

Is the Lord 'Really' With You?

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of giving oneself fully to the work of God, being humble, and being united with others in order to have a deep and meaningful relationship with God.

Duration: 30:07

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Proverbs 3:34, Matthew 18:20, Acts 11:21, Romans 12:1, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Timothy 4:1, James 3:14, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "God's Presence", "Humility and Unity"

Description

Shane Idleman challenges the congregation with the question, 'Is the Lord really with you?' by examining Acts 11:21, emphasizing that the presence of God is evident in our active involvement in His work, humility, and unity within the church. He warns against self-deception and the dangers of pride, urging believers to engage in militant prayer and to discern the spirits influencing their lives. Idleman highlights the importance of returning to the basics of faith, such as prayer and community, to experience the fullness of God's presence. He concludes by stressing that genuine worship and sacrifice are necessary for the Holy Spirit to move powerfully among us.

Transcript

The title of the message is, Is the Lord Really With You? Is the Lord Really With You? And as you know, we are in Acts chapter 11. And what I meant earlier when I said that this week has been challenging, number one, because I had to get rid of a sermon. I had maps to show you and all these wonderful things.

And let's get through the chapter 11. And with me, there's an agitation that sits in. There's a discomfort, there's a not feeling satisfied.

And this verse is the reason why. Acts 11, 21. And the hand of the Lord was with them.

And the hand of the Lord was with them. And it just really stood out to me to present this question, is the Lord really with you? Is the Lord really with you? Because we know that Joshua was defeated, Samson was overcome, and Saul lost the throne. All because the Lord was not with them.

And if you remember the story of Samson, this is always interesting to me, is when he got up to defeat the Philistines, he lost that battle. And the Bible says that he knew not that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him. Now obviously in the Old Testament, the Spirit of the Lord could come upon a person and then leave that person.

But we know now in New Testament theology, obviously, and studying that the Holy Spirit is with us as believers. But we can quench and grieve the Spirit to such a degree that we wonder, Lord, are you even with me? And I'm going to remind you, as I reminded myself this week, that no one influences you more than you. No one deceives us more than we deceive ourselves.

And our defense attorney works overtime. Do you have a defense attorney? No, I don't think I do. You do.

He's in here. He's your defense attorney. He puts us in the best light.

We have excuses, we have reasons and justifications for everything. So what I'm going to do, do I need to pull this back a little bit? Is that where that feedback is coming from? Maybe so. We've been praying all morning.

I wore my preaching shirt and I haven't shaved, so I'm a little bit ready to go here. Back to the basics. And I'm just going to throw it out there.

Hopefully it's okay. One of the things I often struggle with sometimes is when God brings back another topic, and it's, Lord, man, it's a broken record. What are you doing? It's a broken record.

And no sooner was I thinking that than, Phil, you prayed it this morning in the prayer room next door. Lord, this is not a broken record. This is what your people need to hear.

And I start crying because I'm like, this is what I've been struggling with all week. So when we talk about the gifts of the Spirit, that's a gift, that's a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge that I had to hear for God to say, okay, you're on the right path here. This isn't a broken record.

I want to speak something to my people. And it's okay to go back to the basics. I was reminded in 1961, no, I did not live back then, but the Green Bay Packers lost the championship.

And it was 1961. They walked out to the first day in training camp. I think it was 38 players.

And Vince Lombardi, many of you know who he was, right? Very famous football coach. He walked out and he said, gentlemen, this is a football. He brought them back to the basics.

You're talking to the Green Bay Packers. You don't need to tell them what a football is. Sometimes we have to go back to the basics as believers.

So what I want to do on this topic of is the Lord really with you? Go back to Acts 1 and just briefly catch up to where we are now because the Lord is with these people. The Lord is moving in the church. Is He with us? Is He with you? The first thing that we found many, many months ago when we started is they gave themselves fully to the work of God.

They gave themselves fully to the work of God. So one reason, one way to indicate if the Lord is with you, are you involved somewhere? Are you moving? Are you active? Are you doing something for the work of God? You have to be moving because if not, you become very stagnant and become like the Dead Sea. And when the Lord is with you, He is with us to do something, right? He's with me to go minister.

