

Dealing With Idols That Creep Into Our Lives

by Tim Conway

This sermon addresses the struggle with spiritual laziness and lack of self-control, focusing on the need for radical action, amputation of distractions, and a violent pursuit of holiness. It emphasizes the importance of being genuinely concerned about the things of Christ, seeking His will, and making the most of our time for His glory.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:9, Matthew 18:8, 1 Corinthians 3:12, Matthew 4:19, Hebrews 12:6, Romans 8:13, 2 Corinthians 10:3, Philippians 4:8, Colossians 3:2

Description

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Transcript

Hello, Pastor Tim. First off, I just wanted to thank you so much for your ministry. My wife and I are both convicted and encouraged through your church's sermons and APTs available on the I'll Be Honest channel.

My question is in regards to spiritual laziness. I am in my late twenties and have struggled with self-control my entire life. Often, I will be convicted of a biblical truth and be excited to implement this conviction into my life.

Unfortunately, much of the time, these new convictions will only last a short period of time before my laziness wins out and I lapse back into previous behaviors. These behaviors may not be sins in and of themselves, like video games, sports, browsing the internet, but they are definitely not the best ways to spend my time. In some instances, they have definitely become idols in my life.

I truly wish to honor God with my actions and spend my time wisely, but my laziness and lack of self-control has stunted my spiritual growth. Would you recommend removing all these distractions from my life, at least until I have matured enough to exercise more self-control? Or is there a more foundational issue that I need to deal with? I thank you for any spiritual advice and correction you have to offer." Now the first thing I would say is when I read that question, I don't find any wrong presuppositions. I don't find errant approaches to asking.

I don't find contradictions. I feel like that's a good, genuine question. I think it's a question that he's even considering the reality that, hey, could this even be deeper than what I'm thinking? Like if you're talking deeper, that often goes to whether a person's even lost or saved.

But there you have it. You answer it. Be biblical.

Support your answers biblically. But see, what's great about this question is this is undoubtedly a big deal. This guy's 20-something, and probably it's not just a big deal.

I mean, I was just trying to place it. I was just hearing recently about somebody who I think is either upper 30s, 40s, I think 40s. And they came back to allowing video games back in their life to idolatry status.

And they were confessing this. So it's not just a problem with the 20s, but it is a problem with people who are younger. Laziness.

Lack of self-control among those who are professing Christians. And so, what do we say? Kevin, what do you have? Ephesians 5.9. It says, the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. And try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Take no part in unfruitful works or darkness, but instead expose them to the Lord. It is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. Now, what I mean by that is exposing.

Because that, to me, is a deeper root than just spiritual laziness. I know it personally because I've been affected by it. By? What I consider to be spiritual laziness is being caught up in certain things that may not be apparently sinful.

But a culmination of those things can point to a deep-rooted issue inside of a person. What could that deep-rooted issue be? Exactly what you said, idolatry. I was just looking over, looking through those things.

I was actually looking for a particular scripture in Ephesians somewhere where it refers to how you spend your time. And I noticed, so it's like this. So, say, for instance, if I'm all day playing basketball, this is what I prefer to do with my life.

I mean, that could be evidence of something that if I call myself a Christian and I continuously play basketball, one time I should be spending with the Lord, one time I should be directing my family, or times I need to be growing in holiness. But I'm focused on playing video games. That, to me, there's something deeper than I'm, my focus is video games.

It's not the Lord. And so that's why I hold that stance on that. It's unfruitful.

And that's why this scripture... I think he recognizes that it's unfruitful. I think his thing is this. I know this is bad.

I know this is unfruitful. It's almost like lost people, and I'm not saying he's lost. It's almost like lost people making New Year's resolutions.

They can't keep them. But, okay. Let's just ask some questions.

Can a genuine Christian perpetually live in this state? Do you have any sense that the Spirit of God would stop this? What would lead you to believe that? And what is it specifically from Ezekiel? And that's one I would run to. We know God is going to cleanse us from our idols. Now, what means does God use to cleanse an individual from their idols? An Ask Pastor Tim response.

Yes. But the righteous rebuke. That is one way.

Let's number the ways that God will use to remove an idol. Even when it comes to an APT or to the Word, how does that connect with the individual? Conviction. So, it takes the individual being convicted.

