

Lord, Help Me Change!

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of personal change through God's help, accountability, and community support while warning against the dangers of leaving one's heart empty of God's presence.

Duration: 56:42

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 12:43

Topics: "Accountability", "Change"

Description

Shane Idleman addresses the necessity of change in our lives, emphasizing that as sinners, we all have areas that need transformation. He highlights the importance of seeking God's help in this process, as mere willpower is insufficient. Idleman encourages the congregation to expose their sins, implement safeguards, and recognize their responsibility in the change process, while also relying on God's strength. He reminds listeners that true change requires both divine assistance and personal accountability, urging them to fill their hearts with the things of God to resist negative influences. Ultimately, he calls for a heartfelt return to God, emphasizing that change is possible through surrender and faith.

Transcript

I want to talk tonight on the topic of change. Is there anybody in here that wants to change any aspect of your life? If you're not, I'd love to meet you after the service and tell me actually how you do that. Because as sinners, on this side of the cross, there are going to always be areas that we need to change and want to change.

And sometimes that can be healthy because that can drive us to God. We'll be the person who says, I don't need to change, I'm good, I got God down, I'm doing everything by the book. Usually they're not doing everything by the book, they need the book.

To be enlightened, to show them areas that they need to improve on. And maybe it's just as my role pastoring, a role I never would have chosen. God chose it and I'm grateful for that.

But the hardest part for me, and I've explained this before, is seeing people die spiritually. With living water just steps away. If you would just drink, if you would just take of this living water, your thirst will be over.

If you just take of this and watching them go through many different things, it's hard. But most people, they'll say, I want to change. I don't want to continue this addiction.

Or I don't want to continue this temper. I'm destroying my family. I need to change.

I need to change. And that's what I want to talk about tonight. And the interesting thing is, the church as a whole, we either get caught on this side, where it's all about me, willpower.

I just got to push through. I just got to get back on track. I just got to do this.

New Year's resolutions, I'm going to do it. And that won't work. Because you need God.

But then there's the other side where it says, okay God, change me. Change me. Help me lose this weight as I went by Krispy Kreme donuts and eating those while I'm watching TV.

Just change me. No, you've got to do something. So we want to find that balance.

Because it's God who changes us, but he also requires that we do certain things on our side. They work together. God says, if you do this, I'll do this.

If you do this, I'll do this. So anytime you want to change, you don't want to eliminate either one of those. You're going to have a responsibility.

You can't do God's part. Let him do his. But you have a responsibility.

I have a responsibility to be involved in that process. So what's that look like? Well, let's dive into this. Matthew 12, verse 43.

Actually, I came across a casting crown song this morning. Some of you have heard East to West. And it reminded me of this topic.

I actually redid the first page just to read this. It says, Here I am, Lord, I'm drowning in a sea of forgetfulness. The chains of yesterday surround me.

I yearn for peace and rest. I don't want to end up where you found me. And it echoes in my mind.

It keeps me awake tonight. I know you've cast my sin as far as the east from the west. And I stand before you now as though I've never sinned.

But today I feel like I'm just one mistake away from you leaving me this way. Can we relate to that? A lot of times, I'm just one more mistake. God's about ready to just drop the hammer on me.

He's done with me. Thank God. They say, He's the God of second chances.

He's the God of 10,000 chances. Talk about a merciful, loving, gracious God that draws us back, that prodigal son imagery that you have of coming back to a loving father. Isn't it interesting the prodigal son came to himself, and then he ran back to the father? God just didn't instantly pick him up and bring him home like a puppet.

There's responsibility on our part. So Matthew 12, verse 43 is where we left off last week. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest and finds none.

Then he says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they

enter and dwell there.

And the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation. Now, let me relieve some of you right now.

In context, this scripture isn't talking to Christians. That was a close one. But there's a principle here that we can definitely glean from.

The context, if you remember, is Jesus was talking about blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. You remember these religious leaders were rejecting him. They're rejecting his call.

They're rejecting his good works. They said, you're just doing these good works because you're Satan. And Jesus said, you are stiff-necked people.

You're resisting the Holy Spirit. You're actually participating in the unpardonable sin. And that's the sin where if you reject Christ, the day we breathe our last breath, that's unpardonable because we can't be forgiven.

We lost that opportunity. So the context is still this group of people rejecting Christ. That's the context.

It's not a Christian warning, okay, you better do something, or you better keep Christ in your heart, or the devil's going to come in and bring seven spirits worse than the first. It has nothing to do with the believer. The context is an unbeliever.

You can do outward things and sweep the heart, do reformation, but that's not going to make a lasting change. I like what Matthew Henry said. He's a commentator back in the 1700s.

He said the unclean spirit leaves for a time, but when he returns, he finds Christ is not there to shut him out. The heart is swept by outward reformation, and the man becomes a more decided enemy of the truth. Every heart, hear this, every heart, and it might be some in this room, is the residence of unclean spirits, except those which are temples of the Holy Ghost by faith in Christ.

So that's the context there. But here's the important principle that we're going to talk about tonight. We must fill our heart with the things of God.

If you don't fill your heart with the things of God, guess who comes in? The satanic influence comes in, and they begin to dominate, they begin to rule, they begin to reign, they begin to control, because you've given up control. So there's an important principle here. If our heart is not full of the things of God, what's it going to be full of? The things of the world, that we're opening up ourselves to that satanic assault.

