

This Does Not Go Out Except by Prayer & Fasting

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and fasting in dealing with spiritual battles and demonic influences, and encourages listeners to incorporate these spiritual disciplines into their lives.

Duration: 55:39

Scripture: Matthew 17:14

Topics: "Fasting", "Prayer"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the critical role of prayer and fasting in overcoming spiritual challenges, particularly in the context of casting out demons, as illustrated in Matthew 17:14-21. He explains that some spiritual battles require a deeper commitment to God through these disciplines, as they strengthen our faith and connection to the Holy Spirit. Idleman also discusses the importance of recognizing the spiritual realm and the need for Christians to engage in spiritual warfare, asserting that many struggles stem from a lack of spiritual discipline. He encourages believers to prioritize their relationship with God and to seek His guidance through prayer and fasting, which can lead to healing and breakthroughs in their lives. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper commitment to spiritual practices to combat the challenges of life.

Transcript

This sermon is probably one of the biggest areas of my life that I've seen God move through this area of prayer and fasting. As you'll see, the sermon title will come up soon. This does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Matthew chapter 17, verse 14. And let me read beginning at 14. And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to him, kneeling down to him and saying, Lord, have mercy on me.

Or actually, have mercy on my son. For he is an epileptic and suffers severely. For he often falls into the fire and often into the water.

So I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to me. And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the child was cured from that very hour.

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, Why could we not cast it out? So Jesus said to them, Because of your unbelief, for surely, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you. Verse 21, However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. And that's where I want to stop for a minute.

This kind does not go out except by prayer and by fasting. And if you remember, if you were here last week, I talked about the different translations of the Bible. And the reason I did that was because some translations actually don't include this verse.

And if you're reading the NIV or maybe the English Standard Version or a few newer versions, they don't include this verse. And I'm not going to rehash everything because we did last Saturday. But if you weren't here, go listen to that message.

I talked about where the new translations such as the NIV, the English Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, all the newer versions, they come from a different school of manuscripts. And then we have the King James, the New King James. It's called the Majority Text from Byzantine.

This one's from Alexandria. And they come from different schools of manuscript. However, the truth is not off at all.

The truth is consistent. However, there are minute details, prepositions, or words that are omitted, and the manuscripts don't quite agree. And if they did, we'd have a perfect Bible.

And we worship this perfect Bible. And every jot, every tittle is absolutely perfect. Now the truth is perfect.

The truth of God is perfect. But there are different, they call it variances in the manuscripts. In the manuscripts, there's different variances.

This group is very similar, and this group is very similar, even though they have some differences. So that's where the new translations come from. And they're not new as far as whole chapters being omitted and truths being changed.

They're both very consistent. However, this group, the King James, the New King James, where it came from, the school of manuscripts, has this verse in it. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

But the newer translations don't because their manuscripts don't. So let's unpack that for a minute before I get to the message. What I normally do in a situation like this, you'd say, well, Shane, what do you think? Well, a couple things.

There's something known as the Synoptic Gospels. If you're familiar with that, the word synoptic often means similar. So Matthew, Mark, and Luke are synoptic.

They're similar. So often we can read the stories and see if there's any different contrast, see if there's any different light that we can glean from that. And then you have Matthew, Mark, Luke, you have John that's different.

Not different as far as the Gospels, but he brings in a whole new light on Christ. Well, if you look at Mark chapter 9 on this topic, it says this. And when he had come into the house, his disciples asked him

privately, why could we not cast it out? So he said to them, this kind cannot go out by nothing but prayer and fasting.

So we see that in the same text as Matthew, we see also Mark recording the same thing. And Mark was the first of the three Gospels, and Matthew and Luke came later. And they're saying the same thing.

They're synoptic. They're similar. So that's what I would do.

I would look at other stories in the Bible and see if there's any difference there. And they're both saying the same thing. The next point on this is the early church fathers.

The early church fathers add credibility, but they don't add truth. And that's key to remember. Early church fathers.

People like Tertullian, Augustine was a little bit later, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Polycarp. These were church fathers that came the first century, the second century, the third century, the fourth century church. The beginning of the conception of the church.

And if you look at their writings, do they mention this verse or do they not mention it at all? And one of the theologians, a recent theologian said, his name is Jonathan Borland, said no church father explicitly opposed the verse. In other words, the church fathers writing in about 175 AD to 200 AD to 250 AD, they actually quote this verse in their commentary. And they come before this school of manuscript.

If that makes sense. They're writing even earlier than that, commenting on the verse. So that's why I think it adds another level of clarity for us and confirming that this verse is in the text.

Here's what Tertullian said. They're hard names to pronounce sometimes. He said about Jesus, he prescribed that fasting should be carried out without sadness.

For why should what is beneficial be sad? He also taught to fight against the more fierce demons by means of fasting. For it is surprising that the Holy Spirit is led in through the same means by which the sinful spirit is led out. And that last sentence just stuck with me this week.

The Holy Spirit is led in through the same means by which the sinful spirit is led out. Through prayer and fasting, you can have a deeper relationship with the Lord as the Holy Spirit is led in. And then that evil influence can be led out by the prayer and fasting.

So it's the Holy Spirit, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit is coming in. This evil spirit presence goes out is what he's commenting on. It's his commentary.

Now on this point people ask, well do you believe in demons? Absolutely. This isn't pixie dust and unicorns. This isn't Disneyland.

