

Self-Control: A Struggle vs. a Lifestyle

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of self-control as a vital aspect of Christian living, balanced with grace and love.

Duration: 47:12

Scripture: Galatians 5:22

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Self-Control"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes that self-control is a vital aspect of the Christian life, distinguishing between a struggle and a lifestyle. He warns against the extremes of legalism and grace, advocating for a balanced approach that recognizes self-control as a fruit of the Spirit. Shane shares personal anecdotes to illustrate the importance of self-control in various life areas, including relationships and spiritual disciplines. He encourages believers to pursue self-control through obedience to God's Word, which leads to the filling of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, Shane calls for a heart filled with love, as it is foundational for exhibiting self-control and living a life that honors God.

Transcript

The message this morning is entitled Self-control, a struggle versus a lifestyle. Now initially it was a struggle versus a lifestyle. However, the whole context is self-control.

Now I want to be careful here, that's why I prayed that prayer this morning, just a few minutes ago on convicting people but also encouraging people. This issue of self-control is kind of unique because if you get too much on the self-control side, you know, come on, just self-control, come on willpower, you're going to lose a lot of the grace and the love of God and trusting in God, it's all about rules and here we go, you can't do this, you can't do that, self-control, and you'll just beat people up. However, if you void your life of self-control, you will be headed down a very destructive path.

Self-control is actually a fruit of the spirit but we have to remember it is grace that's brought me here thus far, it's going to be grace that takes me home. The song doesn't say it's grace, it's self-control that's brought me here thus far, it's going to be self-control that makes me finish strong. No, it's the grace of God, the mercy of God and so that's my challenge is I don't want to, you know, really just hit people with self-control, self-control, what's wrong with you guys, come on, but to avoid it and just say, well, just, you know, trust in God and God will lead you through and don't worry about self-control, that legalistic term, I mean, just live for God and there's truth for that, just live with God but the Bible says that we need to

exhibit and have self-control.

Now, before you get too, not too caught up but too thinking that I'm the epitome of self-control, let me tell you I'm not, okay, that is the, that's who we're looking to, we're looking to Christ, we're looking to the cross. Just a couple days ago, my son came up to me and goes, Shane, your dad, all the kids at church think you eat healthy all the time. I said, did you tell them the truth? Did you tell them the truth? Yes, I did.

Okay, good, good. There's times where I fall on the self-control bandwagon but I do know that I think self-control has probably made one of the biggest difference in my life as far as spiritual disciplines than any other discipline. Here's why, because obedience is always a precursor to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

If you lack self-control, it's going to be really hard to be filled with the Spirit because being filled with the Spirit is, yes, emptying yourself of yourself but also it's obeying the Word of God and it takes self-control, willpower, these terms perseverance that are in the Bible. So as you can see, that's the difficulty with a topic like this and just in case you didn't know, I'll tell you now, most people know this, one of the labels I am labeled with those who don't like me, it seems I have a new critic every day, is that I'm a moralist or I'm legalistic or I'm rigid or it's you fill in the blanket but it always has to do with this self-control term. When you talk about self-control and obedience to Christ and righteousness and full surrender, people who don't like that, they don't want to do that, are going to label you.

And anytime you talk to a lukewarm Christian about, hey, self-control, well that's just legalistic and I don't know if you do know or not but legalism in simple words is following a bunch of rules to please God. It's Jesus plus I don't do this and I don't do this and I don't do this. I have to do these things where what self-control is, it's obedience to God's word and it leads to the filling of the Holy Spirit.

So is self-control a myth that is something beyond our grasp? And I think if I were to take a survey, I think this would be 100 people out of 100 people would say they struggle with self-control. I haven't met anyone that says they've got it mastered, they never make a wrong choice, they never go sideways, they never grab that piece of chocolate when they should grab the apple, they never sometimes go back to an addiction or back to a bondage, they're just always walking perfectly. I think we struggle with it because it's part of our fallen nature.

One of the verses that I've loved over the years is this, Proverbs 25, 28, a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls. Now in the Old Testament, a city would build walls around it. Interesting, that's a big debate in politics right now, isn't it? But in the Bible, it was pretty clear that a city would have walls.