And some of you might be saying, oh, Shane, Satan, satanic. Well, let me just tell you up front, and truthfully, there's a heaven, there's a hell, there's a good, there's an evil, there's a right, there's a wrong, there's a God, and there's Satan that opposes him. It's crystal clear throughout Scripture.

And we can even see it working in our own life. Sometimes you wonder, how in the world did that happen? And we see that demonic element taking place. And I like, there's another commentator, he said, no good parallel has been cited for the journey in waterless places.

But the imagery is probably based on the idea that demons will move naturally in realms where conditions are antithetical to our well-being and devoid of the blessings of God. And I underline that, and I highlight, I

said, this is profound, and it's absolutely true. Here's the point, demonic activity will move naturally in realms where conditions are opposed to our well-being and devoid of the blessings of God.

So in a nutshell, you remove God, guess who moves in? I'm not talking about demonic possession and exorcist and all that stuff. Ironically, all these young adults now like the American horse story. I just watched a trailer of that and get nightmares.

I mean, I don't know how, I mean, we're feeding our mind with this garbage and wonder why God seems distant. We wonder why we're struggling in these areas. It's because you're creating an environment for Satan to thrive, Satan to flourish.

See, that's the interesting thing. If we're not filling our heart with the things of God, just by default, you're going to fill it with the things of the world. And then you're going to be led astray by the things of the world, influence.

They're going to influence you in the direction that opposes God. So that's a very important point for us. We either provide fertile ground for Satan to work or fertile ground for the things of God to grow.

And you know how I often say sin either grows or withers depending on whether you feed or starve it. If that's one thing you take from this, highlight it, write this down. Sin either grows or withers depending on whether we feed or starve it.

That's the principle of this whole message. What's in our heart? Is Satan going to come and say, I can't get in there, God's got shelter, He's got a protection, He's got that covered. Or do we open ourselves up for the demonic influence? And here's what the Bible says about this area.

Ephesians 4.27, do not give the devil a foothold. So that tells me I can give the devil a foothold. How? By opening the door.

You ever do that, somebody opens the door, like my kids open the door, they want to slam it? I just put my foot right there, guess what, the door's not closing. I've got a foothold. Now I've got advantage.

Now the door's open, now I come in. That's the imagery. Don't even give the devil a foothold.

But what we like to do, we like to play with the lion that's sent to kill, steal and destroy. Isn't that a cute little kitty? And we use a baby gate to guard a lion. So the Bible says, don't give the devil a foothold, because once you do, he will pounce through that door.

Remember the Bible also talks about your enemy, your adversary, goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. How does he devour us? Open the door. If the door's shut, there's no devouring.

And that's really what this point is about. Don't give the devil a foothold. You might be saying, okay Shane, you got me thinking, how do I do that? Well, that's where we're getting into the practical application in just a minute.

Also the doctrine of Balaam. I've talked about last year in Numbers 22. It's a doctrine, theologians call it the doctrine of Balaam, because what happened is King Balak hired Balaam to curse the children of Israel.

He hired him to curse the children of Israel. So once he kept trying to curse the children of Israel, God said, no, you can't curse them. You can't curse them, there's peace there, there's peace there.

And the guy came back and said, I can't curse the children of Israel because they are blessed. So the whole doctrine there is you cannot curse what God has blessed. So what happened to the children of Israel then? They were blessed of God.

They removed themselves from the covering. So the false prophet said, listen, I can't, I can't curse them, but I'll tell you what you can do. You can have them curse themselves.

Bring in the women of the land. Bring in idolatry and let them be seduced and pulled away from God. See, that's how he works.

So he says, come on, come on. See, isn't that easy? Oh, see, nothing's happening. Nothing's, come on.

That's how he gets you out of that covering, gets you out of that shelter and that protection. That's another way he operates. And the final one, Ephesians 6.11, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

What is the word wiles there? Trickery, deceit. So he says, put on the armor of God because the devil is going to come in and trick you. He's going to deceive you.

It's called an angel of light. He doesn't come in as an angel of darkness, though. He comes in as an angel of light.

You know, that's not that bad. That's no big deal. And we begin to compromise in these areas.

So when we abandon God's plan for our lives, we also abandon his covering, his shelter, his protection. And that's the interesting thing. Looking back now, I say, duh.

But in my teenage years, in my early 20s, you know, you always get mad at God's word. Ah, golly, a bunch of do's and don'ts. But then you realize that they're actually guardrails through the canyons of life.

That's what it does. So when you remove, when we abandon God's plan for our lives, we abandon his covering, his shelter, his protection. It doesn't mean life's perfect.

It doesn't mean life's great. But you can remove yourself from God's covering, from that protection, and open yourself up. I mean, Peter says, the enemy goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

How does he devour? We open up to that. We remove ourselves from God's protection and open ourselves up. So let's get into the practical application.

If you want to change tonight, and I'm talking about any, I'm talking about change from anger issues, addiction, gossiping, tongue, lust. I mean, we know what they are, right? I mean, our hearts are going, okay, I need to work on that area. We just won't tell anybody about it, but we hold it in there.

And that's the first thing I want to talk about. If you really want to change, if we really want to change, you have to expose the sin. You have to expose it.

It's like cancer. You've got to expose it. It doesn't mean you tell everybody.

It doesn't tell a lot of people. You go to some trusted people or a spouse. Maybe that's not a good idea for some of you.

But you go to somebody, you know, somebody, the elders of the church would love to meet with you afterwards, or somebody where you can expose it and you bring it to the light. See, sin loves deception. It loves darkness.

