, prayer-powered church? Did you know that? That's what hell fears.

That's why he will stop the prayer meetings. That's why before we start rend the heavens, all hell breaks loose. People want to quit.

Me too. Why are we even doing this? What's going on? Everything is trying to divide the church and we've got to fight for that unity. So with prayer, you have to plan for it, prepare for it, and then go for it.

Easy to remember. You have to plan for it. If you think, well, I'll get to prayer at some point, the whole day will go by.

Put God on the calendar. And so after 12 years, I'm happy to report that I would say we are doing very good in this area as a church. I wish we could improve.

I wish we could do more prayer meetings. I do, and maybe we will. But where we started and where we're going, the heart of prayer, 6 a.m. worship for an hour and a half of just worship and prayer, that's what gets the church going.

Wednesday nights, times of worship and prayer, rend the heavens. It's so important. Hashtag God answers prayer.

Maybe you need to hear that this morning. God answers prayer. And then I'm almost closing off here.

The desperate need for heartfelt worship. The desperate need for heartfelt worship. Ephesians 5.19 Sing and make melody to the Lord.

Colossians says to sing to the Lord. And I just had Luke's here. He teaches our New Believers class.

I would encourage you to take it in the mornings. I said, hey, just do a quick Hebrew study on that verse that talks about Psalm 100. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, a shout.

And if you study it, it has to do with like warfare, like a shout, like others are joining in. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, Psalm 100. Make a joyful shout unto the Lord.

It's okay to get excited. It's okay to say, we are gonna conquer the enemy. We have come here to get built up and reestablished.

I'm getting depleted. My food supply is down spiritually. And I came here to hear from the general, from God Himself.

I'm gonna leave here refreshed. And you can make a joyful noise unto the Lord and get a little bit excited. Who told the church during worship you can hear one hymn and be quiet and just sit there? That's a conservative church scared to experience the presence of God.

I said it. I said it. I said it.

I own it. Is it not? Don't get too excited. There's a church an hour from here I went to.

Lots of people. Don't raise your hand. Don't get carried away.

Don't get excited. Don't go to the altar. Charles Spurgeon said, he whose soul does not worship will never live in holiness.

Nearly all biblical figures, do a study of this. All biblical figures, you know, Elisha, Elijah, Moses, Joshua, David. Nearly all of them who made an impact had a deep and impactful and emotional experience with God.

They were worshipers. They worshiped Yahweh. And I love the excuse I get more often than not, and they'll come up even afterwards.

Hopefully not today because I'm letting you know. You know what, Shane? Worship for me is a lifestyle. That just means I don't like to worship.

Worship for me is a lifestyle. Now technically, yes, your whole lifestyle worships. Of course.

But to use that as an excuse, not to be engaged in corporate worship, means you haven't experienced the power of God in your heart and in your life. Or my favorite, I don't need to come to early morning worship. I don't need to do all this.

I do that at home. Now some people do. I do.

So do Mike, of course. But anytime we have to excuse ourselves from powerful corporate worship, we might want to take a heart check. We might want to look and see what really is going on in our hearts.

And then finally, we can all agree, the desperate need for Christ. The desperate need for Christ. So we have to make sure as a church, we look at our programs, we look at our ministries, we look at our sermons.

Is Christ elevated? Is He at the forefront? Is this why we are here? And we have to make sure Believe it or not, you can get off course in this area. Even us. We've been so busy.

Programs, platforms, potlucks, studies, that we forget why we're actually here. And in doing so, we have to remove some of the good things so we can get to the great thing. Because you can be too busy while Christ sits in the corner and waits for you.

Martha, Martha. You're about many things, but Mary's chosen that which is best to worship Me. The desperate need for Christ.

Matthew 11, Come to Me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Some of you need to hear that this morning. You need to come to Christ fully, not half-heartedly.

There is no half-hearted relationship. Full surrender. If you're heavy laden and you're carrying this laden load, and you're just exhausted with life, come to Christ.

Let Him carry that for you. John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Some of you need to hear that this morning. There is no other way. There is no other religion.

There is no other source. There is no plan B. Jesus is the only way. And Revelation 12, 10, And they overcame Him, who the enemy, by the blood of the Lamb.

That is so important. Have you repented and believed and said I need the blood of the Lamb to cleanse my sins? That's how you overcome demonic influence in your homes. That's how you overcome the demonic realm is by the blood of the Lamb.

And by the word of their testimony. So this isn't Jesus plus your testimony. It's out of your salvation, you're going to testify.

Testimony is so important. They overcame Him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. If I could just tell you, if I had another half hour about my testimony and how much God just really wrecked my life in order to rebuild it and to testify to others.

I just wrote down a few things. When I was on the highway to hell, He put me back on the road to heaven. He was at the beginning of my story and He will lead me to the end.

When the enemy comes in like a flood, God raises up a standard against him. He walked with me through the valley of the shadow of death. He brought the prodigal son home.

He saved me and set me free. He comforted me in my darkest hour. He restored my soul.

He is my Sabbath rest. He returned to me the joy of my salvation. He gave me hope in a hopeless world.

Oh, I'm not done. He is my demon destroyer. He is my bondage breaker.

He is my anger suppressor, my sin stabilizer, and my lust eliminator. He is the rock of my salvation. He is the doorway of deliverance.

He is my advocate, my defense team, and my judge. He is the captain of my salvation and He is the soon coming king. We need to testify to what God has done in our lives.

So, hashtag Christ alone through faith alone. The great mantra of the Christian faith since its conception. Many say, well, that was at the Reformation.

Actually, it was at the beginning of the church. Christ alone through faith alone for the glory of God alone. That's why we are here.

We are here to testify to what God has done in our lives.

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