The walls of Jericho came down, the walls of Jerusalem, a city would have walls. Why? That was the fortification, that was the strength, that was your boundaries, you were safe inside those walls. So the imagery is a man who lacks self-control is just like a city broken into and he's left without walls.

So can you imagine a husband, a father, or a mom who lacks self-control? Their family will be hurt, different aspects of their finances will be hurt. Self-control plays a huge role in our lives. And the Bible even says that if you want to be a leader in the church, you have to have? Oh, we're getting it.

So don't let anyone fool you and say that self-control isn't important. Usually it's those people indulging in sin that don't like this word or this type of teaching. And again, like I said earlier, obedience and the filling of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit go hand in hand.

One of the things I love about self-control, I'm going to get into the Word of God in just a minute, is self-control helps with prioritizing. Anybody having a challenge with prioritizing certain things? Self-control actually helps you prioritize different things. And I probably should have explained this, but I thought it was pretty obvious what self-control means.

The word control comes from a Greek word *kratos*, and it means to have dominion or mastery over something. So we are called as believers, if you can believe this, to have mastery or control over our body. Self-control.

You control the body, it doesn't control you. So when your body says Dunkin' Donuts and McDonald's after church, you say, no, no, no. I remember the health expo advice, and I'm going to grab something very healthy.

Flesh, you're not controlling me, I'm controlling you. Self-control. You have control over it.

As believers, I believe. That's why Paul said, I discipline my body. I discipline my body, and I bring it into subjection.

Meaning he tells his body what to do. You don't have to be led by the flesh. And actually, Paul's clear on it as well.

Those who are led by the flesh do the things of the flesh. But those who are led by the spirit do the things of the spirit. So self-control, even this week studying this, I realized just how important and often neglected area of spiritual discipline it is.

Just think of how many problems this could fix. Of course, trusting in God and praying. But it's funny, you'll see people, okay, I'm just trusting in God, I'm praying.

Okay, that's what Shane said to do. But if you don't exhibit self-control over finances, you're going to go in a bad direction. If you don't exhibit self-control in the area of sexual purity in your marriage, you're going to go in a very bad direction.

If young adults don't exhibit some type of self-control, they are going to have a life or a past that they will regret. Self-control got most of you to church this morning. Who wanted to sleep in? Let's just be honest this morning.

Oh, that's more than I thought. The balcony too. There's a lot up in the balcony.

Wow. So you know what I mean. It's important.

I got this from the John MacArthur study bible out of the book of Ephesians, I believe it was. A man wrote, my family is all grown up and the kids are gone. But if I had to do it all over again, this is what I would do.

I would love my wife more in front of my children. I would laugh with my children more at our mistakes and our joys. I would listen more, even to the littlest child.

I would be more honest about my own weaknesses, never pretending perfection. I would pray differently for my family. Instead of focusing on them, I'd focus on me.

I would do more things together with my children. I would encourage them more and bestow more praise. I would pay attention to the little things like deeds and words of thoughtfulness.

And then finally, if I had to do it all over again, I would share God more intimately with my family. Every ordinary thing that happened in every ordinary day, I would use to direct them to God. I actually have this framed in my office to remind me of that.

Prioritizing self-control. Because if we are left to ourselves, that's a dangerous thing that could happen. If you do nothing and you don't pursue God, you're just like, well, let's see where this river goes.

The river is going in the wrong direction. So it takes self-control to fight against that pull. It takes perseverance.

Any of you want to give up this morning? Let me tell you, keep persevering. We focus on the light at the end of the tunnel, not the darkness in the tunnel. God says, just having done all, you stand.

You stand there and fight. Having done all, you hold your ground. Though the enemy's trying to take you out, though he's trying to distract you and discourage you.

And God says, you just fight and you stand. The battle is mine. And perseverance is a biblical principle.

Self-control is a biblical principle. Standing and fighting is a biblical principle. These are all principles designed to help us, not hurt us.