It loves that hidden element where you say, I can handle this myself. I can quit any time. I can handle this.

But when you expose it and you say, listen, I'm struggling in this area. I need help. I'm exposing it.

I remember a while back, I knew there was a spouse who came to their other spouse and said, man, listen, this is going to be hard for you to hear, but I'm struggling with lust. They're like, what? But I'm bringing it to the light. Would you help me? Can we talk about it more? Can you help me and keep me accountable? Can we bring more intimacy back in our marriage so the devil doesn't have a foothold? And that helped the marriage.

You would think it would hurt, but be by the spouse admitting, hey, I'm struggling here. Can you help me? It brings it to the light. It loses its power.

The enemy goes, oh, darn it. That was my ace in the hole. I was going to keep working on that, but now it's to the light.

You've exposed it. It loses its power. It grows in darkness.

And the pull of sin often doesn't vanish, but the power of it fades when it's exposed. That's one of the steps. You know, you look at these Celebrate Recovery or AA or whatever it is people go to, and they say, listen, here it is.

I'm a whatever, and I'm exposing this. I want you to keep me accountable. This is the area I need help on.

This is the area I'm struggling. And the enemy just loses ground. So if you want to change, you have to admit what you want to change.

But like many of us, oh, we play church really well, and I couldn't admit. Everybody thinks I got my life together. Man, if you could see everybody's thought life in the course of a day, it would make you sick.

I mean, let's be honest. Lord, help us change. Not my thought life, though.

It's good. You guys. Well, I'm going to talk about that in a minute, how to really change in this area.

But there's a website I want to encourage some people to go to if you're not open for a meeting, like Celebrate Recovery or different things. But it's called settingcaptivesfree.com. And it's like a 40-day study on addiction. Settingcaptivesfree.com. It'll bring scripture.

It'll bring testimonies. But I was looking over it before I recommend it. I want to look it over.

And it said there is deception thinking you can handle this yourself. That's where pride comes in. I can handle this myself.

When you're at that point, you no longer look to the Lord for your help. Then there is shame because you're living a deceptive dual life. So we say, I can handle this.

And you can't. And when you fall and fall and fall, it brings shame. And now I'm living in shame.

It's a double-minded man and stable on his ways. I'm miserable. I don't want to go to church.

Let's be honest. Why do you think so many people miss church? Not this church. All the churches.

Why? They're living in sin and they don't want to be confronted. I don't like that. Here I go again.

Down this road again. There he goes. Hammering me again.

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. It's because we don't like it. I'm not going to church this week.

I'm not going next week. And we avoid it. Many Christians avoid church because they don't feel the conviction there.

I don't want that. And they live this dual life. And deep in their hearts, they say, Lord, I want to return to my first love.

Don't you want that passion back when worship used to pop and it used to worship God and tears would come down your face and the Word of God became alive and you'd spend hours and hours each week reading the Word of God. It came alive and you're filled with the Spirit of God. You couldn't wait to get to church.

I'm going to get there early. Where did all that go? Because we're caught in this cycle that has to be broken. I believe it has to be broken tonight.

And one of the ladies' testimonies on the website said this. I'd gotten to the point that I could not even look another Christian in the eye. Have you ever been there? I have.

And I know because people avoid me a lot. It's funny because people say, you must have a lot of friends. Everybody wants to know the pastor.

Actually, everybody wants to avoid the pastor. That's the truth. I mean, a lot of my own family members, you know, we don't want to be around you because what you stand for, we don't like.

They don't even realize, hey, I'm a struggler too. Hey, we're just all sinners together. Let's not point fingers.

Let's not judge. Let's help each other. But I see this a lot.

I'd gotten to the point I couldn't even look another Christian in the eye. Their walk with Christ was convicting to me. And just on that note, if we are the people convicting others, we should also be the ones offering the grace to them and say, hey, listen, I know you're going through a lot.

If you need anything, let me know. I'm not any better. I've been there.

I can help. Instead of, oh, how could you? And we push them further and further away. So you can have a huge ministry by just forgiving and loving and allowing God to draw them back.

It doesn't mean their walk is right, but it means you're not going to judge them. I found many times they don't need you quoting scripture. They are well aware that they're on the wrong path.

And then I come in there, oh, looky here. No drunkards, no thieves, no homosexuals, no adulterers are going to enter the kingdom of heaven. You're in trouble.

They're like, I know that, Shane. That's why I'm, can you help me here? So they need us to bring life to that dead walk. I mean, I love to go and encourage people.

You guys remember a while back we were ministering inside of hospital homes. And on that note, we do need helpers. We've got three or four different homes throughout the valley, and a lot of these people are terminally ill.

They're not going to be getting out. And one guy I met in West Palmdale, I walked in, and the nurse said, oh, I don't know if you want to go in there. He's pretty depressed.

I mean, he was pretty depressed. I mean, you could just, you walk in a room, you ever feel that, oh, I don't like this. This is not my playground.

And I walked in there, and he was just a heroin addict, 30 years, heroin addict, cancer, has pictures of his little son and grandson, who he knows will never see. They're not going to come see him. And I was depressed and just listening.

And his name was John. And I just started to encourage him for about a half hour. You know, but look at what you can do now.

Restore that relationship with him. Show them how you're back in right relationship with the Lord. Let's get you in the Word of God.

Let's start doing it. And he started crying and gave me a hug as I left, like bawling. Like, I am so encouraged.

Then he started coming to church a few times, sitting in the back row. And he walked in and just started crying, worshipping. I'm like, how did this guy go from suicide to this? Hope.