This is the Bible talks specifically. If Jesus dealt with them, you don't think we'll deal with them today? They'll be present today? Now granted, I don't think we see them in our country nearly as much as if you travel in the mission field in India or Africa where there's witchcraft and all kinds of voodoo and different things. There's a lot of people who have opened themselves up to the demonic.

It's a very real realm. Actually Paul says we don't even wrestle against flesh and blood. Your battle, what you're going through is not physical.

You're not going to win it with your 9mm. You're not going to win it with a baseball bat. You're not going to win it by yelling and screaming.

You're not going to win it. It's our battle. The battle, Paul says, your battle is not against flesh and blood.

It's against principalities. It's against evil spirits that come and do harm. That's why he goes on to say you have to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ to come against these strongholds.

So yes, there's a demonic realm. It is very real. It is very scary and you better be careful with it.

We can open ourselves up to the demonic. Or you can also close yourself and surround yourself by the word of God. And on that note, I see a lot of times in young adults, especially when they're opening themselves up to the occult or these movies that are... I mean, I can't even watch the trailer.

I mean, there's just so much darkness and occult, the witchcraft and vampires and all this stuff. And actually the reason I'm bringing it up is because they're opening themselves up to this demonic influence. And any time darkness begins to entertain you, you're on a slippery slope.

Because darkness should not entertain. It should repulse. The Holy Spirit and a believer should be repulsed by darkness.

They should not be entertained by it. So when I see Christians just loving all these new American Horror Story and all these films and all this stuff that is just demonic at its core, you have to wonder what spirit's guiding you. What is leading you? And I just met a while back a girl we prayed for that opened herself up to that with the Ouija board and having many demonic-type dreams and waking up at night and can't sleep.

And so that's a real realm. The demonic realm, the spiritual realm is real. Actually, Jesus was dealing in the spiritual realm, casting out demons and healing people.

We walk in the physical. We live in the physical. But there's a spiritual realm.

So how do you do battle? You do battle with spiritual weapons. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they're mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself. See, a high thing wants to exalt itself.

That's what the spiritual realm wants to do. It wants to exalt itself. And we have to bring down that exaltation to the obedience of Christ and say, no, thoughts, you're coming captive.

You're not taking me captive. You're not taking me down. The spiritual realm is against me and coming against me.

But I'm holding you captive, and I'm fighting. And that's really the point I want to get across, is there's a fight, people. There's a battle.

Life is not a playground, A.W. Tozer would say. Life is a battleground. It's not a playground.

And Christians come into the battle unarmed, unprepared, and untrained. And the devil says, hey, take your best shot. And they go down week after week after month.

There's a spiritual battle, and we're losing spiritually. Husbands and fathers, contend for your family spiritually by praying and fasting, not by yelling and being dominating and all this stuff. You do it by praying and fasting and seeking God.

That's how you pull down these works of darkness. So it's very interesting here. Jesus said that this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.

And another early church father, Origen, said this. And some of these guys did some questionable things, infant baptism, and just things that, you know. That's why we don't look to the early church fathers as perfect people.

We look to them, though, with their writing sometimes. You can glean a lot from Augustine, especially in his confessions. Augustine wrote confessions later in his life on areas of doctrine where he changed his view from when he was younger to where he's older.

It's a good resource. Tertullian has good commentaries on the Bible. Justin Martyr, Polycarp, early church fathers have good commentaries.

And it's interesting to see what they were thinking 1,900 years ago. 1,900 years ago. And this is so true.

The more fierce the demons, the more fierce the fasting. For it is surprising that the Holy Spirit is led through the same means by which the sinful spirit is led out. That was Tertullian, now reading the next one, Origen.

That those, then, who suffer from what is called lunacy sometimes fall into the water. And they also fall into the fire less frequently. Yet it does happen.

And it is evident that this disorder is very difficult to cure so that those who have the power to cure demonics sometimes fell in respect to this. And sometimes with fasting and supplication, which is prayer, and the more toiled, they succeed. See, what they're noticing here is Jesus' words that this kind, that there's a demonic element, there's a demonic realm sometimes that doesn't come out except by prayer and fasting.

The stronger the battle, the stronger the reaction. When the enemy comes in like the flood, the Spirit of the Lord is going to raise up a standard against him. There is an onslaught, there is an attack.

Sometimes you get the devil in onslaught, sometimes he's just dripping. Just a little drip. And even the drip can bug you, can't it? Hear that sink at night? Didn't I not turn that off? It's a little thing.

So he can come in in many different areas. And also about this, however, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. I don't know why it's omitted in some of the manuscripts.

Other than I do know this, it's a spiritual truth. It's so crystal clear throughout the Bible that you can't miss it. Ezra said, so we fasted and asked God and He answered our prayer.

We fasted and asked God and He answered our prayer. I actually talked about hearing God through fasting exactly a year ago on our website. Hearing God through fasting.

I believe the closer you draw towards God through spiritual disciplines, the better you can hear His voice. Tell a young adult to kick the alcohol habit and stop watching MTV and start getting into the Word of God

and praying and fasting. What voice do you think they'll be better able to hear Him doing that or following the trend of the world? Following God requires spiritual disciplines.

And in that sermon a year ago, I said this. Moses received the Word of God after fasting. King Jehoshaphat experienced victory after fasting.

Esther received protection after fasting. Elijah was restored after fasting. Daniel experienced the supernatural after fasting.

Ezra received direction after fasting. Nehemiah was strengthened after fasting. Joel offered the cure for judgment and it was fasting.