Again, exercising the control God gave you is a fruit of the Spirit. And you might wonder what that is if you're new to being a Christian or you're not a Christian. The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit that comes out of a person who is either filled with God or filled with the world.

And my mom used to say, when a vessel is struck, what's inside spills out. So fruit is what's growing on the tree. Love and joy and peace and long-suffering and gentleness and kindness, these are all fruit of the Spirit.

So somebody, it's so easy to identify somebody filled with the Spirit, isn't it? They're just, the fruit is there. I mean, you look at a pear tree, guess what's growing? Strawberries. No, strawberries grow in a little bush on the ground.

It's hard to stop insects from eating those strawberries, by the way. So I've been trying that for a while. So the fruit is what people see.

Do they see you being agitated and angry and always panicking and upset? Or do they see the fruit of the Spirit? So let's read what that is in Galatians. So Paul says, the acts of the flesh are obvious, sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery. And then he goes on to say, I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Wow. I warn you. When was the last time you heard somebody warn you in church? Now we've become so politically correct.

We don't want to offend anyone. We don't want to talk about things that might upset them. But that's not telling people the truth.

But I do want to encourage you in this. When Paul said, I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God, a struggle versus a lifestyle. So if the fruit of someone's life is sexual sin, he would go on to say parting and drunkenness and orgy and all kinds of debauchery.

And if your life is that, even though you go to church, even though you might own a Bible, you might click on our Christian radio station now and then. But if you live like this, like the flesh, if the flesh is controlling your life, you don't have the fruit of the Spirit, you are not saved. Someone who is saved has the fruit of the Spirit.

Now, praise God, not perfect fruit. So be encouraged. You're not going to have perfect fruit growing on your tree.

But there should be an indication that God is working in your life. The Bible says a person who is truly saved loves God. They love His Word.

They love God, Jesus Christ. They love His Word. They're okay with humility, selfless love.

There's things in the Bible that are clear what the fruit of the Spirit are. But then he goes, here's the contrast. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, which is long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness.

And there's that word again. I didn't put it there. How are you doing so far? Love and joy and peace and forbearance.

I can tell you there's some weeks where I don't have that much fruit. It's a tough week or a tough day. But here's what you have to remember.

Although the righteous man fall, he will not stay there. He gets back up. That's person does with God's fruit.

They get back up. They say, okay, I've fallen. I don't have these characteristics right now.

I've been mean-spirited. I've been angry. I'm not gentle.

God, would you help me? I repent. God, I'm coming back. Please, God, work.

Change this fruit. Get rid of this old apple that's decaying and give me some good fruit, God. See, where's your heart at? It's getting back on track.

And I don't think the order here is an accident. Do you? Love, it's two bookends. Love and self-control.

And here's what I've noticed. When one of those suffers, don't they all suffer? If you lack self-control and you fall back into sin, are you pretty loving and gentle and kind and gracious? No. What happens? That sin takes us down.

We become angry and judgmental and harsh and critical. We don't exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. And if we lack love, do you think we're going to have the other characteristics? The answer is no.

And we have to start with the first one. I truly believe we have to start with the first one, love, to get to the end one, which is self-control. A.W. Tozer said, a Pharisee is hard on others and easy on himself.

A spiritual man is easy on others and hard on himself. And I don't know about you, but I want this fruit of the Spirit. I want this fruit of the Spirit.

It has to start with love. I'll just be honest with you. One of the most difficult things for me, watching where our country is now, with the political fighting and going back and forth, is the lack of love.

People truly hate people. Even Christians, they just hate. And it's obvious.

And they're lacking that fruit of the Spirit. If you lack love, you will not have these other areas. I guarantee if you lack love, I guarantee you're struggling with self-control.

I'm pretty sure there's not much joy, there's not much peace, there's not much kindness and goodness. They all work together. So let's say you want this fruit.

I'm assuming you do because you're here this morning. Love does not get excited when others fall. What love does, it looks at the brokenness all around us and says, God, give me that brokenness.

Do you ever walk by homeless people? It doesn't even matter anymore. You hear stuff on the news that doesn't even matter anymore. You haven't wept for our nation in years.