Hope. And I wasn't doing anything magical, like, oh, Shane, will you talk to this person, this person. I mean, it was hard.

I can't do anything you guys can't do. And you get them focused on the hope. And he rebuilt his relationship with the son.

I mean, it was just a, and he passed away, I think, I don't want to get it wrong, but a few months ago, from what he went through, what he put his body through. But offering hope. And she continues, their walk with Christ was convicting to me because of the overwhelming shame and guilt I felt.

I ran to alcohol to numb myself because I didn't want to feel the very thing the Lord was using to get my attention. My heart began to get harder and harder. Sin is debilitating, exhausting, and paralyzing.

This zapping of strength, have you ever felt that? Keeps us powerless to fight the enemy and ineffective in serving God. It's the opposite of I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And it leaves us spent, tired, and emotionally drained by keeping that sin bound and in secret.

But then she goes on to say, fortunately, there is a way out. And the first way out is we have to expose it. We have to expose it.

That's one of the things I talk to when I go to men's conferences because I don't know if you guys will realize, but pornography is just a huge issue with men and women. It's everywhere. It's destroying families.

It's destroying walks with the Lord. It's everywhere. And I tell the guys, you've got to expose it.

Let your spouse know. Let your friend know. Oh, man, I don't want to do that.

Well, how bad do you want it? I mean, that's what it boils down to, doesn't it? How bad do you want it? How bad do you want to change? Because obviously this isn't working. And you have to expose it. So that goes back to what's our role? We expose it, we repent, and we ask God for help.

Maybe on an ongoing basis for a while. Expose it, repent, ask God for help. That's our job.

And then what does he do? Here's what he does. He fills us with his strength. He fills us with his spirit.

So now we're full of the spirit of God because we conquered that besetting sin. That's how they work together. You see how that works? But if we don't bring it to the light, God's over here going, uh-uh.

Unless that comes to the light, I can't deal with it. I can bring consequences that might bring it to the light, but you don't want to go down that route. So here's the second thing.

Once you bring it to the light, here's the second thing. Safeguards are guardrails. You've got to put safeguards in place.

This is huge. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is where you will see a lot of change take place if you can do this.

But we don't like guardrails, do we? We want to live free. I don't want anybody telling me what to do. I don't want these restrictions.

I want to just do whatever I want to do. And the enemy comes and works that because guardrails hold the lion back. Safeguards.

What's a safeguard? Well, drastic change requires drastic measures. And I usually shoot people straight. I say, you want to change? I talk to people hooked on this or hooked on that.

I mean, if you really want to change, it's going to require drastic measures. Jesus said, if your eye caused you to sin, go buy a pair of glasses. What's he say? Cut it out.

If your arm caused you to sin, is he talking about physically doing that? Yeah, of course not. Because you can still do that and still lust. Still commit sin.

But the imagery there is whatever it is, whatever it is that's causing you to continue in this lifestyle, to draw you away from God, you better cut it off before it cuts you off. And we have to take drastic measures. When people fall, it's often because they use a baby gate to guard a lion, as I said earlier.

Here's what happens. After a fall, a person is quick to repent and get back on track. Right? That was a close one.

Never again. Oh, next week. Repent, back on track, never again.

It's fall, repent, fall, repent, fall, repent, fall, repent. And then shame comes in, and guilt and humiliation and failure. And the enemy loves to get us in that spot where I'm just, I'm a failure.

I was born this way. I was just destined to be, I mean, I can't do anything with these desires, anything with these impulses. I can't, I'm so defeated.

And he just works in that defeat because from defeat comes excuses. Right? If I'm feeling defeated, I'm feeling, man, life stinks. We just keep, we just continue in it.

We just feed that with excuses. So we have to have safeguards in place to help with this. Again, these aren't things that just stop everything, but they help minimize the attack of the enemy because if he comes in like a lion, he comes in roaring, seeking who he can devour, you got to keep that door closed with safeguards.

So he hits that safeguard and says, there's a shelter, there's a protection. And God's word is clear on this area too. Here's a couple ways.

I'll just tell you up front, you're not going to like these, especially young adults, you're not going to like the first one. There's an app, you can go on the app store and find this, that allows parents to monitor their children's text messaging and Facebook posts, or you can go on their Facebook page. You can monitor their text messaging.

Now, what kid in their right mind is going to want this to happen? Nobody. Why? Because they're enjoying their sin. Can we just shoot straight tonight? If anybody says, that's a great idea, let's do it.

You know, they want to see God. If they say, no way, you're not touching that thing. Well, you're hiding something.

I found out something interesting. When young adults text, P-I-R, it means parent in the room, C-U-4-6, C-U-4-6, number nine, parent watching, number 99, my parent's gone. They have all these little codes.

It's a safeguard. If I was a young adult, I'd say, get me some safeguards. Because when I was your age, you had to drive to a liquor store to find something out in the desert.

I mean, there's nothing. You guys, there's an onslaught of attack coming into your phones, coming into your homes. You've got to put the safeguards in place.

If you don't want it, why? Why in the world would you not want a safeguard? I'll tell you why. Fill in the blank. Because I want to continue in my sin.

I want to feel guilty at church, but I don't really want to change. I want to cry a little bit, but I don't really want to change. We cry because we got caught.

That's why I talk to men. I say, are you crying because you got caught? Or are you crying because you really want to change? And then here's where you find out. Here's what I need you to do.