If I just sit at home watching Netflix, drinking Kool-Aid and eating chocolate bars, He might not be with me to the degree I want Him to be. But if I'm wanting to go to the hospital homes or serve in different areas, the Lord is with you as you move. And I'm not afraid of the prayer of Jabez.

You remember that prayer? Oh, that book stirred up a lot of controversy 20 years ago. Just go online. That's a selfish prayer.

I don't think so. Jabez said, Oh God, would You bless me? Would You lengthen? Would You increase my territory? Would Your hand be with me and keep me from evil so I don't cause pain? That's selfish? It is if you're thinking, bless me with this and this, and if I could just get this car and drive that. Yeah, that's very selfish.

But if you're saying, Lord, bless me so I can be a blessing to others. Bless my home because the opposite of a blessing is a curse. And that book caught a lot of heat.

I don't know theologically. I didn't look into it. But the prayer of Jabez is in the Bible.

It's a healthy prayer. Lord, bless me. Increase my territory.

Increase the influence. Because if you're not increasing, you're decreasing. And then he said, but Lord, keep Your hand with me.

That Your hand would be with me. The hand of the Lord was with David. The hand of the Lord was with Daniel.

The Lord was with Samuel. The hand of the Lord was with. But is He with us? It's a very important question.

You have to give yourself fully to the work of God. You have to give yourself fully to the work of God. And that's one reason I wanted Mike to give that testimony because it's not about weight loss.

What are we talking about weight loss at church? We're talking about the spiritual health of our soul. And C.S. Lewis said, I'm contemplating whether I should even quote this because I don't know if I'll get it just right, but something like our body and our soul are so close together that we often share the same diseases. And what he meant was, what affects a physical affects a spiritual.

And your spiritual will affect your physical. They live together. You see somebody who's self-disciplined, takes care of what God has given them, and it's easy to apply spiritual self-discipline.

Or easier. But if we give ourselves over to, I can't even get home without getting chocolate. And I have to get that six pack.

And I have to get that in and out. And the flesh is just controlling us everywhere we go. I guarantee you, you are not as strong spiritually as you think you are.

Been there, done that, still struggle. When he said pizza and beer sounds good, it does. Confession.

I mean, everything's, oh, I like pizza and hamburgers and all those things. But when they begin to gain control of us, I'm getting way off direction now, so let me pull this back in here. So that they gave themselves fully to the work of God.

Number two, they came down off their high horse. They came, see, I wish I could stay right here for a while. They came down off their high horse.

Like, what does that mean? Do you ever hear that phrase? Well, if you research it, I didn't research it a lot, but I'm assuming that it was military, it was kings, and they would be up on their high horse looking down at people, looking down at others, looking down, coming down off their high horse, there was humility. Expose the defense attorney. He's the one that's defending you.

He's the one that's defending you in the wrong direction. And the self-righteous person lives in deception. The Lord is not with them.

The Lord is not with the self-righteous arrogant person. See, I have to expose the defense attorney. Most people won't, so let's expose him.

That's what he does. He is self-righteous. But this, but that, but this.

So think about this for a minute. How can God lift you up when He will abase you if you're not humble? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. In due time, He will exalt you.

If you exalt yourself, He will abase you. How can He teach you when it's the humble He teaches? How can we pray for wisdom but pride brings disgrace? Proverbs. We want healing and deliverance but the humble He heals.

See, we pray for things, but if my people who are called by my name will exalt themselves, will humble themselves. He has shown you, oh man, what does the Lord require? But to walk humbly before your God. Now this is an interesting topic.

I've talked about a lot this on many different occasions, but those who this applies to think it doesn't apply to them. And those who are working on this area are saying, amen, same preacher, brother, I need more humility. And God's working on them, and they're not prideful, they're humble.

So the ones that don't need to hear it are hearing it. The ones that need to hear it aren't hearing it. Because the defense attorney comes in and goes, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I'm not listening. So we look from the book of Acts, back to the basics, getting involved, fully to the work, gave themselves fully to the work of God. They came down off their high horse.

And then number three, they could not be conquered because they were united. Listen, the enemy can't do anything in a church that is united. I pulled this from Sermon Index, I believe it was K.P. Yohannan who said this many years ago.

Being poisoned by negative talk, one person in a church or ministry is dissatisfied, bitter, critical, and unwilling to change. Did you catch that? Here's where division starts from. Here's where the enemy comes in.