It's funny, the prophet Joel comes on the scene and God says, I'm going to judge the nation. Joel says, just come to God in sackcloth and in ashes and in fasting, basically in repentance. Come to God in repentance with a broken, humble heart.

And fasting is just a sign of what's going on in the inside. When we fast, we're humbling ourselves before God. That disarmed all of God's judgment in the book of Joel if they would just call the solemn assembly and prayed and fasted and sought God with all their heart.

Because isn't that what fasting is? You're denying the flesh and you're feeding the spirit. You're saying, basically, can I be honest and frank? Flesh, shut up. Flesh, shut your mouth.

I told the first service, I put in my notes, I was hoping I remembered and I did, so now I can tell you. But it's almost like the flesh drives our car. We leave here, I'm hungry, I want to go by In-N-Out Burger, I want to go by Panda Express, I want to go by Starbucks.

And then we go to bed and then our flesh wakes us up at midnight, doesn't that ice cream sound good or that cake? And then we, okay, flesh, you're right, let me eat this. Then we wake up, oh my gosh, I ate too much, I'm feeling kind of overweight. And then let me go to Krispy Kreme and get a donut and a coffee and I'll start tomorrow.

And the flesh drives us there. The flesh says, aren't you tired, shouldn't you take a nap? Yeah, I should. And then the flesh says, oh, now you need to go here and get a frappuccino and a cappuccino and all different kinds of things.

Yeah, now what are we going to do for dinner? Let's go to Little Caesars. And the flesh just drives us everywhere. It just drives us, doesn't it? At some point you've got to say, shut your mouth, flesh.

You're not driving this car. Want to make the flesh really mad? Go home and just drink ice water tonight and say, Lord, I'm going to seek you with all of my heart. I'm going to pray, I'm going to fast.

I don't care what the flesh says. I'm going to submit, Lord, to what you want to do in my life. And when you say, oh, that sounds good right now, but in about five hours? But really it comes down to how bad do we want it? Because I could give testimony after testimony on the power of fasting, the power of prayer and fasting.

And I truly believe that's one of the reasons God has blessed West Side so much is just from those of us who fast. I try to do it every Saturday. Many of you know that.

I just go Saturday just water only. And it's difficult. But sometimes you've got to tell the flesh to be quiet.

You're not controlling me. I'm controlling you. You sit under me.

You sit under me, flesh. I don't sit under you. And we don't see the benefits of fasting sometimes.

I would encourage you, read Daniel chapter 10 tonight. Just sit there and read Daniel chapter 10. The angel was sent to Daniel the day he began his fast.

The Bible says that he ate no pleasant food, meats, wines, nothing, nothing pleasant. And the angel was sent that day. But then he was held up by the prince of Persia for 21 days.

He couldn't get to Daniel for 21 days until Michael the archangel came and set him free. And then he went to Daniel and delivered the message. So Daniel, 21 days, probably going, what's going on here? This is not paying off.

But the minute he began, he set his heart towards God to fast, God began to bless that decision. And that's even a hard fast. No pleasant foods.

Have you ever tried that? In other words, whatever you want to eat, don't eat. And I actually am doing that this week to prepare for this message. No sweets, no meat, no coffee.

Basically just plant, ask my wife, just plant-based healthy food. And it is a nightmare. You think, oh, I can eat.

It's no big deal. We had a church potluck last night. Five pounds of carne asada, homemade chocolate chip cookies, and then afterwards the root beer float comes out.

I'm sitting there with my salad and quinoa. What is going on here? This is ridiculous. For about an hour.

But then when I got home, I was so encouraged. I just felt lifted up. I got up in the morning.

Instead of desiring a coffee, I just desired something healthy and just sat my whole day. I have a big breakfast in the morning. Then tomorrow, I'll eat again tomorrow morning.

That's my 24 hours of just water. But I got up this morning and just felt the Spirit of God. And when you make choices in the little things, it adds up later.

If your flesh can get you in the little things, he's going to try to take you down in the bigger things. Once the flesh wins in this area, then he wants to win in this area. And then he wants to win in this area.

And then he keeps taking you down this path. That's why at some point, you've got to tell the flesh no more by prayer and fasting. So if you believe that Scripture is still in the Bible, which we do, there's an element sometimes that this does not come out except through prayer and fasting.

And I also forgot this in the New Testament. Jesus was empowered through fasting, wasn't he? Did you know that Jesus fasted? So why do we think we don't need to? Just write down an index card for me and drop it in the offering, why we don't need to fast, and Jesus did. Oh, that's a New Testament thing.

Prove it. You can't. Because Jesus said, when you give, when you serve, and when you fast.

That's assuming. Well, who would say we don't give anymore and we don't serve anymore? Jesus, when you do these things. And that's why, see, you think I'm miserable right now? Well, maybe a little.

Food-wise. But not at all, spiritually-wise. Spiritually-wise, I'd feel wonderful because of that starving the flesh all day.

Pains around 11 o'clock. 1.30, oh man, 3 o'clock, I need to get to church. Because when church starts, your mind gets off.

And then I get home around 8.39, it all starts over again. But there's a victory there. The spiritual man has built up the Word of God.

You think I want to go home and watch Desperate Housewives or read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John? This isn't rocket science. This is very simplistic. When God says, these are spiritual disciplines that draw me closer to you, we see them throughout the entire New Testament, from provision to safety to power to everything.

Paul was called after he fasted. Jesus went in the power of the Holy Spirit after he fasted. Peter received confirmation from God after he fasted.