You could care less about sin that people are caught in. It's just you become cold and stagnant and hard. Welcome to the club.

I've been there. It's not a good spot to be. Love is so important.

That will get you on your face, worshiping. That will get you here at the prayer meetings. Because when you have love, you have that brokenness.

I think it was Paul, you can correct me here. He said that love, he said, you can speak like the tongues of men and of angels. But if you have love, it profits you nothing.

You can have great faith and understand all mysteries, everything that is out there. But if you have not love, it profits you nothing. You can burn, have your body burned at the stake, give everything to the poor.

But if you have not love, it profits you nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind.

It doesn't envy. It doesn't boast. It's not proud.

It's not rude. It's not self-seeking. It keeps no record of wrong done against it.

Where there are tongues, they will cease. Where there is prophecy, they will cease. But tongues will never cease.

We see in part now, but Paul says, when I was a child, I thought as a child, I spoke as a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things that I knew how to love those I even disagreed with. The power of love.

Guys, let me tell you, without that, I shouldn't even be up here. I shouldn't even be preaching. Had God not broke my heart, broke the heart in his heart, tore out the pride and the arrogance and gave me a love for others, it would weep for others.

Weep for the addict instead of telling them off. Weep for the prodigal instead of preaching at them. Weep for the condition of our nation instead of going on political rants.

We need the love of Christ in our hearts again to break us and mold us and shape us. You become worshippers. You become worshippers.

That's why the devil's got some of you in handcuffs, and you don't want to worship because there's no love. Worship flows out of a loving heart. Amen.

Amen. Thank you, Michael. I've just noticed in my own life, I've walked by homeless people.

My best friend that I've known since I was eight is hooked to alcohol and suicidal. I don't know how long he's going to make it. And you grow callous and cold.

You hear of tragedy in lives of people, and you grow, you're cold, you're callous. These things should break our heart. If you have not love, it profits you nothing.

You got that? Bible lovers, I don't care how well you preach. I don't care how well, you can memorize the entire Bible. I'll take a saint filled with the Spirit of God who loves God and others over a person who memorized the whole Bible.

Love. Love is how you will lead others in your family to Christ. Love flowing out of our homes.

Let me just stop and pray for a minute. Just for a minute. God, fill us with your Spirit this morning as we break before you.

God, let those crying out for love this morning be filled with your Spirit. God, show them the peace and the joy. Maybe they've been bound for years with a cold, callous, rigid heart.

God, fill them with your Spirit. Show them how they need you every day. Show them that they have been preaching at others and looking down on others and stiff-necked and prideful and arrogant.

Lord, break that out of us this morning and give us a Spirit of love. Thank you, God, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay, that's the introduction. 1 Corinthians 6.12, talking about self-control. I'm actually going through the book of 1 Corinthians.

We're in chapter 6, verse 12. I didn't know it would be that long of an introduction, so I'll try to get through this. All things are lawful for me.

This verse is so important, folks. Listen to this. All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Here's something I hope you understand as you leave here this morning later. The context of this is liberty has limits.

As a Christian, your liberty, because everybody says, oh, I have liberty. I can drink and chew and hang out with those that do and cuss and swear, and I can do all that. Okay, but are you bound? Has it led to addiction? Is it helpful? Is it really helpful? Because we love to pride ourselves and, well, look what I can do.

Is it helpful, though? Is it good? Well, how do I know? What fruit is being produced? If you ever want to know something is good and helpful in your life, just look at the fruit that's being produced. Is it leading you closer to God? Is it leading your family closer to God? Is it good fruit? Well, what about a Dodger game? Sure, take your kids, enjoy the game. See? Bring your own food, though, just a side note.

You don't want to know what's in those Dodger dogs. Sorry, I still have the health expo on my mind. So Christian liberty is often an excuse to indulge.

Did you know that? Christian liberty, meaning I can do this. I can do this. It's often an excuse to indulge, and actually a sign of a false teacher, a false prophet, is they will encourage you in your indulgences.

