

Preparing the Heart to Pray

by Shane Idleman

Preparing the heart to pray requires a willing mind, open heart, and obedient will, as well as faith and trust in God's promises.

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Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 7:7, John 15:7, Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6-7, James 5:16, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Prayer", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of preparing our hearts for prayer, warning against spiritual complacency that leads to a lack of passion for God. He highlights the importance of being filled with the Spirit, aligning our prayers with God's will, and the need for personal holiness and obedience to experience powerful prayer. Idleman encourages believers to seek a vibrant prayer life, which is essential for spiritual awakening and revival, both personally and nationally. He stresses that true prayer comes from a heart that is broken, humble, cleansed, and believing, and that prayer must be prioritized in our lives.

Transcript

The message this morning is on prayer, preparing the heart to pray. And I shared with the first service, that song we sang was so profound, and it is so profound, and maybe it just moved my heart, you know, sometimes it does that, doesn't really touch other hearts. But when we sing those lyrics, spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me, wake me from my slumber, from my sleep.

What can happen in the lives of all Christians, if we're not careful, is we can go from passion and having a fire for God, and wanting to do things for God, into sleep mode. Rockabye, lullabies, go back to sleep church. That's what the devil loves to do, go back to sleep.

It's wonderful for a three-month-old, but it's terrible by the time we're in our thirties, to sleep when God has called us to awaken. So I want to encourage you this morning to maybe think about that. Has the spirit of the living God fallen afresh on you? Awaken you from your sleep? And we can often see that in worship.

I know I mentioned this sometimes, but those who are awake and want to worship God, and have a vibrant relationship, versus those who are bored to death, the spirit of the living God has not fallen upon them. Because when that happens, you're filled with God's spirit. In the same way that Paul talks about

being filled with alcohol, or being filled with God's spirit.

Either one of those spirits is controlling you. When you give over to alcohol, that spirit is controlling you, and your speech is controlled. Your actions are influenced.

What's controlling you, Paul says, but be filled with the spirit of God. So your speech is controlled by the spirit of God. Your actions are controlled by the spirit of God.

And I would submit to you that most people walking within our churches in America are not filled with the spirit of God. The spirit of God has not fallen afresh on them. There's not a vibrant prayer life.

There's not a heart of worship. And I'm hoping that we can help this morning. So the title is Preparing the Heart to Pray.

And as you know, we've been in a series, the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible doesn't say that. Do you ever come across scriptures, or you hear people quote scriptures, and you say, the Bible doesn't say that? One that's been in the news lately is a doctor who actually performs abortions, and thinks he's doing God a favor, and he uses the text of the Good Samaritan.

As the Samaritan will go around doing good things, he uses that text to support his agenda. And what we're seeing also in America is they'll use scripture such as do not judge, and they want to pass every type of ungodly law under the banner of God is love. Isn't it interesting? They say God is love, but they forget that God is holy.

God is righteous. God is a judge, a just judge. And we can't look at certain attributes or certain scriptures, we look at the whole scripture of God.

And what comes on this area of prayer, I was going to use this title, but I changed my mind back to this one. Ask and you will receive sometimes. Because one of the scriptures that people take out of context is ask and you will receive.

Come on brother, just believe it and you will receive it. That's where the name and claim it comes from. Just name it and claim it.

Ask and you will receive. Oh, that Lamborghini, it's just months away, I can feel it. I'm just God, and we start to have a wrong view of God because it's not about what I want.

It's really about lining up your prayer life with the heart of God. What does God want? And then as God's heart lines up with your heart, and you begin to pray, that prayer takes on power because now it's infused by the spirit of God, because now you're praying according to God's will. So yes, you can ask and you will receive, but there are conditions that often need to be met.

So the pattern of history in the Bible is this, before God moves in outward, visible power in the world, he also moves in inward purity in the hearts of his people. To say it a different way, before God moves outwardly and brings revival, brings awakening, God changed my home. Do you ever pray that? Changed my work environment.

Changed this, changed that. Often he's going to change you first. See from that fire within, that's how the fire goes without.

John Wesley said, you want to see the pew burn? Set the pulpit on fire, and people will come to watch you burn. It's not a bad thing. It's a good thing.

Burn with the Holy Spirit of God. We should talk about that more often. John the Baptist even said of Jesus, he will come and he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

There should be a burning, a passion, a desire, an unction, anointing to do things for God. But that only comes from the prayer closet. And actually preaching really comes from the prayer closet.

People picture people on computers preparing sermons or sitting in their study writing down things. It really is developed in the prayer closet where God loads the weapon. And then the hammer is released and the bullet goes out because what was loaded in the prayer closet comes out in the sermon.

At least it should in the lives of most pastors. So think about that. We're wanting God to move in our state.

Do you know the numbers of how many people are moving, leaving California weekly? It's way up there. God, move in our state. And I want to remind people, oh, if it's coming, if it's happening in California, it's coming.

It's coming all across the United States. As California goes, so goes the nation. So you can't go run and hide somewhere.

We have to stand up and fight and hold our ground. God, change our state. Change our nation.

Change God. Lord, look at what's going on. Is not the culture divide getting worse? Folks, we're talking about murdering children at nine months.

Killing elderly people, those with Down syndrome. Anti-Israel statements that hate the Jewish nation. Gay marriage is being promoted and pushed.