One person or two or three in a church or ministry is dissatisfied. They are bitter and they are critical and they are unwilling to change. Just thought of a great example right now as I'm saying this.

Many of these songs we do, people from past generations don't understand. I've never sung those songs before, therefore they must not be biblical. Well no, the old hymns used to be new hymns.

Right? The old hymns just written in 1756, well in 1756 they were saying, we can't sing this. We don't sing these songs. So we have to be, remember, we have to be doctrinally sound, we have to run things through

the lens of Scripture, but at the same time we have to be open to what God is doing.

So be careful. There's nothing wrong with saying, hey what about this and what about this and critiquing, but to come with a critical spirit, it's not healthy, it's actually arrogant. He or she starts to talk negatively and poisons others.

Soon the atmosphere of love among the brothers and sisters is replaced by disunity, anger, and hardness of heart towards each other and the Lord. Guess what? That's what's happening in most churches. It will happen here.

It happens here. There are seasons of this. This will happen here.

And the hand of the Lord will not be upon you if you are divisive. The hand of the Lord will not be upon you or your life if you're divisive. If I'm divisive.

If I'm critical. Again, nothing wrong with challenging in love. But there's something wrong with having a critical heart that always wants to challenge or always wants to pick apart.

Do you think God is happy with that attitude? Maybe the 11 a.m. will be more responsive. I think our new motto is going to be this. Are you stirring the pot or are you mending the wound? Are you... I'm not doing the cabbage patch.

Stirring the pot, causing trouble, or are you mending the wound? The wound. Right, not the wound. What are we doing? That's our motto.

Somebody's saying something or getting critical. Are you stirring the pot or are you trying to fix and help? Big difference there. Now I don't want to dishearten anybody.

We are always open for constructive criticism. I get it weekly if not daily. So don't think that.

But I can discern the critical heart in those who truly love and want to help. There's a big difference. So we need to go back.

That's one of the basics. Fully surrender to the work of God. Humble ourselves and be united.

Here's the thing about unity. It doesn't come naturally. You know what comes naturally? Disharmony.

You want to hear me play that piano? Why? It's not in unison. It's not working. We want to point out certain things.

We want to point fingers. So unity comes supernaturally as we submit to the work of God. It does not come naturally.

You will not just come in here, and say, I'm just so united with the body. Well, the spirit is. But the flesh is.

Right? Picking apart from the moment we get here. And it's just this thing that I think God wants to deal with in all of our hearts. This is why we must discern the spirits.

Discern the spirits. Is it of God or is it of Satan? Now, before you think I'm going in a different direction here, I'm not. Because God and Satan are both planting thoughts into our minds.

Are both allowing certain things to happen. Corrie Ten Boom said, it's a poor soldier indeed who doesn't even recognize the enemy. It's a poor soldier indeed who doesn't even recognize the enemy.

So you have to discern between spirits. What spirit is influencing you? Here's a good test, just throwing it out there. During worship, were you restless and wanting them to hurry up? And I got things to do.

Wrong spirit. Wrong spirit. I'll challenge that till the day I die.

That is the wrong spirit. And it needs to be challenged. It needs to be lovingly confronted.

Satan plants thoughts focused on pride, bitterness, anger, lying. How does Satan plant thoughts? I don't know exactly. I don't like the concept.

But we know that we have to take our thoughts captive. Do we have scriptural support for this, Shane? Where do you want to start? Satan inspired David to number his people. He put it into Ananias and Sapphira to lie about the money.

He put something else into the church. Paul was writing about the church in Corinth. Mike mentioned, but also the root of bitterness that begins to grow.

Do you know what a root of bitterness is? It starts out little. It's okay when it's little. What you do is you go pull it out.

Just go pull it right out. But that root of bitterness, if it starts to grow and grow and he keeps planting thoughts. See, that's why that scripture is so important.

Take your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. That's where the enemy is going to be won. So Satan is contending, the Holy Spirit is contending.

What do we do with our thoughts? Lying, pride, bitterness, all these things are taking root and we have to pull them out. James 3.14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but it is earthly, sensual, and demonic.

Sensual? Senses. Of our senses. It's demonic.

So if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, the Lord is not with you. The wisdom, this wisdom does not descend from above, but it's earthly, sensual, demonic. For where every form of envy and self-seeking exists.