Cornelius' entire household was saved after a big gluttonous meal on the weekend? After he fasted. God says, Cornelius, your prayers and your fasting have reached to heaven. I will hear your prayers.

Listen, guys, I promised God a long time ago I'm not going to come here and play church. I'm going to shoot you straight. I'm going to tell you this is what will lead to a deeper walk.

I don't care if people don't return. I don't care if they say, oh, that guy Shane, he's hardcore. You can call me lukewarm.

You can call me a holy roller. You can call me Jesus freak. You can call me extreme, but don't call me lukewarm.

I mean, that's the heart of God is to get us in a desperate state for him, more of him. That's who I'm really talking to, if the truth be told. I'm talking to those who are desperate for more of God.

Because those who aren't just tuning off, oh, he's on the radio? Let me tune that out. That church, I'm not going there because they're not desperate for more of God. Many times we want a pleasant Christianity that doesn't change anything.

Go take a survey. That's what most people want is this nominal Christianity. You better not change my eating habits.

Don't touch my drinking habits. Don't change my lifestyle. Don't change anything.

And we wonder why we're dying spiritually. We wonder why God seems distant. We wonder why we have no passion for the things of God.

It's because of these areas. There's no spiritual disciplines taking place. But let's backtrack for a minute.

They said, why could we not cast this demon out? Now, this could be a whole other sermon on the demonic. And I truly believe I've seen people possessed, not a lot. And I've seen demonic influence.

But as a believer, I don't believe a Christian can be demonically possessed. And actually, the Bible uses the word, he has a demon. Not necessarily possessed.

It's an English word. But I believe that Christians can be harassed. They can be influenced.

They can be pestered. They can be, oh, my goodness. Let the hound of hell loose on a Christian.

And there's turmoil. So, how are you going to battle against that? Five-minute prayers and a Bible that's growing dusty. And church attendance twice a month.

Did you know that's a new national? Across the board, nationally, people are coming to church twice a month now. It went from every week 40 years ago to now twice a month. Everything else is too important.

Now, actually, God is an afterthought, not a priority. Because when it's a priority, it's a priority. When it's an afterthought, you fit it in whenever you can.

When it is the priority, you make everything else fit around it when you can. It's a big difference to see where God's at with our heart. But they ask this question, why could we not cast it out? And I don't think we should dismiss this easily.

When Jesus said, because of your unbelief, because of your unbelief, for surely I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible. So, on that note, unbelief. Here's what unbelief is.

It's allowing fear to influence and dominate. When fear comes in and it influences you and it dominates you, and it leads you as you make different choices, not according to God's word, that's where unbelief begins to sidetrack us. And haven't we all experienced unbelief before? I don't believe God can do that.

I don't believe that would happen. I don't believe this, and God can't do that. So there's a portion here.

What's interesting, though, is in Luke 9, I believe, chapter 1, Jesus gave the disciples power to cast out all the demonic demons, all the people. And they came back rejoicing, saying, even the spirits are subject to us. And Jesus said, don't rejoice because of that.

So if you look at the historical context and you look at the flow of the gospels, this is coming after that incident. So these mighty men were filled with the spirit to cast out demons. Now they can't.

What's going on? Well, obviously, we get a little gleam into what's going on when Jesus says, because of your unbelief, because of fear and not trusting in me and not believing in me and who I said I am and who you are in me. And all of us can experience that. But what you do with fear and doubt is what makes the difference.

See, all of us get that fear and doubt. But do you take that fear and doubt captive? And you say, this is not a correct thought. This is not from God.

You're not influencing me. I'm going to influence you. And you take that thought captive.

Or if you play into fear and doubt's hands, then that's how it leads us astray. And that's how it pulls us down as we get caught up in it. And you fear grows, doesn't it? You fear this, and then you fear that, and then your unbelief, and then now you're just a mess.

I need therapy. What started a week ago could have been brought under control real quick. But over the course of time, we allow that to come in.

And also, I like what he said, nothing is impossible for God. Nothing. Now, is he talking about a physical mountain? No, he's talking about nothing is impossible for God.

If we're in God's will, if we're praying and we're fasting, and we're in God's will, and we're seeking his will and what's best, whatever we ask, I believe, can happen if we're praying according to God's will. Because you're not going to pray for an \$80,000 Lexus. You're going to pray for your neighbor to come to know the Lord.

You're not going to pray for a big house up on the mountain over there by the water tanks. You're going to pray for your spouse to finally come to the Lord. And you're praying for things that are according to God's will.

He can move a mountain with just a seed, a little mustard seed. That faith grows, and it grows, and it grows. So I believe that both of these things play a huge role in the answering of prayers and spiritual power.

Unbelief and fear and different things, they play a huge role. However, Jesus said, this does not come out except by prayer and fasting. So here's what I got from that.

A strong attack requires a strong defense. When the enemy comes in like a flood, a strong attack requires a strong defense. So sometimes, sometimes you're going to need some prayer and fasting.

A five minute quick little prayer on the run is not going to cut it. You're going to need to deny the flesh and say, Lord, I want this so bad. I'm going to deny my flesh, I'm going to pray, and I'm going to fast, and I'm going to seek you.

Because as a spiritual attack comes in, the greater the attack, the greater the resistance. And how do you resist the devil? Resist him and he will flee from you. How do you resist? With spiritual armor, with the weapons of our warfare that aren't carnal.