And if you don't believe in it, you are a homophobe and a hater. It's actually the opposite is true. And if you have our electronic bulletin, I was on Fox News Thursday, we shared it on there.

I have two minutes to answer thousands of questions. But my point was, people cannot shift on this issue. Morality doesn't shift.

Morality stays solid. People shift. Morality doesn't.

It has nothing to do with a hater. It has to do with a lover. We love people.

Nobody's taking me up on this, but I want to offer them a lie detector test. You say, I'm a hater. Let's take a lie detector test.

I'll ask you questions. You ask me questions. You'll find out.

See, they smoke screen all of this. So if God is going to move in our culture, if he's going to move in our nation, if he's going to move in your home and your community, he's going to move in you first. But don't we want God to do things without us? Lord, you change it.

I just want to stay comfortable. You deal with it. I just want to stay here.

Comfortable Christianity. You won't find that concept taught in the Bible. Comfortable Christianity.

Relaxed Christianity. Lazy Christianity. You'll find lukewarm.

Is it a good thing? Jesus said, be hot or cold. If you're lukewarm, I will vomit you out of my mouth. This battle is really fought in the prayer closet.

If you want to have a passion for God, prayer has got to become a priority. A priority. It's something we put on the calendar.

Something that is important to us. We must prepare the heart to pray. An athlete prepares, correct? Look up what an Olympic athlete does before their Olympics.

It's a crazy schedule. They prepare. They prepare for a medal that fades away and is gone.

The farmer prepares. A student prepares at school. Soldiers prepare.

How much more should Christians prepare their heart? And for me, I agree with what Robert Murray McShaney said many years ago, that I spend most of my time praying, preparing to pray. So do you, I'm sure. You spend most of your time preparing to pray.

So what I'm borrowing here are some notes from Al Whittinghill. He's going to speak next weekend. I think you have it as a handout.

I grabbed some of the scriptures. And I think it's a wonderful way to get our hearts ready for this. So here's the keys, or here's keys to preparation.

You need a willing mind, an open heart, and an obedient will. Are those not difficult? A willing mind, what's a willing mind say? Lord, I'm willing to do this. An open heart, Lord, whatever you want to do, and an obedient will.

Now, I wish I could do the whole sermon on this topic of obedience, because there's power in simple obedience. I think the reason many prayers are not answered is because we're not obeying God in certain areas. God says, do this.

I say, nope, but I'm going to keep praying. God says, do this. Nope, I'm going to keep praying.

Lord, why aren't you opening doors? Why isn't this happening? Why aren't you doing this? Go back to what I told you first. Simple obedience. Moses obeyed God.

David obeyed. Elisha obeyed. Kings obeyed.

Priests obeyed. Prophets obeyed. And God would move on their behalf.

What happened when there was disobedience? God would not move. He said, is my ear not heavy that I cannot hear you? Of course I can hear you. Is my hand not short that I cannot save you? But what, your sins, your iniquities have hid my eyes from you.

So I cannot see you. I cannot turn to you and help you. Of course he could.

But see, there's something called sin and disobedience that prevents many prayers from being answered. We think God will still answer my prayers even though I'm not obeying him. And I know it's convicting, but it's meant to be because without this initial first step, it's hard to get prayers answered.

It's to get into a deep abiding prayer life without obedience taking place. 1 John 5. And this is the confidence that we have in him. So where's your confidence at? In your friends, in social media, checkbook, retirement, all these things? No, it's this confidence we have in God, that if we ask anything, anything, he hears us.

Did I forget something? Anything according to his will. See what obedience does? Obedience lines you up with God's will. When I obey him, I'm lined up with his will.

So as I'm lined up with his will, now my prayers change from self focus to others focus. Now it changes from what I want to what I need. So your prayer life lines up with obedience.

Does that make sense? The more you obey him, the more you're filled with this spirit, the more your prayers will shift. And then of course, it goes on to say, we know that he hears us and whatever we ask, our petitions, our desires that he puts in our hearts, he yearns for us to lay hold of his promises and to fully trust him. This is remarkable because God yearns for us to lay hold of his promises.

Do you know what pleases God? Faith pleases God. The Bible says it's impossible to please God without faith. Faith lays hold of God's promises and believes in God.

Lord, your word says this. Your word says this. I trust you.

Your word says this. It says that I will not leave you or forsake you. I know you won't.

Your word says this. God, your word says you will hear me even if it's two in the morning crying out to you. Lord, your word says this and you hold God to that.

You hold his promises. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you.

I'm the good shepherd. Though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear no evil because I hold you up with my hand. I will put a table in the front of your enemies.

I will give you comfort and joy even when your enemies mock you and laugh you and ridicule you. God, I'm holding you to those promises. That's trust.

And what happens when doubt comes in? Uh-oh. I'm doubting what God's going to do. I'm fearful.

Fear and anxious. That's why the Bible says that God has not even given you as a believer a spirit of fear. That's not of God.

Fearing what's gonna happen. What? What? What? What? I can't believe this. What am I gonna do, Lord? I can't bear this any longer.

So trust him. John 15 7, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. See, if I'm abiding in Christ, I'm not gonna ask for that Lamborghini.