They will encourage you in your indulgences, and I truly believe, if you listen, if you go back, I was on Fox News. It's on foxnews.com a few weeks ago, and I debated that professor from a liberal university, and she actually would endorse homosexuality and encourage people to live like that. Thought Jesus would be okay with abortion.

See, there's a clear distinction here. That's false. There's a right, there's a wrong, there's a truth, there's an error, and false teachers, false proclaimers of God's Word, someone who's not genuine, will always appeal to your lusts and do your flesh.

They will not call you out of that lifestyle. They will not call you to repentance, because they appeal to the flesh and the carnal nature of man. So, helpful.

He says here, is it helpful? You can, but should you? You can do something, but should you? I mean, just, I don't know when it was, somebody asked, can I smoke and be a Christian? Sure. You're gonna be miserable. Should you? A hundred years ago, they thought tobacco was great.

They even recommended it to pregnant moms. We've changed a lot, haven't we? So, you can do certain things. Of course, the question of alcohol comes up often in the Christian community.

Can I? Well, maybe we'll teach on that sometime. Be careful. Should you is the correct question you should be asking.

Should you? I've got a lot of notes on that, but I will save it for later. Bondage, stronghold. Has something become a bondage or a stronghold in your life? Many people never break out of certain bondages and strongholds, because they don't recognize that they're the problem.

They always excuse. They always make excuses for their actions. So, then Paul goes on to say, verse 13, foods for the stomach, and the stomach is for food, but God will destroy both it and them.

Now, here we go. We're gonna get controversial. You ready? I'm gonna keep it the G version.

Maybe PG. Now, the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord. So, in other words, he's saying here sexual immorality is sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage.

Now, you have to say between a man and a woman in the context of a godly home, a godly marriage. So, that's sexual morality, and that's why Jesus said pornea. He used a Greek word, pornea, when he talked about divorce and different things.

It's anything outside the bounds of marriage, and people always, they'll email or they'll ask, but Jesus didn't say anything about homosexuality. How can you say that then? Because he used the word pornea, any type of sexual immorality. He also didn't talk about necrophilia or pedophilia.

He also didn't talk about a lot of different things. Why? Because it's covered in that blanket statement that any, God says, I create them male and female. I will bring them together.

The two shall become one flesh. Anything outside of that is a deviation from God's word. I mean, we are getting so sick as a culture.

I'm not going to go into detail, but there's like robots now on the news. Robots that, you know, if you don't have a spouse, you can marry a robot. What? Yeah, Google it, or maybe don't Google it.

No, just take my word for it. Just take my word for it on that one. Because, see, remember, perversion doesn't stand still.

Perversion grows or withers depending on whether you feed or starve it. So sexual sin, how would people say, how did America get here? It started in the 60s. It started by slowly chipping away at the foundation, removing God from government, removing God from the school districts, removing God from everything.

We have removed the foundation of truth in our life. So he said, now the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord. So Paul's writing to the church, this letter is for Christians, the Lord for the body, and God has raised up, I'm sorry, yeah, God both raised up the Lord, meaning Jesus, and will also raise us up by his power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? So he's giving parallel appetites here. The body is the Lord. He's talking about food in its correct context, sexual immorality, and sex in its correct context, and fornication is outside of God's will.

He desires commitment, godly children, and a sanctified home. So that's the big deal about this, is it's God's way, and people say, I want to try out the car before I buy it. Well, that's wonderful for cars, but that does not work great when it comes to living together.

And studies have shown, I could read for the next hour all the different studies out there that show that you lose trust, you lose commitment, your marriage doesn't mean anything when we do things outside of God's will. Now, if there's a conviction alert, see us afterwards, and we will say, by the state of California, I now pronounce you man and wife. Husband, kiss you, and you can fix that in your problem, in your house very easily.

You can do that. Pastor Abram would love to do it. We've done that before for people saying, I'm under conviction, I need to do this.

Usually, they don't want to do it because they're not what? Ready yet. I don't know if I like this model car. I'm trying it out.

I have the Dodge truck, but maybe I'm going to switch to the Ford or the Chevy. And lack of commitment, I don't want to commit. Listen, as a Christian, you know the day you say you do means you don't anywhere else.