They're through God, praying and fasting and reading the word of God. All the things we know to do, we just don't want to do them. We know to do, we just don't want to do them.

Why? Because it's hard. Well, welcome to life. This is a battle.

We are in a battleground, not a playground. And I thought of this example earlier, and I brought it to the first service. But when I was back in construction, I remember there was a little car being pulled by another little car.

It had a little tow rope on it. And the little car kind of drifted off the road and went into the mud. And that little car couldn't do anything.

It was just spinning its tires, and it was stuck. There was no getting it out. So I brought it over.

I had a big piece of equipment, a backhoe, and I put a chain on there and almost yanked the front end off of it. It just flew out of the mud. But what was the difference? The power, right? The power that pulled it out.

I needed something different. That little car wasn't going to cut it. The same thing in the spiritual realm.

Sometimes this little thing isn't going to cut anymore. What's been working great. I've got my little 10-minute devotional.

I've got my little church thing going on. I've got my little this. I've got my little cappuccino with the Romans open, the Romans study.

That's good. But sometimes it's going to need a little bit of extra strength. Sometimes you're going to need to pray and fast and pray and fast and lead by example because there's a warfare going on in the spiritual realm we can't see.

How else can you explain that in Daniel 10? Actually, the prince of Persia tells me there's principalities over certain areas. Held back, the answer to Daniel's prayer, held back the angel from being dispatched for 21 days as Daniel prayed and fasted and prayed and fasted. So that reminds us that a strong attack requires a strong defense.

I found this from a website, [Setting Captives Free](#). If you struggle with any form of addiction, this is a good website. [Setting Captives Free](#).

It's a 40-day study. It says every temptation we face, hear it loud, hear it good. Every temptation we face is designed by the enemy to cause us to disobey God and bypass our own cross.

What it means by that is when you carry your cross, you are dying to self. God calls us. It's interesting.

God calls us to carry our cross. He calls us to die to self. But we want to paint this glamorized picture of Christianity that doesn't exist.

Just follow Jesus. You'll be a millionaire soon. There will be no problems.

You'll meet a trophy wife, trophy husband. Now what some story has now, this shirt that says trophy on it. It just came out a couple of weeks ago.

Everybody's wanting it on Facebook. I'm like, oh my Lord. But that's every temptation is designed by the enemy that causes us to disobey God and bypass our own cross.

In other words, a temptation, when it comes, you have to carry your cross. You have to say no. I'm carrying my cross.

I'm denying the flesh. I'm denying myself. And then Satan's design is for us to give in and disobey rather than to resist and offer our bodies as living sacrifices.

Romans 12. Hello. Hello, brethren, Paul says.

Actually, he goes, I beg you. I beseech you, brethren, to present your bodies as living sacrifices. Now if you look at the scriptural course, you'll start to see real quick that the Sunday morning television idea of Christianity is not the Bible's idea of Christianity.

And that's why I think so many people get frustrated. They go on this thinking this is going to be a joy ride. This is going to be a party.

This is going to be what is going on. It's a battle. It's warfare.

I have to carry my cross. I have to deny myself. I have to fight the flesh.

This isn't fun. No, it's not supposed to be fun. It's supposed to be warfare.

But see, here's the interesting. Joy and peace follow. Everybody wants joy and peace immediately, but it follows obedience.

It follows discipline. Joy and peace comes later, after the spiritual disciplines. Every temptation we face, and you know what it is.

Lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life. That's where he's coming at you right now. One of those three ways.

Lust of the flesh. What your flesh craves. Everything from food to pornography.

That's a temptation. He's going to tempt me right when I leave this service, because Panda Express is going to look really good. That's the form of temptation.

Lust of the flesh. Whatever your flesh craves, he's going to find temptation there. And the lust of the eye.

Who wants a nicer vehicle? I have to fight wanting a nicer house every month. I always want to be on acreage, and I get a little track house with a backyard I could, you know, my daughter can throw the ball for in our backyard. And it's like, oh, it's like, lust of the eye.

Look at that. And the eye goes after these things. Shouldn't you drive that? Shouldn't you go there? Look at that building over by the mall.

Church building. Wow. Ten times bigger than your building.

You know, lust of the eye. We want the eye. Crave.

We crave. We crave through the eye. Look at all the media, what they're promoting.

Lust of the eye. Drink that, you'll get that girl. Not drink that, you'll end up in rehab and lose everything.

They don't show you that. It's marketing. All marketing is designed, the marketing is designed to hit those three areas.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life. New Lexus commercial. Look at, you'll be driving that.

Look at how good you'll look. Everyone will think you're the man, you're the woman, you've arrived. Man, look, he pulled up in that Lexus, and it's just the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life.

Pride also is dangerous. He comes in at pride. Your ego, my ego, wants to wound us, wants to hurt us.

He'll go in through pride. There's a temptation. Are you going to snap back? Are you going to go back at that person? Is your pride being hurt, being offended? This is funny in marriage.

Does it happen all the time in marriage? Please shake your head. So I know it's not just our marriage, right? Right? Pride has to be killed on a daily, if not hourly, on a daily basis. So that's how the enemy's coming in.

So when you think of temptation, every temptation we face is designed by the enemy to cause us to disobey God and bypass our cross. Satan's design is for us to give in and disobey rather than to resist and offer our bodies as living sacrifices. He wants us to indulge our flesh rather than crucify it.