If I'm abiding in Christ and his word, I don't want the 8,000 square foot house on the in the hills. If I'm abiding in Christ, I don't want my enemies to die. Right? This prayers of some people, Lord, just kill that

person.

They've upset me. Just kill them. Just take them.

As you're abiding in Christ, that word abide means to live with and to stand with. So he's saying, when you stand with Christ, when you live with Christ, when the word of God is deep down penetrating your heart and you live on that word and you obey that word, your thoughts actually change. You want God thoughts.

Here's the interesting thing. You're gonna have world thoughts or you're gonna have God's thoughts depending on what you feed the most. You will think like the world if you're feeding your mind with the things of the world.

If you have the world's music, the world's entertainment, the world's news, the world's outlets, whatever it is, it's constantly feeding on the things of the world. That's where your thoughts are gonna be. That's why you'll see many people that you'll find divorcing many times is because they were feeding their mind with the things of the world.

And they think, oh, the grass is greener on this side of the fence. That's what the world tells me. But guess what's on that other side of the fence? Destruction.

Exactly right. The grass is not greener. It's greener wherever you feed it.

Or watered, I should say. You don't feed grass. So you have this battle inside.

So if you're abiding with Christ and the word of God is in your heart, living in your heart, and you're quoting scripture and you're reminding yourself when you're tempted, hey, I know I'm tempted, but no temptation can overtake me. This is all common to man. God, you're faithful.

You're not gonna give me more than I can bear. And I'm gonna hold on to your promise. And I'm gonna seek you.

And that word begins to penetrate your heart. And your prayer life changes. Oh, God, would you save my children? God, strengthen my family.

When the enemy comes in, when the devourer comes in, like a flood, you're going to lift up a standard against him. God, I'm trusting in you. Your word is my weapon.

Your word is my shield. And when the devil comes in and taunts with half truths, you know that, right? You know that the devil knows the scripture a lot better than we do. He'll come in with half a truth.

He told Eve, did God really say? And he begins to, you begin to justify things. Half the truth. But if you have the whole truth in your heart, your prayer life changes.

You begin to pray for people. And you're not in a hurry. If you find yourself saying, I don't know what to pray for, it's because you're filled with the world a lot more than the things of God.

Because we can talk about the world all day long. I know Christians, they'll say, Shane, I can't pray. It's boring.

I don't know what to pray for. But they can quote all the basketball stats I've, you've ever even heard. Oh, did you hear this? I haven't even heard of these names.

You know their batting average. You know their earned run average. You know their, how many games they've missed.

How do you know all this? And you have such an interest for this and such a passion for these things. How do you have it? Because that's what you're filled with. No wonder the word of God is boring.

No wonder you have no prayer life. Because God says, feed on the word. And it's something that I've noticed about God's word.

You know this is true too. The more you feed on it, the hungrier you become. Any chocolate lovers in here? Okay.

What happens if you just get a little piece? That's all you get. Oh, you just opened the, you just opened the lion's cage on that one, right? I want more. I want more.

I want more. Same thing. The more you get into God with worship and prayer and reading his word, the hungrier you become.

The more you remove yourself from that, you'll begin to starve to death, spiritually speaking. It's funny, one of the Old Testament, not really funny, but it's even relevant today. One of the prophets said that God said a famine is coming.

Not a famine of food or water, but of hearing of the word of God. See, that's a true famine. It's a famine.

We have elected officials. We have pastors all across our nation. There's a famine.

They're not hearing from the word of God. They're hearing from their own ingenuity and their own pride and arrogance. And think about this, like Al said, what possibilities, what a privilege, what a pressing need to simply obey God, abide in him, and watch your prayer life turn from boring to dynamic, turn from unanswered to answered, turn from irrelevant to very relevant.

Because when you're filled with the spirit of God, prayer is the priority. It's the engine that pushes the vehicle down the street, that being your spiritual vehicle. It's what pushes you.

It's your engine. Mark 11 talks about having faith in God. Do not doubt in your heart and your prayers will be answered.

See, that is a biblical truth as well. If you have faith in God and you do not doubt in your heart, your prayers will be answered. Now, it does come up, but Shane, how do I know to pray according to God's will? Well, I figured this out the hard way.

I'm going to share it with you this morning. You ready for this? Pin of paper, you're going to take this down. It's a long, long paragraph.

No, it's actually very short. Ask him. Ask him.

Lord, is this your prayer? Is this your will? And what will begin to happen is that desire you had for it will begin to fade. The more you seek him, the more you ask for him, Lord, is this your will? What you thought you needed or wanted, it's not even an issue anymore. But if there's something that's oppressing me, God keeps bringing it back.

Pray for this. Lord, is this your will? Because there's something now, like I told you, I was praying about the radio stations a year ago, and I told you there's something I'm praying for, I can't tell you, and then I finally told you once it happened. There's something else I'm praying for that would be even bigger than that to help people.

And it's something I've been praying about. It's been logged in my Bible. It's in my journal, but I'm still praying, Lord, I don't know if this is your will, but the desire doesn't go away.

It keeps kind of coming back and coming back, and the scripture jumped out, just have faith. Do not doubt in your heart, and your prayers will be answered. But I still ask, God, is this your will? Is this your will? Show me.