I'm not doing that. Oh, then you don't want to change. You just want to be a little sissy boy and cry.

And then the wife comes back, and then you continue in it. So I would encourage, get apps. You think I'm not going to get this app? I was so excited to hear this app's available.

Like, Daddy, you're not doing it. Oh, I'm not called to be your friend. I'm called to be your parent.

There's a roaring lion seeking to devour you. I'm going to do whatever I can, as often as I can, to protect you. That's my calling.

That's my goal. I'm not here to be your buddy. I'm not here to be like, other parents don't do that.

Well, other parents aren't your parents. That would be a huge safeguard. You think that might deter some, what they call sexting? You think that just might be a big deterrent? If my parents are going to see my text messages and what I post on Facebook? Personally, I think Facebook is very dangerous.

Very dangerous. And at a certain age, maybe 18, and you have, you know, I don't know, but that thing is not good, because it could open the door. I mean, I can count on both my hands how many divorces have resulted because of Facebook.

Hey, haven't seen you in 12 years. What are you up to? Oh, nothing. How about you? Hope my husband doesn't see this thing.

And then, there we go. The enemy says, I'm in. Thank you.

No safeguard in place. We started sharing our Facebook page about, I don't know, four, five, six years ago now. You know, she was getting hit on.

I was getting hit on. It's like, hey, let's just stop this real quick. Let's combine it.

Guess what? Nobody gets hit on. Safeguards. Safeguards.

There's also an app that helps with unaccounted time, so your spouse can go, hmm, why are you at Schooners and not Vons? Why are you in Northridge at the Kit Kat Club versus, I don't know if that exists. I'm sounding right. But aren't you supposed to be in unaccounted time? Hey, I told Morgan, let's put that thing on my phone.

I'd love it. You can't look and see where I'm at. Something's wrong.

And if somebody doesn't want to do it, why? Hey, listen, you're not pulling the wool over my eyes anymore. I've had the wool pulled over my eyes dozens and dozens of times by people who'd say one thing and do another. I don't care what people say anymore.

I want to see what they do. Show me your actions. I love what A.W. Tozer said.

He said, don't come up here and cry about it. Go home and live it out. Because we can cry, oh, I'm so tired.

But then when it comes down to it, now here's the other biggie, website accountability. Do you want to have your websites, all the websites you visit, go to accountability partner once a week? I know, Shane, are you crazy? Exactly. Why? Why? You have no safeguards in place.

I mean, I probably tell people this, and one out of 20 actually do it. One out of 20. I'm not putting that on my phone.

Why? Why? I'll tell you why. You're enjoying your sin. You don't really want to change.

You want to play games with God. If you really want to change, you'll put in safeguards. Think about it.

If every website you go to goes to your mom and your spouse, you think you might think twice about clicking something? Oh, you'll think, you won't think twice. You'll, oh, never, never. That'll kill it.

Safeguards. Say, Shane, you need safeguards? Oh, absolutely. I'm not scared as the devil as much as I am with the devil within.

I've said that many times before. We're filled with the Holy Spirit, but we're also filled with filthy flesh that would do nothing, would love nothing more than to just take me down. So safeguards help in that area.

I tell the elders, they tell me, hey, here's the area I'm struggling in. Help keep me accountable. Show me how you bring it to the light.

Loses its power. Then, okay, Shane struggles in that area. I need to help hold him accountable.

Versus me coming in here, oh, okay, I don't struggle with anything. What's wrong with you guys? You just gotta apply the word of God to your life. Come on, be like me someday.

If anybody says that, they've got so much sin in their life, they're just hiding all of it. Anytime you have to act so spiritual, there's something wrong. Again, share Facebook pages.

I know this is, I know these seem like, oh, wow, but you, a lot of people are friends with people they shouldn't be. Let's just be honest. Like, I don't want my wife seeing my, why? You guys are called to be one flesh and be the purity of heart, purity of mind.

If you're hiding things, if you're secretive, that's not good. That's deceptive, and you're on the wrong path. Why isn't it taking me down yet? Oh, it will.

Remember, the enemy doesn't come to you as a red guy dressed in a red suit with a pitchfork and tail, and I'm gonna get you. He comes in as an angel of light, bringing you in things. Oh, see, it's not that bad.

It's not that bad. He does it one step at a time. The next thing that's important is what I just said, checking in with those who love you and will help you.

Have somebody who's accountable. There should be people in your life say, hey, I struggle with this issue. Would you help hold me accountable? Would you, and they're not the answer.

Trust me, accountability partners are not the answer because you can work right around them. It's just supplemental. They help.

Another safeguard there. For example, if I told everybody, hey, I'm addicted to chocolate. Please help me.

I'm going on a fast. You think, if you saw me at stores, you'd be looking at me, hey, what are you doing? What are you buying there? Is that organic chocolate or regular chocolate? It's okay because you're

bringing that to the surface. Number five, on putting safeguards.

I would say this is probably one of the biggest things you can do if you're under 35 and older, of course, but this is the thing that keeps tripping up people. It's not a month goes by I don't get emails or Facebook or something with this is the problem. You need to evaluate your relationships and you need to cut off those that are taking you away from God.

You might think that's strong, but if somebody's pulling you away from God, you need to cut that loose. Well, I'm ashamed, but I'm ministering to them. No, you're not.

The Bible doesn't say if we fall, when we reach out to somebody, that that's okay. Especially young adults, they go back into drinking, back into buying Oxy, back into heroin, back into meth, back into, oh, my friend, they just keep pulling me back in. They pull me back in.