It takes something inside. And we know this. When the Spirit comes, He's going to convict of sin.

That is one of His primary operations. Not just in the lost world out there. When He comes, He convicts His people of sin.

Now, we know this. If by the Spirit we put to death the deeds of the body. By the Spirit.

We're working in the power of the Spirit. We're working in the operations of the Spirit. The Spirit convicts.

The Spirit may apply counsel. The Spirit may apply Scripture. Are there other ways? Sermons.

Which would basically be a combination of those. The counsel. The Scripture.

Discipline. He can discipline. Where would you go to... I mean, what's a classic text? Hebrews 12.

How else? He can do that. That would probably fall into that realm of discipline. Taking away assurance.

Mark dealt with that at the men's retreat. That's a sore trial. If you've ever had your assurance shaken.

So I might say love. I might talk about desires. One of the things that we know that God does when He saves somebody is there's a radical change of desire.

And there's a hunger and thirst for what is good. There is a preciousness that we find in Christ. There's desires and there's loves that change.

And so what can often happen is competing desires. I love this thing now more than I love this thing. And my greater love for this is going to trump the competing desires here.

The stronger is going to win. And the Spirit makes my desires for righteousness stronger. But I can tell you there's another way.

And it's just the desire can be taken away. I mean, it's one thing if you have a strong desire for something and God gives you a stronger desire for something else. And so it cancels it out.

It trumps. But still there's that strong desire. I mean, I think sometimes guys, girls too, but can experience this with sexual immorality.

It's where sometimes even for, say, men, perhaps women as well, I know that that can be a problem, but there can be such a strong sexual desire, but a greater desire for God, a greater desire for our walk with Him, closeness to Him, love for Him. It trumps that otherwise strong desire. But then there can be things in our life where God just turns it off.

Desires for certain things can just go. Certain sins that we once practiced when we were lost, God can just take them away. Like you can literally wake up and it's like gone.

And I think most Christians know that. Most Christians are aware that some things when they got saved fell off. And some things they had to fight like for life to try to keep their head above water.

What else? Is there any other ways you can think of that the Spirit perhaps operates? It comes to mind Matthew 4.19. Jesus was saying, and then He said to them, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men. Just by simply following the teachings of Jesus, our desires are going to be shifted from instead of fishing for food, we're going to become fishers of men. I think that would come back probably to desires, but the influences.

Undoubtedly, if we walk close with Christ, the influence of the Spirit will be strong. We need to be abiding in Him. We need to be walking close to Him.

If we don't abide in Him, without Him we can't do anything. We're not going to be successful in this. Right? I think one big factor in all of this too is faith.

And the Spirit of God definitely strengthens faith. But I mean, these have to do with the things that we believe. You think about strong passages like, look, if you don't pluck that eye out, you're going to be whole, but you're going to perish.

And you're better off being blind and without that eye and going into life. You see, where the Spirit really intensifies faith, we look at things like, wow, that's a reality. I believe that.

And that laying hold, and I know that might come back to the Word, and it might come back to counsel. It depends on the degree to which you actually believe this is a reality. How much do we take these things serious? We only get one life.

I mean, we hear things like this. Teach us to number our days. I mean, maybe that's one way that the Spirit works, really shows us.

You don't have long. You don't want to be sitting there spending all your time playing video games and surfing the Internet, watching YouTube videos, because life is short and the end's going to be here before you know it. And even if you're a Christian, the reality is there's 30-fold Christians, 60-fold Christians, and 100-fold Christians.

And I can guarantee you this, no 100-fold Christian is spending a great deal of time on video games and on YouTube. And as we talked about in our last Grace Group, David was diligent and determined that he was not going to set any worthless thing before his eyes. I think depending on how much we really believe our life is short, we only get one shot at this life.

What's done for Christ is really what... When we sing that song, when it's all said and done, I mean, what's our life going to look like? When you look at everything that actually has anything worthwhile in your life, what's actually going to be left? And you know, the truth of Judgment Day is a strong one. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord. Yeah, it's like we heard at the men's retreat.

The reality is that it is going to prove what we really were. But you also have the truth in 1 Corinthians 3 that some are going to be saved so as by fire. And there's no question about it that some of the things that

we've done in our life as Christians are not going to stand that fire.