That right there is a wonderful definition of temptation or what the reason behind temptation is. It's always to get you to deny your cross, to pick up your own flesh and do whatever you want and deny what God wants us to do. That's temptation.

And we're initially pulled away by subtle compromises, aren't we? We're pulled away by the subtleties, not the big things. Usually it's the subtleties. But God says, come out from among them and be separate.

There's so many scriptures. I had five written down from Ezra to Isaiah to 2 Corinthians to 1 Peter to Revelation. They all talk about come out from among them and be separate, my people.

There's a separation there. That's what prayer and fasting is. Ask many of your friends how often they pray and fast.

What are you talking about? That's some weird church you go to. That's a biblical church. Come out from among them.

If there's not a difference in the way you live your life, if there's not a difference in your Facebook posts and in what you eat and drink and who you associate with, how you spend your time, there's a distinction, there's a difference. You come out from among them and you're separate. And it's in that separation the Bible refers to as consecration.

And that's why so many people complain about consecration. I should do a title, Don't Complain About Consecration. These big words, I don't understand.

That just means being set apart for God. When God said we'll consecrate these items, consecrate this, be set apart for God. And how are we set apart for God? By the choices we make, by our lifestyle, by our spiritual disciplines.

That's why prayer and fasting are so important. And that's the key. Are you affecting the culture or are you being infected by the culture? I like to ask that once a year.

Are you affecting the culture? Are you affecting your world around you? Are you affecting your home? Or is everything infecting you? And that's why we need the desperate need for this consecration. And that's why we shouldn't complain about it because that's how God sets us apart. That's how God fills us with His Spirit.

And that's how He grants us tremendous peace and joy. You see, folks, the end result of this is a deeper relationship with God. Who doesn't want that? If you've ever met anybody that's ever experienced that, they will say, I don't ever want to lose that.

I wouldn't trade in \$10 million for the presence and power of God in my life. That peace and joy. When you wake up in the morning, you have peace, you have joy.

There's a new direction in your walk. You just know God's with you. And then the enemy seeks to destroy that and bring that down.

And then you're back miserable again. When a Christian is not walking in God's will, are they happy or miserable? The words depressed come to mind. Angry.

Mean. Not fun to be around. When you're outside of God's will.

Why? Because as Christians, we weren't designed to be outside of His will. We work in perfect harmony with His will. So when I talk about these things, it's not for people to say, man, Christianity is no fun.

I'm trying to draw you closer to Christ. That's the job of the church, is to draw you closer to Christ. And many times it is hard to hear, but we need to hear it.

Because we are carriers of His presence, are we not? We are carriers of His presence. The presence of God goes with us. And this is interesting.

As the flesh submits in fasting, in prayer, as the flesh submits, you become more in tune with the things of God. The stagnant spiritual life turns into flowing waters. The mind becomes uncluttered and unfocused.

The things of God, rather than the things of the world, begin to dominate as you begin to fast. Now, quick note on this. He said, this kind, this kind does not go out.

And I want to remind you that demonic influence is either being welcomed or it's being rejected. Right now in your life, and in my life, demonic influence is either being welcomed or it's being rejected. It's either being fueled or it's being extinguished.

It's either being fed or it's being starved. One or the other. When Netflix comes out with Fifty Shades of Grey, are you going to be buying it, watching it? I'm giving you practical examples of how we can either welcome things or reject it.

We can either starve it or fuel it. That's how the demonic influence, when the Bible says that Satan is looking for a foothold. Remember I explained this a few months ago, I talked about demonic influences.

A foothold is just getting a little foot in the door. You know, somebody opens the door, you put your foot there, they're not closing that door. You've got a foothold.

So the enemy's looking for a little foothold. A little opening in your life and my life where he can come in. And sometimes belief isn't enough.

I say, wait a minute Shane, you're getting heretical. No, not necessarily. I believe believing in God is wonderful.

And it is enough in many times. In one sense it is enough, but in another sense, you can't just believe and go put your feet on the couch and hopefully everything's, prop your feet up as you're watching TV and hope everything's going to go away. Don't alarm, just believing.

Just believing, that's all I'm doing. No, sometimes there's a fight. There's a fight, there's warfare, there's a battle.

Where we say, Lord, because I'm believing you, I'm going to engage the enemy. I'm going to exhibit these characteristics of prayer and fasting. I'm going to hit the devil on his own terms.

And push back in that area. Fasting starts the flesh while feeding the spirit. And basically we often say, this isn't important enough for me to deny myself.

Here's the most honest sentence in the entire sermon. This is why we don't do it. This is why people do not fast.

Shane, what you're saying is not important enough for me to deny myself. Isn't that true? That's why we can't kick certain habits. Everything from, you fill in the blank to you fill in the blank on this site.

I mean, when I was in the fitness industry, you know that back in 2000, I left 24 Hour Fitness and we worked with thousands of weight loss clients and different things. It was, it was, I was amazed at how many people were addicted to soda. Diet Pepsis, Diet Cokes.

Oh, a lot of head shaking here. I mean, it's just everywhere. And they could not get off.

I offer them money, I'd say free training. They could just not get off of these things. They were hooked to these things.

And we know we are, aren't we? Just try, if you're hooked to something, just try going a day without it. You'll see how, and that's the flesh's hook. That's why fasting is so important.

You see how, follow me for a minute. Fasting denies the flesh, it starves it of these addictions. And then now we're able, more able to focus on God because we're not being led by the flesh, led by these addictions that we have to have.