And God says, I love that heart. I will answer the prayers of that person. So if you don't know, ask.

We see couples now, obviously, and you know people dating. Should we get married? God, is this your will? Should we get married? Ask him. Ask him.

But start with what you do know. If there's not purity, living together, sleeping together, whatever it is, you got to start there before God reveals his other will. Get it right in the first place.

Build on the right foundation of purity and holiness. See, now the lifestyle is lining up with God's word. Now you can ask, because so many people, Lord, I don't know if this is your will, I don't know if it's your will.

Get out of sin and disobedience, then you can hear better. You ever buy those good earplugs? I'm going to get some when the baby's born. On Saturday nights, right? I can't hear anything.

Nothing. But see, that's what sin does, hearing God's voice. I can't hear anything.

Lord, where are you? Would you take care of this issue? Then you can hear me. No. Would you still answer me? No.

Take care of this issue? Now, let me not give you the wrong impression here. God still hears us when we're in sin. Actually, one of the prayers of the Bible that God always hears is, God, save me a sinner.

So if you don't know Christ, all you have to pray is, God, save me a sinner. I repent of my sin. But as a believer, you can still, you're struggling, say, God, I want to hear you.

This is a stronghold in my life. I can't break free of this. God, would you help me? Would you give me the strength? Would you show me something? Show me what your will is.

I've never seen God let you down. When has God ever let you down when you truly petitioned him and were sincere and asked him? We sing that song, God, you will never fail me. You've never let me down.

Though the enemy comes at me, though the enemy's taught me, God, you are standing like a rock. You will never let me down. Jesus actually said, if you hear my words and do them, you will be like a man who built his house on the rock.

And when the rains came, the floods came, and the storm beat upon that house, it did not fall. Why? Because the foundation, the footing, the grounding, the strength was in the rock. That's how powerful obeying God's word is.

Every great revival or spiritual awakening in history has come and answered to sincere prayers from believers who have broken, humble, cleansed, and believing hearts. I want to clarify this for a minute, but this is why this is so important. Most of us see the handwriting on the wall with where the nation's going, unless you've been in a coma for 30 years.

We see that apart from a national awakening where God is reviving his people, restoring morality, and I'm not talking about a perfect government, you're not going to have them all singing worship songs in the Capitol, and I'm not naive, but there is a point where you get where the judgment hand of God must fall upon a disobedient nation, a disobedient people. Apart from a national awakening where God revives his people, like he did in Welsh in the 1700s with people like Hal Griffiths and Daniel Rowlands and Hal Harris, unless he awakens America like he did in the first great awakening with George Whitefield and John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards, or the second great awakening with Billy Sunday and D.L. Moody, or the New Hebrides Islands off of Scotland, or God bringing, he's bringing awakening when things get to their bottom point, or in the nation of Israel, God brings a Josiah and brings a revival and awakening, and you see God awakening his people. That's the only hope.

I'm not counting on 2020. You get that when you get home. Oh, such-and-such just wins in 2020.

No. Only God can keep North Korea at bay, or China, or Russia. All hell is breaking loose, and apart from a national awakening of God reviving his people, the Titanic has been hit.

But there's great confidence in that because God brings revival at important points of history. He brings spiritual awakening where bars are closed down, where people are worshiping God in their neighborhoods, and God transforms entire communities, and that flows into other areas of national life. So I have a heart for that.

He's given me a heart for that. I know not everybody shares that, and that's okay. They can do what God's called them to do.

I'll do what he's called me to do. So it has to come from believers who are broken, humbled, cleansed, and believe in their hearts. So let me go through these quickly.

So I use these words sometimes. Maybe you don't know what they mean. Broken.

What is broken? It has to do with the heart. God says, I will look for a, what, haughty and arrogant heart, and then I'll answer their prayers. God says, I look for a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

So when God sees men and women on their faces at home, or on their faces at the altar, and crying out to God saying, God, I'm broken. I'm broken. God, would you hear me? He says, is that the cry of a broken and contrite heart? I can't cast it away.

I can't remove it from my sight. I hear it like a magnet to metal. I go to the broken and contrite heart, and I lift them up, and I restore them, because that is a sweet-smelling aroma and a sacrifice to me.

Thus saith the Lord. Where do the eyes of the Lord go through? They go across the whole earth. What? Looking for those whose hearts are loyal to him, and broken before him, and humble before him.

I look for that broken heart. David said, for I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. And then we must have humility.

Well, Shane, what's the difference? Oh, there's quite a difference. Brokenness is the heart. Humility is the actions.

You've got so many people saying, I'm broken. I'm humble. No, you're not.

You're arrogant. How do you know in your actions? Always being right. Not loving people.

Isn't it amazing how unloving we can become? Why is that funny? Oh, the baby said something. Okay. Or something.

I'm like, that's not funny. We might have to close down the church service if that's, okay. That went from a very good hi to a very, but isn't it true? Let's be honest.

Unloving. When we are unloving, the spirit of God cannot move through you. Because part of brokenness is loving.

And you feel the pain of others. You weep with others. You feel that brokenness.

Like Jesus felt, oh, Jerusalem, my people. Can you imagine the Messiah coming and his people rejecting him? Oh, my people, Jerusalem, I wanted to gather you like a mother picks up her little children and holds them. But you were not willing.