Wood, hay, and stubble doesn't stand the fire. And Scripture talks about wood, hay, and stubble. And I know it's talking about men and it's talking about what they build on.

But there is a reality here that there is a time of testing coming and there are people who are going to be saved even though that doesn't mean that they don't have any works, but it definitely has the idea that there can be things in a true Christian's life that are not going to stand the test. Yeah, would an example of that be like escaping through fire? Be like the parable in Luke where the Master gives three people different amounts of talents and then he comes back and one guy said, like, I hit it in the ground. Yeah, but that guy's an evil servant.

I think if you go to the other two guys, you'll see that when you look at those parables, you get some that seem to indicate that there will be reward according to fruit. And we definitely see that there's different levels of fruitfulness. But I guess here's the question.

So you get somebody that says, like this guy, I know this is bad, I'm grieved about it. What do you tell him? Stop it. And I think that's exactly right.

Here's the thing, and of course this goes back to the series that we're in right now and where we're at in Ephesians 4, but that's exactly right. Because let me ask you this, you look at anybody who has a significant... like just think about your own Christian life. Have you had any milestones in your Christian life where something really radical changed? Like you took leaps forward.

You went to that higher plane. If you think about things that happened at that point in your life, if you look at history, when men and women have suddenly made these incredible leaps forward in their Christian life, I'll tell you very often what you see. You're going to see somebody who became determined and did it.

Now, it's been a while. Since I listened to any Dave Ramsey on the radio, but you guys know who that is. He's the financial guru.

He claims to be a Christian. But, I've heard him ask people before. People whose financial situation was messed up and they suddenly get to the place where they say, that's it.

We are fixing this. And he'll ask them, what happened? And often times he'll just say things like, we just got sick and tired of being broke. Well, I think about that when it comes to the Christian life.

It's times where Christians finally say, that's it. And they draw a line in the sand. And that's happened in my life.

It's that anger thing. It's that indignation that the Corinthians felt. When I was talking to you guys about that, the last sermon here at Grace, I was saying that from personal experience.

I've been there. I've been there where the anger and the tears were stirred concerning my own sin, where it's like, that's enough. And I drew the line in the sand.

I don't know, maybe I would be very hesitant to ever recommend you vowing before the Lord. You want to be very careful when you do that. I've done that at different times just because I felt such indignation towards myself that it's like I'm going to seal this with a vow.

I'm going to make a covenant before God that this is not going to happen anymore. And I mean, God helping me, I feel like there's been an overall adherence to those things. The thing is, when there's a radical jump in your sanctification, it is you doing something.

It is you. Yes, it may come from Holy Spirit conviction. It may come from the Spirit of God taking certain verses or certain counsel or certain preaching and laying that on your conscience in a heavy-duty way.

But you know how it always will manifest itself? In you doing something. Because look, Scripture talks about striving to enter in. Scripture talks about those who take the Kingdom of Heaven take it by force.

They take it by violence. There is a plucking out of the eye. There is a cutting off of the hand.

There is violence in the sanctification. And yes, just like we're seeing in Ephesians 4, it is going to be the result of you doing it. You putting it off.

You saying that's enough. We're sick and tired of being broke. And we're going to fix our financial situation.

Some of those are worldly people. Probably most of them are that are calling Dave Ramsey. But it's got to be something akin to that in the spiritual realm where you finally say that's it.

I remember that there's one of these Kendrick Brother movies. Many of you probably know it. Fireproof.

But you know in that, Kirk Cameron plays this firefighter and what happens? He gets to the point where he takes the baseball bat to the computer. And what? Then there's victory. I know that's created.

But you know what? There's a lot of reality to that. And just like we were hearing Mark saying, I can't get rid of this because I've got to do email. I think what happens is the kind of response we have to give to people like this is look, if there's going to be a significant change in your life, it's going to be because you make it.

In my own life, reading about the parable of the sower, I felt like I so strongly wanted to be the seed that fell on good soil. And I read about the seed that fell in the thorns and I so strongly did not want to be that. That got choked out by cares of this world, riches, pleasure.