That's a commitment that you're saying, I don't want to ever meet anyone else again. The culture mocks purity. Oh, look at these people, they're remaining pure, Tim Tebow, whoever it is.

Well, look at Hollywood that's falling apart. Who's right? Who's wrong? Look at what's going on in these marriages that are not God-honoring, in relationships that are not God-honoring. So he said, shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? What's happening in the church here is they were still aligning with prostitution.

So Paul is saying, hey, your body's Christ. Marriage is the correct context for this. Don't go marry yourself to a harlot.

What he means is to join together because whether they believe it or not, the two become one flesh. And there's something that takes on to sin against the body. I think there's something much deeper here than what many people realize.

It's a giving of yourself, something that God designed for marriage and marriage only, and that becomes a special thing. Now, how many of us are in here and say, amen, but Shane, you don't know my past. Well, you don't know my past.

Thank God for God's grace and mercy and forgiveness. Thank God for that. Without that, we would be lost.

So see, God always said, I set the standard here. Strive to reach it. But if you don't, I'll meet you.

That's not giving people permission to sin. It's so funny. The Pharisees hate when I say things like that.

I can tell these people a mile away when I get emails. You need to preach about sin and boldness. Don't give people an excuse.

Just ram them with the word of God over their head and kick them on their way out. Because I believe the word underscored with love pierces the heart deeper than any type of preaching that somebody will do. Because you offer people hope and encouragement.

So young adults, if you've messed up in the past, and you come here with a lot of shame and guilt, you can leave here with a lot of peace and joy. But Shane, that doesn't make sense. You're out of God's will.

You can get back in God's will. You can say, God, we need to do this right. We need to do what's right.

We commit our lives to you. We're going to honor God. And I believe God will honor that.

He'll take a broken past, and he'll set you on the right path. I'm sure some people are going, well, I'm glad we don't do that with prostitution anymore. Well, do you think pornography is much different? It's not.

Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, he says, shall become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. I should have titled this message, and I almost did.

I sent it out for advice, but nobody would let me choose this title. But I wanted to title this message, Be Careful Who You Hook Up With. Nobody thought that would be a good idea.

But isn't that the gist? Isn't that what Paul's saying? Be careful, because it's not just some, what do they call it, some affair or some fling. It's a joining together. And I think the more, how do I word this correctly? The more past mistakes we have in this area, the harder it is in life in the future many times.

Because all that pain, all that wrong relationships. But thank God for the cross. Thank God for Calvary, because he can break that.

Yes, there's circumstances. Yes, there's emotional issues and emotional scars. If I could go back and redo time, oh, wow.

I would go back to 12, and when I committed my life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I would follow him with all my heart, with all my strength. I would follow him. I would never have touched a drink.

I would have never have hooked up with anybody that was outside of God's will. I would have sought for Morgan until I was 30. But what happens? Oh, no, the enemy comes in.

The enemy comes in, and he presents the bait. He doesn't show you the hook. So be careful who you give yourself to.

If you're a young adult, persevere. Wait till marriage. There's nothing more beautiful than sexual purity going into marriage.

It's not in this culture today. You will be hard-pressed to find it. But don't let that be an indication or a motivation for what you do.

Let God's Word be a motivation for what you do, because you will always fight against the pull of the culture. Matthew Henry said this about the power of purity. The body is for the Lord.

It's to be made an instrument of righteousness to holiness, therefore is never to be made an instrument of sin. The hope of a resurrection to glory should keep Christians from dishonoring their bodies by fleshly lusts. Here's the interesting thing, too, as well.

If you're single, this will definitely apply to you. But one great thing about sexual purity is it leads to a mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. You are so filled with God's Spirit because you're walking in obedience.

But if you're caught in a wrong relation... Do you know people caught in a wrong relationship? Dating someone they shouldn't be dating, doing things they shouldn't be doing? Are they full of joy and peace and long-suffering and gentleness and self-control and leading people to Jesus and want more of God and making church every Sunday? No. They're caught in sin. And this has ramifications into all other areas of life.

So what is the solution? I'm getting to the closing. If you're hot in the conviction seat here. Verse 18.