You stiff necked and rebellious people. Yes, you have the letter of the law, but you don't have the spirit of Christ in your heart. Love, love with the word of God is powerful.

You have to have both through humility. And then you have to have a cleansed heart. What is cleansed? It's a topic we don't talk about too much in the church.

You're not going to get a lot of popular sermons on this, but it's really important. It's called holiness. And as you know, the church likes to go to two extremes.

So you have this extreme, which is they call the holiness movement. Women, no pants, no makeup. Let me check here.

Better not be going to the movies. We cannot promote movies out there at the Cinemark. That's of the devil.

You can't watch anything to do with television. Just this holiness movement. But see, they had the right concept in that you want to be modest.

You want to be careful with what you watch. But when you put a bunch of rules on it and don't explain the relational aspect, you just become a Pharisee. So you can't go to the movies.

And we tell our kids, you can't go. Here's why. Here's what this is going to do to you spiritually.

They're still mad, but they hear why. So you have holiness, this holiness movement. It's all about rules.

And then you have now what I think is happening a lot today, where there's no holiness. Watch whatever we want. Do whatever we want.

I actually preached 15 years ago at a church I won't name, at a mince event, and called people to holiness, and called people to being selective with their movie choices. And a youth pastor, a youth pastor came up to me and said, I can watch whatever I want, as long as my heart is right. Oh, how do you manage that one? I can do whatever I want, as long as my heart's right.

No, what you do affects your heart. Now, what happened? He was convicted. He was prideful.

He was arrogant. Again, still see him on Facebook a little bit now and then. No secret that they're posting things I probably wouldn't post with their favorite beer, their champagne, the movie they watch, this and that.

Now, going to do it? Wonderful. Don't post it on Facebook if you're a leader in the church. And so you can see there's this drift, because the heart is deceitful.

If you're trusting your heart and your feelings, it will deceive you. So he looks at a broken, humble heart, and then also a holy heart. The Bible says, who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? In other words, who may stand in the holy place of God and do God's work? He who has clean hands, and a pure heart, and who's not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor has he sworn deceitfully.

He's sworn deceitfully, nor has he hasn't lied and manipulated, and he hasn't been this person who has dirty hands and is sinning, and God says, that's the person I want to ascend in my holy mountain. He who has clean hands and a pure heart, and has not lifted up his soul to idolatry. This is why this is so important.

Holiness is really who you are. And A.W. Tozer, I think it was about 60 years ago, he was writing to pastors. He said, who a pastor is all week is who he will be when he steps up to that pulpit.

And I do encourage pastors. Now, a lot of pastors reach out to this church because of where the ministry has gone. I tell them, and they listen to the messages along these same lines, I tell them that who you are all week is going to determine the power of your sermon.

Preaching, here's a secret, I'm going to tell you a secret, you got to put some notes together. But preaching is when God unloads the weapon that he loaded in the prayer closet. This is unloading what God has loaded in the prayer closet.

You hunters out there, you got your 12 gauge, this is a three inch Magnum for duck hunting, you put that in there, that was loaded, that's the prayer closet. Now how much more for parents, or spouses, or those of you who work or have grandkids, how much all of us, we need to load up in the prayer closet. See, the prayer closet is where you load up, you suit up, and you get ready and then you go out and that you unload what God has put into you in the prayer closet.

That's where you pull down demonic influences. That's where you pull down strongholds over your children. Don't go and cuss at them and give them a sermon that they've heard a thousand times, but you get in that prayer closet and you say, you know what, I'm not coming out of here for a few hours, I'm not even going to eat breakfast, because I'm going to pull down strongholds.

God says, what, is that a broken and contrite heart? Has he humbled himself? Is he holy and filled with the Spirit of God? If you ask, you will receive, because now you're praying with boldness with the Spirit of God speaking and praying through you. That's how you prepare the heart to pray. Get your heart ready through holiness and being set apart.

It's no secret if you've been coming here a while, and I've told you this many times, it's a good reminder that the number one attribute given to God is not love. That's all we hear everywhere, even all the news pundits. For moral issues, God is love, God is love, God is love, God is love.

No. The attribute, if you study it more than any other attribute that stands way above them all is holiness. Our God is a holy God.

I demand and require holiness. The angels cry, holy, holy, holy is our God. Can you imagine angels? I see that scene.

I love that scene in Isaiah, where he says he saw the train of God's robe, which filled the entire temple. And the angels would sit there and cry out, holy, holy, holy is our God. And the temple would shake like this.

The pillars of the temple would shake with that word, holy, holy, holy is our God. Why? Because that's the power. Yes, we need the love of God, but it's the holiness of God that comes in and uproots evil and conquers sin.

It's when people are holy and set apart for God. God says, come out from among them, come out from among them and be loving. Yes, but come out from among them and be holy.

Because if you're loving without holiness, you are leading people astray. That's a big problem in our culture today. We just love everybody.

Just love them, love them, allow them to continue sinning. Yeah, just love them as they're walking to hell. Love them.

Well, I don't want to say anything. I just want to love them. Now, there's a time and place for that.

Don't leave here thinking, Shane just said, nail them with holiness. Just don't even worry about love. Just wreck them with the power of God.

No, you need both. Love without holiness, you're lukewarm. Holiness without love, you're a Pharisee.