And I just thought, I don't know if I can control what seed I am in the context of that parable, but I can cut off the input of cares, riches, pleasures of this world. I can cut off the flow of that. You know what I mean? I don't have to play a video game for hours.

I don't have to allow some sin to take root in my life or something, in this guy's case, to dominate my time. I can just cut that off. Does that make sense? Yeah, it's being responsible.

It's taking that action. I mean, if you find yourself in a place where you feel like I lack self-control and I'm lazy, and it's manifesting itself in an abuse of... I mean, the things that he says here, video games, sports, browsing the Internet. Guess what? Everything he describes there, you can basically narrow down to television, computer, phone.

I'm convinced that we are in a place right now where, okay, I just flew to Monterey. So, a week ago today, I flew down there. I mean, you know what it's like sitting in an airport? I'm sitting there.

I'm drinking my coffee. I'm watching the people all the way down that line of seats. Every single person was doing this.

And I started thinking, just 20 years ago, it would have been 99, we didn't have the smart phones. There were flip phones back then. Computers were just coming on.

But just 20 years ago, if I had been sitting there, you know what? You'd have had people talking. You'd have had some people reading books or with the newspaper. And I recognize there were ways back then where you could kind of isolate yourself and get in your own little realm.

But it would have been different. 20 years. We are basically two decades in to having to live our Christian lives with something that in the whole history of mankind we have not been tempted with.

And one of the problems is that it came upon us like boiling the frog in water. You know that. They say that if you put a frog in water and you turn the heat up slowly, the frog will actually stay and not jump out until he's boiled.

What has happened is the technology came in such increments where it wasn't like we just got blasted all of a sudden one day we woke up and we have everything we have now. It came in degrees. It came bit by bit.

But I'll tell you this, if Christians are going to be the kind of Christians that have taken the Gospel to the world in days past, that have made the impact on the world, there is going to have to be self-control exerted in this area in a way that we have not had to fight before because the temptation is so easy. Can I tell you this? In all my lost days, 25 years lost, I never walked into a store and bought a pornographic magazine. Back then, that's what you had to do.

Since I've been saved, I have never purposely brought pornography up on any kind of electronic device. That doesn't mean that when I was young the stuff wasn't available because different guys' dads had that stuff. But we were never tempted with devices that made access to this stuff so readily available.

And the thing is, even if you're in the realm where you won't look at pornography, the reality is, you can get lost in YouTube in a second because there's so much that's interesting. And what's happening is these guys are tracking every one of us. They know what interests us.

They know what we've looked at before. They throw stuff at us just trying to bait us in all the time. You have the greatest time-wasting devices sitting in most of your pockets, purses, houses, bedrooms, and we've let them come in.

And the truth is that a lot of Christians lack the self-control to have them. And yet, it's almost like it's my right hand. I couldn't think of getting rid of it.

But you know when Jesus talks about cutting off hands, what do you think He's talking about cutting off? Things that feel like they're part of you? That you feel like are so integral to you like a hand or an eye? And what if we find out in the end that not a single person in this day and age makes it who hasn't taken radical positions with television and computer and phones? That anybody that was negligent, anybody who just caved to it, they're all damned because they lack self-control. You have to remember one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. Do you have self-control? You can say, you know what, I'm done with this.

I'm going to go back to the flip phone. Oh, but I can't do that. Why can't you? There was a day only like 15 years ago and that's what everybody did.

Why can't you do that now? I'm so accustomed. I've got to have it. I've got to have this.

My business depends on it. My communication depends upon it. Maybe your soul depends on showing self-control that you have not shown.

One of the things is we have to be honest. We have to be honest. Because if you're not honest with yourself, dishonesty is the fastest way for you to convince yourself I've got this.

I'm in control. It doesn't control me. Probably none of us are entirely honest with estimations of the amount of time we have been on these sort of devices over the last week.

I suspect if we knew the actual number and then every one of us took a crack at guessing, we would all guess low. But I have a feeling if we just asked everybody's opinion, we are going to assume we spent much less time. But you know what, on judgment day, we're going to know exactly the amount of time.

And I'm not saying that there aren't some profitable things that you can do with a phone or with a computer. But we have to be honest. We have to be honest in light of a God who sees everything.