We have that one up there. Verse 18. Entertain sexual immorality.

Fight it. You stand and you fight it all day long. Hmm.

Flee. What does that mean? Flee. It'd be like this.

If I go, oh, sexual morality, I'm gone. That's it. Oh, you already know what you're doing.

You don't say, oh, hmm. 36, 24, 36. Hmm.

They're not a Christian yet, but I think I can, maybe I can lead them to the Lord. Oh, you want to go to the beach on our first date and stay the night there? I'm not really supposed to. Well, see, you're not fleeing, you're entertaining.

Many times when you entertain sin, it will take you down because not too many of us are that strong to sit here and play patty cake with the devil. So that's why it's a flee. It's an instant.

Here's a tip. You already know what you're doing before it happens. If you don't and Delilah comes to you and you don't know who Delilah is, she can be a drink.

She can be a woman. She can be a man. Whatever it is, it zaps your strength and wants to pull you down.

And you entertain that instead of fleeing from it, you will run into trouble. And when those thoughts come, here's where it starts, doesn't it? But just, it won't hurt. Just have one.

Just call that person back. I know that relationship was from hell, but maybe they've changed two months later. And you start to entertain it, the thoughts.

That's true. What does God's word say? You flee. Flee sexual immorality.

Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Isn't that interesting? It's a temple of the Holy Spirit, whom is in you and whom you have from God. And you are not your own, for you are bought at a price.

Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. So the thought here is God bought you at a price. You are a doulos.

In the Greek language, it's a slave. The old translations used to use the word slave. Now it's often been translated servant.

But it was a slave to Christ. I am your slave. You've bought me with a price.

I am yours. And because of that, we glorify God in our bodies. And I looked up this word flee.

You know, it doesn't say just flee sexual morality. It does say flee fornication. But it says flee idolatry in 1 Corinthians 10.

It says flee evil doctrine. Flee envy. Flee strife.

Flee the love of money, 1 Timothy 6. It says flee youthful lust. So fleeing is part of the faith. So how do we do that? Well, I'm going to sum it up here.

Glorify God, honor him outside of, I'm sorry, glorifying God and honoring him outside of your body begins by honoring him within your body. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak. So it's what's going on inside.

You've got to put so much strength inside. Many Christians don't explode. They implode.

Meaning the pressure on the outside is greater than the strength you have on the inside and you implode. So to glorify God in this area, you have to be strengthened inside. The inside is the foundation.

This is why we put so much emphasis on personal read. Think about this. If you're in God's word in the morning or later in the day and you're worshiping and you're making right decisions, are you going to go hit the club scene that night? Single people? No.

Why? Because they've been fortified up and strengthened in the inside. So to honor God outside, it begins with what's going on inside. More of God and being filled with God's spirit.

And then also you might need to do a little gardening. Where are you going with that one? Well, I plant a little garden. It's not doing too great yet.

There's a lot of bugs and I found out essential oils mixed with water work pretty good to keep them away. I'll have a nice little strawberry and it's gone. The bugs.

But what I've been doing is getting those weeds right when they start. You know how so easy they are. You just pull them up.

Just pull up that as soon as it starts right there. But if you start to get weeds throughout, you'll let just the whole garden's destroyed then. You'll say, well, you know what? Just forget it.

Let this whole garden just go. I'm not going to worry about this anymore. So you have to remove these things when they're little.

Remove it now before it begins a stronghold. Take it out now before it begins anchored into your life. If you know, I tell people this a lot, I used to, especially more young adults, but if you know the relationship is wrong and you know it, get out of dodge right then.

Break it up. Pull that little weed out because it's hard after maybe you've come together in this area and it's been three months and now you love him. Maybe you'll change him.

I don't know. I know this isn't right, but now I'm hooked. Now I'm in this.

Now I'm in love. No, you're not in love. You're in lust.

And now you're deeper in. The weed has grown. The weeds have grown.

So pull it out early on. If you're starting to struggle in this area, pull it out now early on. Get rid of that temptation.

Get rid of what is pulling you down. And then number three, make the decision before the opportunity comes. Amen? Before it comes.