So you have to find that middle ground. How? Pray. Pray.

Because when you're filled with the Spirit of God, you don't go and judge people. You love them. But you also call them to holiness.

One of the things I was hoping they got to in the interview Thursday was, the big thing that's out there now is the LGBT suicide rate is alarming. And the reason is because validating sin won't lead to hope. Repentance leads to hope.

Point them to the cross. But Shane, they might still struggle. Yeah, we all still struggle with something.

Come on. You point them to the hope, to the cross. That's where the hope is.

40 years ago, they said the church, the church is at fault because they're making people feel guilty. You can't say that anymore. Because now the media is supporting sin.

The government is supporting sin. The school districts are supporting sin. Hollywood is supporting sin.

Facebook is supporting sin. Everything is supporting sin. And you have this voice over here, the church saying, hold on, turn back to God.

You can't say blame us now anymore, because everybody's supporting sin, but there's still hopelessness. The suicide rate is an epidemic. Why? Because you're running from the answer.

Turn people back to the hope and to the answer in Christ. That's the only answer. And you know, it's true.

I have loved people through their sin. I'm doing it right now with many who don't come to this church and struggle with everything from alcohol to homosexuality. Love them.

Don't judge them. They're still miserable. They're still hopeless.

And I'm still, I'm loving them. Why? Because my love is not supposed to replace God's love through forgiveness. Folks, that is so important because this culture is going to hell in a handbasket.

You better know what the priorities are. And we hear all these deceiving things, and it's not deceiving if you look to God's Word. Psalm 139, search me, O God.

Oh, I forgot, broken, humble, cleanse, and a believing heart. A believing heart trusts in God completely. You know why this is important? Because many people trust in God as long as it's going in their direction.

If he answers the prayer like I've been praying, I'll trust him. But if he decides to throw a curveball, I'm not trusting him anymore. Trust is, Lord, no matter what you do, I will trust you.

No matter what happens, I will trust you. Psalm 139, search me, O God. O God, search me and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there's any wicked way in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. How many of you are willing to pray that this morning? Don't raise your hands, just say it in your heart.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Most people don't want to pray that if they're not willing to give up their sin. Who's going to pray that prayer if they want to continue in their sin? What do we say? I'll pray that in 10 years after I have fun.

One of the biggest tricks of the enemy is to make people think that following God is not fun. You're filling the lust of the flesh as somebody in rebellion, and you're miserable, and you're hopeless. How is that fun? Sure, the Bible says hard is the way of the transgressor, but it says also that sin satisfies for a season.

There's a fulfillment as the sin is being gratified, but then when that is over, the negative aspects come in. So let's ask a few questions. Just think what would happen if each believer made it his or her utter priority to spend quality time alone before God.

I want you to think about that for a minute. What about if God became the priority in your life? So when you got up, it wasn't media, social media, your phone, this, texting, emails. It was God.

What about when you got up if it was God, not what's going on in the news? Same thing in the evening. What if God became the priority in your life? Yes, you still have to work. You pay the bills.

You do chores. You get errands done. I know.

But He can still be the priority. He can be the priority of your life. So let's take time to prepare our hearts.

I'm just going to ask a few questions. Is there any area in your life which you have not completely given over to Jesus Christ as Lord of your life? Number two, is there anyone or anything that I love or desire more than God Himself? It's called idolatry. Is there anything that you love more than God Himself? Number three, how do my relationships stand in the presence of God? Look at the last one.

Have I forgiven people? Have I forgiven everyone? People don't realize how much of a hindrance this is to our prayer life. You can't go in praying for God and holding bitterness and unforgiveness in your heart. Hope gets quiet during that point.

This is the hard one, isn't it? This is where the rubber meets the road. God, forgive me and all my sins. Thank you for the cross, but I'm not going to forgive them.

That will hinder your prayer life. It's like cancer to the bones because you're praying and because you're not free. You're still bound to that unforgiveness and that anger and that bitterness.

You have to release that. And remember, releasing this doesn't mean that the person was right. It means that you're giving it back to God.

Because I've had people, I've prayed for people many times, it breaks my heart that have been abused. Maybe the child never thinks that my water boils. But releasing forgiveness does not mean that that person was right and off the hook.

It means you've given it to God and you're released of the cancer of unforgiveness. These things, unforgiveness, bitterness, they weigh on you. They've even studied how they produce toxic elements in your body.

Toxic chemicals that come in and damage the heart, damage your mind. You're just so mad and tense. The reason is because when you're angry, you're upset.

You're tense and that cortisol is released. Adrenaline is released. That's wonderful if you're running away from a lion, even though you couldn't get away, but it's a nice thought.

But when it comes to living life, if you're always in that state of high adrenaline, cortisol, and I'm just always, your body is not designed to continually be beat with those high levels of those hormones that are very beneficial in small dosages, very destructive in excess. So what that does, you release that forgiveness, but you don't know what my dad did. You don't know what my mom, you don't know what they did to me.

I don't know, but God knows. It doesn't mean they are right. It means, you know what, Lord, they're not holding me in prison anymore.

I'm giving it over to you and that will, your prayer life will explode. Why? Because I've been set free. I've been set free from these shackles that have held me down.