We need to be honest in light of coming judgment. And I'll tell you this, if you have a problem with sexual immorality and these devices, and you're going to be dishonest with yourself, you're on the fast path to hell. And I say that not on a works basis.

I say that because Christ says that. If you lack the self-control and you're not willing to gouge this eye out and cut this hand off, you know the words. And Jesus doesn't just give those words with regards to sexual immorality.

He brings those same sort of illustration up in Matthew 18 when He is not specifically dealing with sexual sin. In other words, even if it's just time-wasting, even if it's just filling your life, I'm not here to say that it's sin for the Christian to ever watch sports, or ever play a video game, or ever look at something on YouTube, but if you look at it like He does and you say, I know it's become an idol. Listen, for anybody to recognize, I've got a problem here, and this is sin, because that's what idolatry is.

If you admit that, but you let it remain, you are in sin. That's wrong. If the Spirit has shown you from the Word through conviction, you've come to recognize, yeah, this is bad.

I'm misusing time. This is bad. Can you imagine what the church might look like if all the time that any Christian has ever spent on YouTube could be redirected to time in the Word and time fasting and praying? I'm telling you, the Christians who are going to make it, remember, in one respect, Scripture speaks about salvation as future.

You will be saved if you persevere to the end. You have to fight the good fight of faith. God's going to cleanse the idols, but you've got to fight and there's got to be violence.

I would just say this, violent Christians make it. Nonviolent Christians don't make it. That's a reality because that's what we're told.

We're told that the Kingdom of Heaven is taken by violence. I've often referred to this, but in Pilgrim's Progress, you'll remember the man. You remember, Christian was being shown realities about the Christian life.

And there was one place where he saw a table and there was a man with a book. And he had a pen. He was writing people's names in the book.

And one man came up and said, put down my name. And that man, there was a castle off in the distance. And that man took off running across the field towards that castle with sword drawn.

And men from that castle came out to resist him. And it says they went to hacking and giving and receiving blows. And in the end, he hacked his way through all those men and made it into the castle.

And Christian said, I think I know what that means. Well, I would have all you to know what that means. That is not Bunyan just dreaming up his own ideas about what it takes to get to heaven.

That is Bunyan drawing from certain passages in Scripture that are definite and distinct. But the way to heaven is not an easy way. It is a way of fighting the good fight of faith.

It is the way of amputation and eye-gouging. It is the way of violence. It is the way of force.

It is the way of taking extreme measures to make it. Your souls are at stake. And some people are just way too flippant.

They say, well, I'm going to make it. I'm a believer. I know I'm a Christian.

It's these presuppositions. Thankfully, this guy doesn't approach it with that kind of presupposition. Well, I already know I'm saved.

No, he's wondering of something deeper. I would say to him, it could be a sign of something deeper. I don't know that, but what I do know is there needs to be a degree of indignation, a degree of forcefulness, a degree of violence in his own life with regards to this.

And if he doesn't make any changes, then nothing's going to happen. You've got to be decided. And if all of a sudden one day comes where you've got sufficient indignation, where you put the line in the dirt, then you can't just keep on doing the same things.

If you're going to draw the line in the dirt, you need to make the changes that are calculated to bring about the results that you're after. And you can't think that, well, I'm not going to change anything. I'm just going to hope God changes it.

You can't just say, well, I'm going to continue to pray about it. You've got to take the action. That's what Jesus is saying.

Gouge out the eye. Cut off the hand. That means you are taking radical action.

Yes, if by the Spirit, we're doing it in the power of another, these things can seem impossible. But with the power of the Spirit, they're very much possible. Abiding in Christ, yes, I know it specifically has to do with learning how to be abased and how to abound, but we can do all things through Christ.

Without Christ, we can't do anything. With Christ, we can accomplish all the things that we need to accomplish in this life. What we find is that as we apply ourselves, we find that the power of God is supplied.

It doesn't mean there won't be a battle. It doesn't mean you don't have to run out onto the battlefield with the sword and go to hacking. And yes, you'll give blows.

You'll also receive blows. There is a tempter who is minded to take us down. But if you think you can be passive and sit back and you're just going to wake up one day and you're just going to feel radically transformed and these idols are all going to be plucked up and taken away, it's like Tozer says, some of these idols, he used the description of them having roots that literally go down deep inside of us.