That's what fleeing is. I see the danger. I'm fleeing.

So as soon as that opportunity presents itself, what would that look like in a single life? You meet somebody. You meet somebody at the bar. That person is drunk and they say, well, yeah, I'm kind of a Christian.

I'm searching for God. Oh, that's my opportunity to evangelize. Let me, let me get to know this person.

No, the Bible says flee, flee. Number one, it's probably not a good spot to meet them. Number two, a lot of people say they love Jesus just to love you.

They give you the wrong information. As soon as you know something is wrong, you, you flee it. You leave it.

You don't entertain it. So let me go back to the title, a struggle versus a lifestyle, a struggle versus lifestyle. I don't know where most of you are out in this area, but I do know this, run to God's grace and his forgiveness and his mercy.

Run and just cling on to that. Cause that's what will get you through. Have you ever been to where, been in a spot where you feel like you're a hostage of shame? I mean, shame is, you're hostage to shame and to guilt, especially in this area, because it does affect the body and sexual sin that people get so much shame and so much guilt, they don't know how to break free.

And they're, they're caught in that. So God calls us to turn to him. And again, a struggle is not a lifestyle.

So if you're saying, man, Shane, I'm struggling with sin. Well, welcome to the battle. What do you do with it? What do you do with the struggle? Because what happens many times, many times people fall and they stay in that spot.

But the Bible says what I found a few scriptures for you for the righteous fall seven times. He will rise again. That's the thought process of a man or woman filled with the spirit of God.

Yes, you got me, but this is not my, my, my past is not my future. Yes, this is where I'm at now, but this is not where I'm going. Though I fall, I'm going to get back up and I'm going to put on my gloves and I'm going to fight again.

Though the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, you're serving in ministry. You're called of God. Though you fall, God says, you will not be utterly cast down.

I will pull you up with my right hand and I will set you back on this level of playing field that you can fight again. Look to God, look to Christ for the strength, look to him for the mercy and the grace and run like the prodigal son ran home to the father and run back to his grace and love and let him rebuild you and restore you. But people say, but Shane, there's consequences.

Yeah, but I'd rather live in God's arms in the center of his will and let him deal with the consequences because I don't ever want to do it again. Don't get me wrong. But I thank God for what he brought me through.

I thank God that he held me through the darkest days of my life. I thank God he continues to do that as we cry out to him. As you know, we're going to go into a time of prayer in the prayer room and often you say, or you hear me say, pull down heaven.

What does that mean? Pull down heaven. I mean, it sounds great. What you have to remember in prayer is you speak the name, the name above all other names.

When you call down heaven, when you pull down heaven, you say, oh Jesus. Oh God, help me. Oh Lord, I look to you.

All other names. Do you know that that name calm, the wind and the sea, that name keeps the earth in orbit. That name heals.

It sets free that no demonic bondage. People are so worried about demons and bondage and demonic activity. That name will set them running.

You say that name and they can't do anything about it because there's not a co-equal force there. There's a spirit of the living God who commands the demons to flee. He commands the body to be healed.

He commands to engage the angels over your children. You think moving is going to help your children. The devil still goes.

What helps praying the angels of God, of the living God to be encamped around them. Oh Lord, would you pray? Would you pray according to Jesus' name? Heaven is waiting. The Bible says heaven is waiting.

God's not sleeping. Jesus is not on vacation. Heaven is waiting for that name that says, oh Jesus.

Oh God, would you restore my marriage? Would you restore my purity and my broken heart? Remove this addiction. Oh God, please be over my children. Watch them.

Set them free and deliver them. You watch them, God. Oh Jesus.

And you pull down heaven. You call on Christ. These superficial prayers sometimes don't cut it.

Oh God, bless me and bless this food. And let me get that job. And I'm not against small, quick prayers.

We need to do those more. But there needs to be some pulling down heaven. Heart-wrenching, heart-wrenching prayer.

And you can't manufacture that. You can't whip it up. It comes from a heart that's, what, broken, full of God's love.

What we just talked about 30 minutes ago. That's where real prayer comes from.

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