Sexual intimacy outside of marriage, pull me, pull me back in. But I just love her. I think she'll come to Christ someday.

No, that's not, the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible doesn't say, okay, keep that going on and then try to witness to her in the process. It doesn't say any of that.

It says come out from among them, be separate, be holy for I, your God, I'm holy. And once you cut off friendships that are bringing you down, the wonderful thing is you're filled with the spirit of God because you remove this deceptive influence. I mean, this took me down when I was 17, 18, 19, 20, all the friends, just bring me back into that lifestyle.

And that's a safeguard. Have people in your life that build you up, not pull you down. And again, this is where the rubber meets the road.

I tell people to do this, they go, I don't think about it. Why? Why don't you want to do it? Because you enjoy, we enjoy that sin. We enjoy that friendship and them taking us down.

If not, we would run for cover. We'd run in the other direction. And number six, avoid the triggers.

You might say, what does that mean? Well, glad you asked. What's a trigger do? Right? Pulls the trigger. Boom, boom.

That's it. You have to avoid those things. You know what they are.

What are those triggers that make us sin? Going on the internet alone, single people, lonely Friday nights. Want me to get real or what? Avoid places that fuel lust. I mean, some people laugh and I told my wife, I never want to go to the gym in the evenings.

That place is a smorgasbord of spandex and cosmic surgery and I mean, it's just like, whoa, it's everywhere. Like, these people, when's it get, how can it get any tighter? I mean, you just, you can't get any tighter and everybody just wants to show it. I was like, just, that's not a good place.

You have to avoid those places. Am I being too transparent? You have to avoid those places. When you go in the mall, you just, oh, there's Fredericks of Hollywood.

Wonder what's in, wonder what's on sale there. I mean, you just, Fredericks of Hollywood, you know, those stores, you just avoid those places for men. Okay, I'm talking about men.

Women, you avoid the triggers. What's triggering you? Shopping or places that, that you know it's a trigger for me to sin. I'm gonna, you avoid those triggers.

And I didn't say this in the first service, but I'll ask it here and it also, especially young adults, are you a trigger from what you post on Facebook? Are you pulling people down? By your attire or pictures you post on Facebook or bringing people into sinful lifestyle. Are you the trigger? You need to repent as well. There's purity in the house of God.

And again, it goes back to how bad do you want it? How bad do you want it? You can't play with a lion who goes about seeking to destroy you. So back to God and us, we're called to install safeguards. If you want a lot of Bible verses, how many, I mean, we could sit here for the next hour, make no provision for the flesh, right? Put in a safeguard.

Let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus. There's my thought life. Flee sexual immorality.

Don't fuel it. It goes on and on and on and on. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

So I've got all these responsibilities I have to do, but then on God's side, what does God do when I do all that? He keeps the lion caged. He keeps the lion on the leash. It's caged.

It's not gonna hurt you. But if you go and you open that door, let's see if this little guy's tame now. Oh, he's not.

And it's both. We have our responsibility. And I think a lot of times, He's saying, I'm trying to.

I'm trying to. I would recommend if you are a guy, get some accountability stuff on your phone, on your computer. Do it.

Guess how many people do it? Not many. Nobody will even ask me where to get it. I don't want them to see that.

That's a problem. There's a problem there. You should be transparent.

Maybe it's not your spouse. That might not be a good one for some of you, but get accountability partner who you can send the websites to or something. There's gotta be some safeguards because sin doesn't, again, withers, right? Either you feed or you starve it.

So if you feed it, it's gonna grow and grow and grow and grow. If you starve it, it's gonna be minimized and minimized and minimized. Number three, the third point, change is not easy.

Change is not easy. You need to prepare for the battlefield in the mind. Okay, prepare for it.

And I tell people this often that are coming off of addictions or different things that you have to prepare for. If you're coming off, the withdrawals are gonna be hell. The withdrawals, I mean, it's hell.

You have to prepare people for it. The addiction comes in and it begins to pull you away. I like what the NIV study Bible said about Esau, his life.

He acted on impulse. Listen, does this sound like some of us? Esau acted on impulse, satisfying his immediate desires without pausing to consider the long range consequences of what he was about to do. When we see something we want, our first impulse is to get it.

We might feel such great pressure in one area that nothing else seems to matter and we lose our perspective. Getting through that short pressure-filled moment is the most difficult part of overcoming temptation. So it's okay to tell people, listen, you're gonna fill that desire.

Sometimes, I used to speak up at a men's camp for addicts coming out of jail and they would tell me stories like, Shane, I felt that, I mean, the devil just grabbed my steering wheel and I knew right where that dealer was at on the street corner. Or he just grabbed it and I felt, right to the liquor store. It's almost like they fill this overwhelming impulse to sin.

Oh, God forbid. Has anybody else ever felt that? But if you prepare people and say, listen, getting through that short pressure-filled moment is often the most difficult part of overcoming temptation. The Bible says no temptation has overtaken you but what is common to man.

But God will provide a way that you may be able to bear it, escape. God's gonna provide the way of escape. One translation says that you may be able to endure it.

And that word endure is interesting because that means suffering patiently. That does not sound fun. We forget there's a cost.

To overcoming temptation, you're gonna have to suffer patiently. But then the fruit is the filling of the spirit. The fruit is love and joy and peace and contentment.

I've overcome that. Now the word of God becomes living and active. Now worship again is sweet to my soul.