Number four, am I truly surrendered to God in the area of personal disciplines and holiness of life? What is personal disciplines? Praying and reading. And we call them disciplines because it's a discipline where you have to do it. You discipline your body to do these things.

But there is a reward afterwards. People think, oh, it's discipline, it's drudgery. No, it's not.

There's a reward. Have any of you worked out hard and disciplined your body and got some results? Oh, I lost this weight. My blood pressure is normal.

I'm no longer type 2 diabetes. I feel 10 times better. Oh, it wasn't fun the first couple weeks or a couple months.

It wasn't fun getting out there and walking for four miles. It wasn't, but there's disciplines that have rewards later. How much more spiritually and holiness of life? Maybe it's interesting, or not interesting, but wise to mention this.

When I mentioned over here this holiness movement about you can't go to the movies and you can't do this, you have to remember something. You are not a neutral being. You are either filled with the Spirit of God or you're filled with the world.

Or you're doing this a lot like most of us. I'm so filled with God's Spirit after Sunday and here comes Wednesday. You know, you get out and you've got this filled with God, filled with the world.

And that's what happens when you listen to the media. It's interesting. In Romans 1, Paul talks about that they suppress the truth and they gave themselves into a lie and they begin to burn with lust.

Women for women, men for men. But then men for men. Something at the end he says is interesting.

He says the rebuke is also to those who are amused by it, are entertained by it, who allow it. So although we say I wouldn't do that, we watch it, we are entertained by it. You just turn on something and there's sexual things that are drawing us in.

Then there's envy and there's pride that draws us in. Everything is drawing us in so we're filled with the things of the world. So we begin to think like the world.

That's why you have all these people that can come out. That's why I was on Fox with that lady who's on Sex and the City. It called it Sin and the City but they didn't catch that.

But Sex and the City, she's going to rebuke the president on morality. What? We've lost our moral compass. You have a person promoting sex in the city, promoting all kinds of ungodly, illicit sex.

And by the way, sex is great and good and God-given in the proper thing just like a fireplace is wonderful in the fireplace. You go sit down in the living room floor, you've got problems. Same thing.

So you have this person lecturing the president, the vice president, calling him a homophobe because he stands up for your values. Holiness is so important. Number five, do I tolerate pride? Do I tolerate? What does that mean? Put up with.

Do you put up with pride? How do I know? Are you always making excuses for it? I'm just passionate. I just know my stuff. I just see things differently.

God speaks to me, not you. Do you put up with pride in your heart? What about impurity? What about unbelief? Or is there any other compromise in your heart? Compromising. Number six, am I allowing the Lord to bring me into a life of true worship and obedience to the Holy Spirit of God? Would I call myself a

diligent seeker of His face? Let me tell you how real the struggle is between the world and the Spirit.

I know we could have a lot more people at 6 a.m. morning worship right here. But what excuses come up? Tired, it's cold, it's far, I've got to go to work. We take off work to go voting.

We take work off to drive a friend to LAX airport. We might even take off Black Friday. Shop until you drop.

Is that not true though? We'll take off the whole Friday to go spend on things that are perishing. Because see, it's that struggle. The struggle is real.

Between the flesh and the Spirit of God. So are you allowing, are you going to allow the Lord to bring into your life true worship? If so, say, Lord I want that. What does it look like? What does true worship look like? God show me.

And yes, we do have morning worship this week at 6 a.m. every morning. People say, you need to have it at evening. And then we have it at evening, guess what? Same people don't show up.

So fool me once, fool me twice, but mm-mm, mm-mm. Isn't it true though, right? Well if you just had an evening, we have an evening, oh they don't show up. If you just had Saturdays, no they don't show up.

Excuses have to die. And here's what we do, we allow the flesh to control us. Yes, I'm tired.

Yes, it's cold. But you know what flesh, be quiet. I'm going to drag you along.

You're the ball and chain. My spouse isn't. You're the ball and chain flesh, so let's go.

And that's the Christian walk. You tell the flesh what to do. You have a scripture for me that says it pulls you around.

Show it to me after the service because there isn't anything. You discipline your body. You tell it no.

You tell it we're going to praise God even if we don't feel like it. We're going to serve him even if we don't feel like it. We're going to worship him.

We're going to go to church. We're going to put God on the counter. Of course you don't feel like it flesh.

You're coming into submission to me. I'm not submitting to your desires or your will. And guess what? Here's the great thing.

Eventually he listens. Just look at all those trying to eat healthy. You know after a couple weeks it finally says all right, you're not having pizza.

Get out the salad. Get out the healthy stuff because you've taught it. You've disciplined it.

I think it's the same concept when the Bible says resist the devil and he will what? Flee. You resist the flesh. That's what Paul said.

I discipline my body. He didn't leave it there. He said I bring it under subjection meaning I bring my flesh under my control.

Most people have it this way. The flesh is controlling how often they come to church. The flesh is controlling how often they read the Bible.

The flesh is controlling because they listen to the defense attorney within. You don't need to do that. You've read that.

And they just keep letting the flesh control them. But the life of the Christian is this. You bring your flesh under subjection and under control.

And then number seven. Is there some command or calling that the Lord has given you that you have chosen to pull back away from or ignore? Did you catch that? Has God called you to do something and you just ignore it? You think you're going to have a vibrant prayer life? Because that rebellion stops that. So I want to ask this question.