You don't have to have four Pepsis throughout the whole day. Uh-oh, everybody's, I'm hitting home on that one. I better change gears real quick.

But if we have to have something, there's an addiction there. And the flesh is pulling us away. So prayer engages God's strength.

E.M. Bowne said, every mighty move of the Spirit of God has had its source in the prayer chamber. Every mighty move of the Spirit of God has had its source in the prayer chamber. Do you know what a prayer chamber is? These guys will talk about it.

Jesus said, well, go into your prayer closet. There's a time that you're setting aside for God to seek Him. This isn't going to be a five-minute little devotional, as I said often.

This is going to be time we say, this time, Lord, is for you. I'm going to throw the phone in the trash or turn it off or something. I'm going to take some time and I'm going to pray and I'm going to fast.

I'm going to seek you. Yes, it hurts. Yes, it doesn't feel good.

Yes, you get grumpy. Yes, there's mood swings. Yes, you want to go back, but that's why it's called battle.

It's called warfare. How bad do we want it? How bad do we want it? I don't think most people want to experience God bad enough or the answer to prayer bad enough. I've talked to a lot of people praying for their kids and praying for the prodigal son, praying for their wayward daughter.

And I'll say often, have you fasted yet? No, I don't want to do that. I need my food. I mean, how bad do we want it? I've prayed for people.

They need medical breakthroughs. They need healing. Can you fast for two days? Oh, no, I can't do that.

That's too hard, Shane. Guys, is it really that hard? Now, am I saying everything is linked to fasting? Of course not. I hope nobody takes that from this sermon.

But the other side is to say, well, I'm not going to do any of that. I'm not going to fast. I'm not going to do that.

You have to find the middle ground. You have to start. I personally start with the spiritual aspect.

If somebody is going through something from physical, that needs physical healing, mental disabilities, mental health issues, depression, anxiety, I always start with the spiritual. Because God is a priority, not an afterthought. And it's amazing, when you start with the spiritual, you'll often find that people are lacking in that area.

Do you read? Everything I talk about. Oh, no, I don't do that. Okay, well, that must not be that.

Let's just go get you a prescription. Let's go get you this. And we kick the spiritual to the side.

When I think the spiritual needs to be the priority, it needs to be the main thing that we look at first. We look to God first. We look to truth first.

Not later. We look to him first for direction. All these areas.

And then you can begin to knock down different areas. In other words, if we're not praying, if we're not fasting, if we're not obeying the word of God, if we're not letting bitterness and anger and forgiveness and all this thing be put away from us, if we're not following the scriptural course and we have these issues, how on God's green earth can we say, well, I tried all that. It doesn't work.

Let me try these other things. When we haven't tried everything, we haven't spent time in God's word with prayer and fasting and seeking him. We haven't done the spiritual things.

And I see so many people rule them out and just, yeah, that didn't work. Let's kick it in the trash. Let's get to the real stuff now and try to prevent things.

And it doesn't happen unless you get to the spiritual root of the problems. We are slaves to our appetites. Need I be more clear? We are slaves to our appetites.

They must be starved. And health benefits. This is interesting.

I just found this out this week. Well, I knew a lot of this, but I came across another article. The health benefits of fasting are immeasurable.

Did you know that? God never calls us to do something that doesn't have practical, physical benefits. So when you actually fast, your body goes into a state of healing. Toxins are removed.

Your energy is reassessed and adrenal glands, a whole bunch of stuff I don't have time to explain. But your mind is refocused. Your body is uncluttered.

There's detoxing going on. It's fasting. You're clearing out all this waste.

So not only is it a spiritual benefit, it's a physical benefit as well. And I came across an article this week by Dr. Esther Seals. And she wrote this.

A Kansas couple I talked with, both of whom were physicians, had an autistic son. They discovered fasting when the boy was 12 years old. After a three-day fast, the son began to respond to them for the first time in his life.

Through testing, it was learned that he had an enzyme deficiency that made him sensitive to certain foods. After a general fast of a few days and a rotational fast to keep the enzymes from overpowering his system. And then at age 18, oh, that's what they gave him.

And then at age 18, the boy was reading and showing great improvement according to his parents. The symptoms of many other mental illnesses such as hyperactivity, dyslexia, schizophrenia, and depression apparently have cleared temporarily during short fasts. These symptoms are often usually blamed on early childhood parental relationships.

What if they were more closely related to diet, to what we're feeding the body? And then they also quoted a doctor, a psychiatrist out of the University of Moscow who's been treating those who deal with, I can't pronounce it exactly, psychophrenetics? How do you know? I'm saying. But he treated them with water fast for 25 days and followed by eating foods in their purest forms and 70% of his patients remained free from the symptoms of these diseases, of mental illnesses. Now, am I saying that that's always the solution? Of course not.

But I am absolutely amazed at how many people won't even try God's solution first. It's like, well, that's kind of weird and spiritual. Let me go get this instead.

Let me try this. And to be honest with you, the reason is this is hard work. Is it easier to pray and fast and seek God and deny yourself or go to Walmart or the drugstore and pick up a little pill and try that? What's the easiest? Myself included, we take the path of least resistance.

And I tell people, let's start by praying and fasting and seeking God and very few people actually do it. They want the quick fix. And there's no quick fix when it comes to seeking God.

And I would say without a shadow of a doubt, many of our illnesses, mental illnesses, physical illnesses, many of them at their core are a spiritual problem. I have no problem saying that. I would argue it day and night.