Because I've overcome that. And we don't tell people it's a battle, it's gonna be hard. It's almost like, oh, you're just raised that way, there's nothing you can do.

And we forget that, yeah, God has given us the ability to overcome these things. Romans 13, 14, do not think about how to gratify the flesh. Paul's saying to the church in Romans, make no provision for the flesh.

Don't think about, I would bet there's a good portion in this room who are already thinking about how they're gonna sin later. And you wonder why we keep falling, because we're not supposed to make any provision for the flesh. Yeah, gosh, I just ruined my plan.

What about 2 Corinthians 10, 5? Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Take every thought. See, as believers, we're given the ability to take our thoughts captive.

So if I have a thought that's not a good thought, I have the ability to take that thought captive. Say, nope, I'm imprisoning you, you're not imprisoning me. You see the difference? I'm taking it, nope, that's not right, that's not right, I don't care.

Resist the devil and he will flee. It doesn't say he's gonna flee like that. You gotta resist.

Maybe you'll say, Lord, if you don't take this away, I'm gonna blow it in 10, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two. You didn't take this desire away. He says, no, I didn't, because you've got to fight.

There's an endurance there. You take those thoughts captive. You control your flesh.

You don't let your flesh control you. That's one of the big reasons why I promote fasting. That's why fasting, when you starve the flesh, it loses control, it loses dominion.

And you're filled with the spirit of God again, you're putting the flesh in submission because you're controlling those appetites. And a lot of life is about controlling the appetites. You either control them or they control you, one or the other.

Think about it. How many people have to get up in the morning and have to have their, yeah? You said it, I was gonna say Coca-Cola or something. How many people get up in the morning and have to have their water, right? Our desires are controlling us.

I have to hit Panda Express on the way home. Actually, I live by In-N-Out Burger. I'm controlled by my desires, and I have to have this, and then I have to, and we're just controlled by our desires.

The Bible has a different answer. You control those desires. You put the flesh at bay.

You put the flesh under your foot. You make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. You control it.

It doesn't control you as believers. And it's hard, it's difficult, but it can be done. And the fruit that comes from that is the filling of the Holy Spirit.

That's what comes from that. So here's what we do. We renew the mind and apply God's word, and then God strengthens us and renews us and brings peace and joy.

We're no longer prisoners of our appetites. That's how that works together. When desires, pressures, or bad habits come for the love of God, change the environment.

Usually it's the environment that creates certain things. Change that environment. Don't put on certain music.

Don't put on this. Don't get into the word of God and get into worship. Change the whole environment so your whole thought is renewed.

I did it back in 1999. I've given my testimony a few different times, but this was a biggie for me. It's changing my environment.

You're single. You're 30. It's Friday night.

You're coming to the Lord. It's like, oh, man. People call me.

Let's go to Vegas. Let's go to Bakersfield. Country bars.

Let's go to Hollywood. Let's hit the Whiskey Go-Go. I'm like, oh, what do you do with this? Well, you change the environment.

Turn the phone off. Turn your lights off. Get on Hillsong Worship for an hour and a half.

Get into the word of God before you know it, it's time to go to bed. I just changed the whole environment. You have to.

If not, it'll call. It'll keep calling. You have to change the environment that's fostering that addiction or fostering that bondage you're in.

We can't live like hell all week and expect to overcome besetting sin. We can't fill our mind with darkness all week and expect the light of Christ to shine. We can't feed the lion and expect him to die.

We can't. And I added this part. Sometimes I go back and forth.

I say, Lord, I've already said this a lot, but when I'm talking about change, I can't ignore this. As much as I want to, I can't ignore this. Many of you know, we did a health seminar last Saturday.

And the reason is because I often see in the videos available now, we've got three videos, myself, Luke and Sheila spoke. But I often see a parallel between our physical health and our spiritual health. When I'm dominated by addictions, I can feel it.

When I'm dominated by addictions, I eat too much, too much caffeine, too much coffee, too much sweet, too much too. My whole life is, I'm addicted to these things. I can tell big time how it affects me.

And you've got the testimony I gave in your bulletin. My wife, I remember, many years ago, I mean, it's always a struggle, but I was, I mean, anger, irritability, mood swings, all these things. And she just finally said, you're a jerk.

I know I am, but I had a bad day. Don't do a lot of pressure. And I began to realize I was the cause of my bad days and my mood swings because of what I was feeding my body.

Let this image stick in if Patty can get it up there. Who can relate? Right? Who can relate? The funny thing is, people, I'm often taken back at how many people get upset when I talk about things like this. It's almost like they want to cover their addiction.

They want to enjoy it. And I'm just shooting you straight. If you're putting things into your body that are counterproductive, there is a price.

There is a cost. So you say, Lord, take this anger away. He says, give up that 500 milligrams of coffee for the love of God.

You're a Christian on crack. That's Christian crack. And I would pray for years, Lord, take this away.

Take this away. No, I know you're convicting me about that, but there's no way this Vente is going anywhere for a while, so you just take it away. And guess what? He didn't.

He didn't. And you start realizing, I am a jerk. Lord, I need your help.

And when you wean off and wean off, now I have like this much. I'm like, oh, I never, I mean, but the first week and a half was hell. I mean, I told my wife, take the kids and just go somewhere for the next two hours because I just want to hit somebody.

The withdrawals alone tell you how powerful this stuff is. I was in shock. I'm like, this alters your mood.

This messes you up. So I see a physical and a spiritual connection a lot of times how we take care of our body affects us spiritually. If you don't think so, just show me one scripture to the contrary.