How many of you has God prompted to do something to serve? Children's ministry? Okay, I'm bringing this home now. Ushering? We need ushers. We need children's ministry.

We need media. We need sound. We need all these areas.

And about 10%, maybe 15% of the church actually serve. So 85% of the people that come here don't even serve. Now I know people are busy and kids and I've got it.

I'm right there with you. But if God is calling you, if God is prompting you to do something, how many times has he been prompting you to go to help at the hospital homes? Months? Years? Homeless outreach? We have every Sunday evening at 6.30? Prompting? Come to the morning worship? Prompting? I know I should help those kids, but I really don't like kids. That's what I hear most often.

People say, I wish I could help in children's ministry, but I don't like those little stinkers. I'm not a kids person. You had kids, didn't you? Yeah, well you're a kids person then.

Because often I've noticed God will use those difficult things to shape us. My wife will remember this. When I first called the ministry and she obviously called with me, we were both called.

I said, how many times did I say, I'm not speaking to youth? Well guess what I did for a year and a half? I even wrote a book about it, What Works for Young Adults, Solid Choices in Unstable Times. And I was speaking at youth conferences. I was speaking at youth events.

Why? Because it was uncomfortable. Because they don't pay as good attention as you do. They're on their phone, yawning, bored.

But often what you're running from is what God's calling you to, to chip you away. I don't want to go on the mission field. Oh, guess what? You need to see what it looks like in third world countries.

I don't want to do this. I don't want to do this. That's usually the flesh.

So is there an area you've been running from to serve? Then grab that card in front of you in the pew and fill it out. Half joking but half not. If you want to serve, let us know.

Because we need people helping. I think it hinders prayers. When a Christian, and all they're doing is coming being fed by the church, their kids are being fed, they're being encouraged, and they don't give back, they'll become unhealthy spiritually.

Because we're not supposed to get overweight spiritually. We're supposed to give it back. We receive and we give it back.

Better for you to give than to receive. So let me close with this. This is both for the person who doesn't know Christ and the person who does.

David said, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

So for the person, if you don't know who Jesus Christ is, you know intellectually, you hear about it right now, you have a concept of who he is, you know he existed or you think he did, the Bible says you must be forgiven of your sin, you must repent and believe. It's that simple. I repent of my sin and I believe.

God, and as a result, wash me thoroughly from this iniquity. But then also the saint who gets trapped in sin. Remember I've given you that analogy before that sin is like mud that a pig falls into and a lamb.

The pig enjoys it, the lamb cries out and wants out of that mud. So it's this image we have here saying God, wash me thoroughly from this sin. Cleanse me and purge me that I will be clean.

Wash me and I will be whiter than snow. So a believer can say that as well. If they're trapped in sin, if sin's got a hold on them, if this message is convicting, you're ready for lunch.

This might be a good time to apply this verse. God, cleanse me, create in me like David said. He had somebody murdered, he committed adultery, his child died and he said God, create in me a clean heart.

God, create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me. That word right means dependable and unwavering. Who wants that this morning? I sure do.

God, create a spirit within me that is dependable and unwavering. Though the culture comes against me, though people come against me, God, I am unwavering, I am holding tight. Why? Because of me? No, because my shoes are founded, are stuck on the rock of Jesus Christ.

I can't move because I built my life on the rock, so God, you create in me a clean heart. God, you renew a steadfast spirit within me. I love that old hymn, Rock of Ages.

Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee. It's this picture of this huge, enormous, think of Yosemite, half dome or whatever it is and you're hiding in that cleft, that little opening, you're just hiding in there in this massive rock, 3,000 feet high. Rock of Ages, let me hide in thee.

Let me find safety in thee. The Bible often attributes or actually links Jesus with things like a rock and a strong tower, a fortress, a buckler, a shield, a Sabbath rest, an alpha, an omega, a lion, a conquering king who will come back with a sword coming out of his mouth to judge the nations. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

He will tread the winepress and the wrath of Almighty God. It's strength. So number one, do you know him? Not about him, do you truly know him? Or number two, for believers, do you need to fully surrender, get your life on track and get that prayer life blazing again? Before anyone falls into a moral abyss, you watch the news, how many pastors are going, all these guys we used to look up to, what's going on? It all started here in the prayer closet.

When you become too busy, no time for God, that's where the fall is coming. It all starts there. Prayer strengthens you, prayer encourages you, prayer rebuilds you, prayer renews you, it revitalizes your entire life, you are strong in the things of God.

The enemy gets you out of that prayer closet and you are doomed because that's your strength. Knowing and applying scripture, yes, but also praying. Praying and pulling down heaven.

A writer, I don't know who it was, a couple hundred years ago, I read it last night, said something like, the devil knows that one hour in heartfelt communion with God will pull down what he's been trying to conceive in your life for the last year. An hour with God pulls down what Satan is trying to build. Is Satan after your children? Yes.

Is he after your marriage? Is he after your personal life? Yes. What pulls that down? What pulls down strongholds? What casts down every argument and hyping that exalts itself against the knowledge of God? What does that prayer, the prayer closet? You see that? The power is prayer. The power is what moves the hand of God, it's prayer.

And we've got to get back to being a praying church.

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