Come on, we know what self-seeking is, right? Everything is about self. Everything. Where we eat, where we park, where we self-seeking.

It's all about me. If that's occurring, then confusion and everything, every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above, here's God's wisdom, here it is, is first pure.

Then it's peaceable. Gentle. Gentle.

Willing to yield. Full of mercy and good works. Oh my goodness.

Are you willing to yield? Are you willing to bend a little bit? Not be so flexible? There's a quote I read, I'm glad I came across it, it really put this in perspective. It's actually a book written to pastors. And the person

said, this person I believe is Jack Hafer quoting somebody, he said, I have never fully exercised the authority given to me in my position.

And I always try to remember that because you have to be willing to yield. Fathers, can it be said of us? We never fully exercise the authority given to us in our position to hurt? Or to take things? Or is there a willingness to bend? There's a willingness to yield full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy. That's the wisdom from above.

So what spirit is with you? What spirit is controlling you? Because 1 Timothy 4.1 in the NIV says this. The spirit clearly says that in latter times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Isn't that interesting? So it's not just thoughts, it's taught.

It's not a word, but it rhymes. Taught by demons. In the latter times, right? Judgmental people are saying he didn't use King James only, he used the NIV.

There you go, critical spirit. NIV, all the translations are clearly along these lines. The spirit clearly says that in latter times some will abandon the faith, walk away and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

So when we say is the Lord with us, we have to really think this through because the doctrine of demons, thoughts and demonic sources, this could be influences, relationships, habits, all the things I talk about. Be careful, this was eye-opening for me when I realized that because sometimes we think, oh, the demonic realm, you know, the movie about the Ouija or the Blair Witch Project or The Conjuring and all this demonic. They are, but also anything that's not of God is demonic.

And demonic just really means the character or the nature of something. So it doesn't have to be outright complete evil that we know is blatant evil. It could just be things that have the demonic nature, the characteristics of Satan not God.

And then we allow those things to influence us and the Lord is not with us. The Lord is not leading us. You know, it's interesting, on the doctrine of demons, it does beg the question, how many decisions are we making? What are we doing? Listening to the wrong voice.

Listening to the wrong influence. And remember, the demonic doesn't always appear black and dark and scary. Sometimes it appears as an angel of light.

Or good. Or, boy, that seems okay, doesn't it? Everybody else is doing it. Everybody else is going that direction.

Everybody else is such and such. So pride, humbling ourselves, also being united, and then the fourth point, something I mention often, but I think we have to be reminded often, is they were people of prayer. And I added there this morning, they were people of militant prayer.

Shane, that word seems a little too hard. Do you know what militant means? If you look up many different definitions, but one of the ones that stood out was aggressive. Aggressive prayer.

They conquered the flesh more than the flesh conquered them. They conquered the flesh more than the flesh conquered them. And people say, Shane, you just want me to be perfect.

No, I don't want you to be perfect. I want you to fight for the love of God. Fight! Fight for your children.

Fight for your family. Fight for your spirituality that is dying. Fight the good fight.

How can we send out an email to 500 people and 7 show up for prayer? Yeah, it's supposed to hurt. So next week there won't be 7. There will be 27, right? And it's a good conviction. Good conviction.

It's okay, folks. I've been there, done that. Guess who hasn't been here at prayer time all the time? Me.

Because I've got to preach. I've got to get ready. Not anymore.

Not anymore, Jack. Phil, we're going to be out of that room pretty soon. We're going to have to move it next door.

Because that's what starts the engine. That's what gives us life. Without prayer, you're dying.

We just can't come in. Oh, that's wonderful. The worship team did a good job.

I saw Phil today. Let's go home. That doesn't change anything.

It's waiting on God and praying and pressing in. A man is who he is on his knees before God and nothing more. A woman is who they are on their knees before God and nothing more.

Nothing more, Shane. No. You hear what I'm saying? That's where everything starts.

That's the foundation of life. That's the foundation of spiritual health. Who we are on our knees affects everything else.

When the prayer life is stifled, is my spiritual walk on fire? Boy, I can tell each and every one of you that we're all in the same mold. When my faith ceases to pray, my faith ceases to live. Prayer is that heartbeat that keeps pumping the life throughout the body.