And those roots have all these tendrils and it's like it becomes part of us. And when you go to tearing it out and ripping it out, it's like ripping out a part of yourself. That's how it is.

That's how deep these things can be planted. And the imagery in Scripture, it's violent. Yes, there's other images, but there is an imagery of violence.

And so we need to take some violent action. There needs to be a time like some of these people with finances where they say, that's enough. I'm sick of living a defeated life.

And you begin to make the changes. And if there's going to be any radical change, it's going to be because you make changes. And I know you can hear testimonies.

You can think of times of revival. Yes, you can look and say, well, there were times when people experienced these real changes when they heard a certain sermon or God visited or these different things happened. Yes, I know.

I know God is real. God intervenes. God comes.

God can bring conviction. God can bring conviction on crowds of people at one time. But the reality is that you know what Scripture says and what we've been looking at that if you're going to put off sexual immorality, it's going to be because you put it off.

If you're going to put off anger, it's because you're going to put it off. If you're going to put off stealing, it's because you put it off. If you're going to put off covetousness, it's going to be you putting it off.

Dishonesty, you put it off. That's the reality. And if you think that just waiting for the day of revival is what's going to fix the problem, well, that isn't what Scripture tells us to do.

Jesus doesn't say, well, you know, if you've got a problem with your eye looking at women, then wait for the next revival. He says you've got some things in your life that need to be hacked off and you better hack them off. And it's life and death.

How can that be and not be by works? Because the reality is where God has truly saved somebody, He's going to make them violent. He's going to put His Spirit within them and that Spirit is a Holy Spirit and that Spirit is always going to drive people to holiness. That Spirit is always going to drive people.

The fruit of the Spirit is love. That is the fulfillment of the law. The Spirit of God is going to drive people towards righteousness.

The Spirit of God came to glorify Christ and is always going to seek to drive people towards Christlikeness. That's a reality. And the Spirit of God makes people radical and violent.

Any other comments on this? How would you know perhaps the difference between something that is lawful versus something that's a weight? Like for instance, I feel guilty at times just watching a basketball game and I've had to think is this really wrong or is my conscience falsely accusing me? But when would be a time when you know this isn't just something lawful? How would you know I really need to get rid of this without being too subjective? Well, I don't think we have to be subjective at all. We can go to an objective passage like whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And so, I would just ask somebody, do you believe that's wrong? And faith and what I believe doesn't necessarily mean what I feel.

Sometimes our feelings can be odd. Like, I have felt what I believed was peace about something. Like maybe something I'm going to buy.

I run this thing by the Lord. I feel like there certainly isn't anything overtly sinful about this, but I recognize I'm a steward of what God has given. And I'm asking would it be okay to use the money in this way? Because it's something maybe I don't absolutely... Like, I have difficulties spending money on myself.

I regularly feel convicted. No problem giving it. But even giving it to others in my family, that doesn't cause me problems.

It's when I spend it on things for me, especially if they're things that are not very specifically necessary. And there's been times where I have done something where I've had a sense of peace. Faith-wise, I believe I have liberty to do this.

But then after I do it, I feel troubled. But it's only for a season and then it goes away. And then I don't feel troubled at all.

And it's like, how do I even explain that? Well, I would say the faith aspect has to do with what I know to be objective reality. Can my feelings kind of go all over the place? Can suddenly I get bent? I remember one year where all of a sudden, I just had this overwhelming sense I should not go preach at the Denton Conference. I spoke to Brother Charles.

One conversation and it was all gone. Just gone. I mean, it never came back again.

It's like, what was that? So sometimes our feelings... But look, I'm watching myself. I told James just recently, I said, I can come home on a Sunday, turn on YouTube, watch the highlights from NFL games, and I don't feel convicted. I feel like I was able to relax for that little bit.

But I told James, but I can't watch Astros games. Why? Because it does something to me that I don't want to have happen to me. I can tell when something... like if I was watching these things and suddenly I felt like I have to, or there's one team that all of a sudden just comes out and grabs hold of me where, okay, now I'm sitting in church listening to the preaching and I'm thinking about that.

Okay, I can't go there. So I have to be honest with myself. And I guess everything that we allow into our lives, we have to be honest about.