At their core, there's a spiritual problem many times. Now, other times, there's a physical reason. Right? Deficiencies in certain areas.

I have background in health and fitness. You know, I know that. I know that there's deficiencies in brain chemistry.

I know that. But you don't run to this. You run to God's solution first.

This kind does not come out except through prayer and fasting and seeking him. That's where you start. And then what's interesting is when you start there, then God can direct you to the best form of cure.

Then he can direct you to the best course of action to take after that. Because you run to God first, then he gives you direction. He might point you to the right physician.

Then he might point you to the right person. Then he might show you. I mean, there's so many times I've been praying and seeking God and praying and he would just show me right there.

That's the problem. That's the problem. Morgan, remember this one? Our son, I think he was only a year old.

He was going through tremendous, I don't even know what it was, just up and the coughing and the queezing and the noise. It sounded like he was going to die. You know, their nose.

I'm like, oh, my Lord. I was just sitting there. And it just came to me, turn off the humidifier.

Get rid of that thing. Like what? Okay. And we did it.

He's fine. I go online. There's a lot of things.

The moisture, bringing in bacteria and keep him in that state. Things like that. I've lost important paperwork before and just seeking God.

Oh, that's right. It's by the trash can out front. He'll just do that when you seek him first.

I've had issues with my back and different things. And I know when I seek him, he'll show me. You've got to get rid of this.

You've got to get rid of this. This is back to, you know, a diet. And I know it.

I know it. But I want the easy road. I want the easy road.

Isn't there a little pill I can buy at the health food store? Wouldn't that be easier? But that's what we do. So I would just encourage you, run to God and his way first. You can never go wrong that way.

You can never go wrong going to God first and saying, Lord, what do you want? Who should I see? Who should I talk to? What's going on with me? I'm looking to you and you first. And I've seen fasting bring healing, break addiction. Unanswered prayers are answered.

Besetting sin is conquered. Spiritual insight and a deeper relationship with God, all because of prayer and fasting as a spiritual discipline. So if there's something in your life where you're saying, this kind does not go out except by prayer.

And you know what it is. There's something. I don't know about you, but I can tell when the enemy's ramped it up a little bit.

I can tell when there's something that's coming at me or my family that's not going to just go out with a five-minute prayer as I'm driving to work. You see things happening in your little kids that you're like, how are we going to get through this? There's a demonic element. This is trying to destroy my family.

I'm going to have to go into high gear. I'm going to have to go into prayer and fasting. Because as it's coming at you, you have to have a greater force to withstand it.

And that's only done through prayer and fasting. Listen, everybody in this room has to deal with this statement when they leave here. Either Jesus meant what he said or he didn't.

See, we can debate. Shane, yeah, he's a little off, though. He's more into the spiritual.

I'm more into the physical. Whatever. What Jesus said, you have to take it to heart.

Either it's true or it's not. There's something that's not going to stop pestering you or bothering you or even if there's demonic influence. I'm not afraid to say that there's demonic.

You have opened yourself up to the demonic. It's not going to leave except through prayer and fasting. It's not.

And if you don't like that, then take it up with the author, not the messenger. Procrastination, folks, will kill us. Procrastination.

Knowing what we should do but shouldn't do it. I came across as I close with this. An incident from the American Revolution illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination.

It is reported that Colonel Rawl, commander of the British troops in Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that George Washington was crossing the Delaware. Rawl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game was finished. Which we're glad he did, right? Then realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurried.

He tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of his regiment were captured. And Norbert Quell said this.

Only a few minutes delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and un-executed resolutions. Tomorrow is the excuse of the lazy and the refuge of the incompetent.

They're strong words, but it's true. And then underneath that, Richard L. Evans wrote, The tragedy of life is not that it ends too soon, but that we wait so long to begin it. But I also thought the tragedy of the Christian life is not that it ends too soon, but that we wait too long to begin it.

Listen, this is serious stuff. The enemy is coming after us every day, every day. And if you don't prepare, if you don't prepare, and we continue to procrastinate, he will come in and wreck our life.

I wish I had a positive go-team message, you know, and don't worry, we'll get him next week. But the truth is, the closer I can get you to draw to God, the closer you draw to God, the closer he'll draw to you. That's how the best counsel you can give somebody that needs counsel is to draw closer to God.

Draw closer to God and his word. I've never seen that fail somebody yet. If you have, talk to me afterwards.

Nobody will come up. Because we can't. That's impossible.

God will never fail us as we draw closer to him. And it takes prayer and fasting. The reason this church is here is because of prayer and fasting.

The reason people get changed through the worship, the word, the prayer, is because of prayer and fasting. And the word of God. Prayer, fasting, and the word of God.

I would encourage you to do that in your own spiritual life. And you're going to have all the voices coming in right now. You can't do that.

You're hypoglycemic. Oh, that kept me away for ten years. Borderline hypoglycemic.

I can't do that. Failing to realize my energy is ten times better. My clarity is way better.

Everything is so much better by fasting. Or it comes in. Oh, you don't want to do that.

You'll starve. You'll lose this. The voices come in.

They don't want us to fast. They don't want us. Every voice.

I've got to keep eating. This. I'll start tomorrow.

I've got to go to work. You know, I'm not going to be able to do it. They just keep contending for our time.

So I would just encourage you to trust God on this. Go to Him. Say, Lord, what kind of fast do you want me to do? You cannot go wrong doing a fast and denying the flesh.

It'll be amazing. It'll be tough, but it'll be amazing.

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