When God says, this is the temple of the living God, Paul says, I will not be brought under the control of anything. But think about how many people have to have their something tonight or tomorrow. Have to have it.

And if I don't have it, I'm a jerk and I'm mean and I'm rude. That's a problem. That's a problem.

And we wonder why we have no passion for God. Why anger and selfishness are dominating. Why are we miserable and unhappy? It's because we're allowing the flesh to control our life.

We're allowing these things to control our life. The final thing, point four is, and this is important, it's God who makes us stand firm in Christ. It's God who makes us stand firm in Christ.

Paul said something interesting. I had more time in the first service, but I won't now. Where he was fighting against something and God said, listen, my grace is sufficient for my power is made perfect in your weakness.

I thought about that this week. I'm like, my weakness is actually a strength? And it dawned on me that the weakness can keep you humble. If I say, hey, I'm weak in this area, that keeps you humble and you have safeguards and you're there, you're saying, I'm weak in that area.

I'm staying away from you. I'm weak. I'm not, uh-uh.

I'm weak in that area. And there's humility there. There's strength there.

That's where the strength, I'm weak there. And there's humility. There's honesty.

There's transparency. God loves that. Now you're alert.

Now I'm on guard. Now I'm wearing the armor of God because I exposed it. And here's the key.

God rebuilds the broken. He exalts the humble. He protects the weak.

He strengthens the sick. How? By turning to his strength, you create an environment where your faith can flourish and can grow. When I turn to his strength, he says, Great.

Finally. Finally. Now you're giving it up to me.

That's where that strength comes from. And then many people say, I tried that. It doesn't work.

Right? I can go over all these points. They'll still go, Yeah, but I tried that. It doesn't work.

I didn't mean to hit it that hard. Do I have coffee today? But, come on, just liven up here. But they say, I tried that.

It doesn't work. Often the reason is because they've tried outward reform rather than inward renewal. You're not supposed to try harder.

You give it to him. You surrender your life to him. If a person drifts, it's because they let go of the anchor.

If your boat drifts, it's because you let go of the anchor. If we drift from God, we let go of that anchor. I'm not talking about reforming and reforming.

I'm talking about inward renewal. The heart changes. Confession takes place.

Repentance takes place. Full surrender takes place to God. Everything is there for that environment to flourish.

In the closing part there, God says, or Jesus says, so shall it be with this wicked generation. It's interesting, that word wicked, basically we think of wicked as, oh, you know, something terrible. But wicked is just somebody who rejects God and his ways.

It's a perversity of mind. The mind's perverted. It's when the natural man surrenders himself to evil impulses.

Wickedness has its seat in the heart and it's inspired by Satan. It's progressive and it's contagious. That's wickedness.

So closing on the, I just want to close on these three, I want to talk to three people. Number one, the group, and this is, you know who you are, those who are progressing down the wrong path and you may even be leading others down. I want to talk to you right now on this point.

You know it, you're on the wrong path and you might even be heading, bringing other people down because sin is progressive. The one way the devil appears as an angel of light is by showing us the party, not the hangover, the fun, not the misery. He's taking you down one step at a time.

You're on the wrong path. You're on the wrong path. You have to expose it.

You have to repent. You have to get back on track. And I just came across a story again.

I don't know if many of you remember last year about the Google executive who died. He's married with kids. He died on his yacht of a heroin overdose as a prostitute walked over him to call for help.

What happened? He was going down the wrong road and he didn't turn back. There are consequences. There are consequences for our choices, for the roads we're on, we're on the paths we're on.

This type of message is a wake up call to say listen. Bring it to the light. There's a prayer team in the back.

Bring it to the elders or somebody close to you. Bring it to the light and say I need help in this area. I'm bringing it to the light.

You think we're not, we don't hear people say I'm addicted to pornography. I hear it all the time. Cheat on my spouse.

I hear it all the time. I'm hooked to this or that. I hear it all the time.

This is common. You don't have to feel ashamed and lonely because this is what sinners do. We come to church because we need the healing power of God.

So I would encourage you if you're on the wrong path and you know it, this is when change needs to take place tonight. I also want to talk to the group that you're trying to hold the line by outward reformation. And

you'll say things like this.

I'm exhausted. I want to give up. I'm exhausted.

I'm trying too hard. Exactly. Stop trying.

You've got to surrender this to God. There's tremendous peace. Trust me.

I've had to surrender many things. And there's tremendous peace that Lord, this is yours. And when the thought comes, oh, that's not mine.

I'm taking my thought captive. Lord, would you answer the door? Surrender it to Him. Stop this.

If I just read the Bible 20 minutes a day, if I just pray, if I just, whew, tired, but I'm holding tight. No, just give it to Him. Surrender it.

And then have the heart change. And then of course, the final group is wickedness might be seated in your heart. You've surrendered yourself to evil.

You're not on God's side. And the Bible says, repent, repent, confess your sin and allow that time of refreshing to come from the presence of the Lord and He will save you. So no matter what your situation is, if you're caught in besetting sin, you're on the wrong path, you're caught in the middle, you're on the road of reformation, it's exhausting.

Maybe here's another good indicator. Your zeal for God is gone. The worship is dead.

Bible's just, I can't read that thing. The heart needs to repent. The heart needs to cry out to God.

That's why we have the time now and we have the worship team come back up now. This is why we have a time of prayer and worship so you can get right relationship with God and you can get back on track.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/32/SID32142.mp3>

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