That's why the prayer meeting is usually the Cinderella of the church. Isn't it? The prayer meeting. That's the Cinderella.

Let's go put her way back in the top attic. Let's get rid of her. Let's put out everything else, but she's the one that keeps the house clean.

She's the one that keeps everything together, and when the prince comes, he's going to find her. Because she's waiting on God. So I will encourage you.

We've added a third service here. It's at 730 in the morning. And we need to be men and women of prayer.

Well, I've got kids. Bring them. It's okay.

It's okay for kids to see their parents praying. This is kind of hard to say, but it's the truth. You want to know the image? Now, where we're living, the image that most kids have of their parents.

You ready for this one? A week goes by, a month goes by, and a year goes by. And we're creating the very thing we're trying to avoid. If kids could see their mom and their dad praying together and contending for marriages, crying out to God, you would see a big difference.

What spirit? What spirit? Is the Lord really with you? What spirit is controlling our homes? You can hear a pin drop in these kind of messages, can't you? Because this is what is important. God is wanting to... He

ripped my heart out this whole week. I had to get rid of the whole sermon.

Hopefully, I'll use it next week. And just start over at 2.45 in this morning, getting up at 3, putting this all together. Lord, what? And just ripping my heart out for the families.

Maybe it's me. Maybe I see too much of the Facebook messages. My husband's addicted to porn.

He's left me for somebody else. What do I do? I'm suicidal. My daughter's cutting.

They want to die. What do I do? What do I do? So it's everywhere. So we got to wake up at some point, don't we? Don't we have to wake up and say, He just wants me to be perfect.

No. Kill that. Kill that defense attorney.

I don't want you to be perfect. I just want you to fight for the love of God. Fight.

Whoever said the Christian faith is for wimpy, lazy people. It's not. Read your Bible.

It's warfare. It's spiritual battle. And we're supposed to be falling forward.

And then as a result of everything we just talked about, the Spirit fell upon them. The Spirit fell upon them. That's what happened.

Do you truly want the Spirit to fall upon you? I don't think everybody does. We got this image at work. I've got this image.

I don't want that, Shane. I don't want that to happen. And that's why, again, the quote from Lennon Ravenhill, Will we look back with shame as we remember nights of prayer and genuine gifts of the Holy Ghost? When we were not clock watchers and our meetings lasted for hours saturated with holy prayer.

Maybe it was just convicting, but my wife and I, we were at a prayer meeting a long time ago. I don't even want to say the time because I'm probably wrong. I think it was 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. We finally left.

And just the presence of God. I preach where the first service runs into the second. People are waiting in the lobby.

And worship is just, we just don't want to leave. Is that a shame? Do we have no shame for children that know nothing of such power? Listen, they can come to Oana and go home and not know the power of God. They can be in children's ministry and just go home and not know about the power of God.

We've colored some pictures and we know about, well, they swallowed somebody and gee, we know but not experience the power of God. Listen, folks, unless God brings revival and pours His Spirit down and falls upon, not an empty altar, not an empty altar. The altar had to have a sacrifice on it.

Something had to die in order for life to be given. The fire fell on a sacrifice. And we have too many empty altars.

Do you know that's what initially the altar was for the church? And I'm embarrassed to say this, that we don't use this like I thought we would be using it. I mean, I came from old school preaching where I would just go in and preach, I'm done, see you later. You deal with the mess.

I don't care what people think. And the altar is full of men crying, weeping, and God would be moving. And now we just don't want to offend, we don't want to upset.

We've got this group and this group. I'm done. I don't care who I offend.

Get the church down to 50 again. We'll start over. We've got to experience God like A.W. Tozer said.

I want the presence of God Himself or I don't want to have anything to do with religion. Nothing. It's interesting, in that verse it said, in the Spirit of the Lord, the Lord is with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

Is it possible that people are not believing in your spirit of influence, are not turning to the Lord because maybe the Holy Spirit is quenched and grieved? The Lord isn't with us to the degree we think He's with us? There's not prayer and fasting and humility. There's not genuine worship. There's not unity.

We're divisive. We're putting people down. And we think that the Spirit of the Lord is going to move inside of that environment.

Folks, I've got a word here for you that that's not going to happen. Something needs to die on the altar.

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