I recognize that there is a time for rest. There is a time for relaxation. But we have to be honest about what controls us, what controls our thinking.

Honestly, I don't like it if I view things where I'm thinking about that as I drift off to sleep at night. I'm thinking about that the first thing when I wake up in the morning. Or I'm thinking about music or songs that don't have to do with the Lord.

To have things going through my mind. So as much as we might allow music that isn't Christian, or TV or sports or whatever, we just have to be honest with ourselves about is it lawful? Yes. But does it edify? Does it build up? Is it the best thing? Is it really helping me run this race fastest? On the one hand, we can't burn out, but the reality is I guess when other people look at my life, would they consider me lazy? If the basic assessment of my life being made by my fellow elders, my wife, my children, is that I'm lazy, then I probably would not want to be sitting any longer watching more basketball games.

Because the reality is if they're all making that assessment, that's probably a reality in my life and I don't want to give myself to that. We are going to be held accountable for how we're using our time even when it comes to rest. The thing is, we're not called upon to work all the time.

There is a time for rest. There is a time for family. There is a time for these things.

And we just need to be honest about it. We need to be honest about when we get online. If we have a tendency to get sucked in to where an hour and a half later I'm looking up and wow! I meant to look at one thing there, and now an hour and a half later I recognize I just got swallowed up by that thing.

If we're going to be honest, are we even in a place where we're ready to even grapple with spiritual amputation on that level? That's what hands and eyes mean. It means things that we think are fundamental and foundational to our lives. Are we ready to amputate them for the sake of making it in this race? And the reality is, I'm telling you this, we're going to look at the end and you will find that the men and women who don't make it are people who are not violent and who aren't willing to make those radical amputations.

And I've been there. I've been there. I remember the first time, months into being saved, I remember that specific Sunday where I lived with my stepdad and it's like, that's it! No more Lions football.

And I got up and I walked out of that room and I didn't watch a Lions football play probably for, I don't know, 10 years? I mean, I basically went through the 90's without watching television, knowing what songs were popular, knowing who won Super Bowls or World Series. I was detached. And my dad died.

And I brought a TV home. Good or bad? I don't know. Probably more bad than good if I'm going to be honest.

A personal testimony of the same thing. On sports, I grew up as a kid watching soccer and I knew all about all the teams. I really was into it.

I just heard a pastor one time when the Lord started saving me, working in me. He said, just think of the players. They're a bunch of millionaires.

They don't care how they waste their money. Just think of them as people who really don't even care about the whole world, just themselves. So I started thinking about that and I noticed that most of the players are like that.

It totally changed my mind on watching. I always thought, I want to watch this one replay and then it will be the suggestions and I'll end up wasting more than an hour just watching replays. So I started cutting it off.

Timothy says, but then as we look at Ephesians, we need to remember that this isn't about just putting off. It's not just the amputation. We really have to be thinking about what is it that we should be putting on? If we're going to make proper amputations to free up time, to redeem the time, what is it that we should really be doing with our time? And I think we really have to remember is I was hungry and you fed me.

I was in prison and you visited me. You basically have the things that really stand out. It's not just that we put off some bad things and become neutral.

It's not like I turn the TV off and I don't watch the Astros because he's going to suck me in and I want to know who's winning in the World Series. And I just turn it off and then sit there just twiddling my thumbs. It's like what should life look like? What is it that's really going to matter in the end? What is it that a life of faith, a life of love, a life of Christlikeness really looks like? Is it sitting in front of movies all the time? Is that really what's going to produce Christlikeness? Look, I'll tell you the truth.

Almost every single Sunday by the time I get home and I sit down on that sofa, I'm exhausted. And yet, I'm convicted by the life of the Lord Himself because of the few times in Scripture that it ever talks about rest. I mean, the one that stands out most to me is when He and His disciples are seeking rest and here comes all the people and He didn't shoo them away and say, look, we're resting and you just can't invade our rest time.

This is protected. He willingly served and gave of Himself even when He was tired. Now I realize He could fall asleep in the boat.

The lives of Christ, the life of Paul, I'll tell you, the life of Timothy. I find Paul talking about Timothy very troublesome. You know what he said? He said, I don't have anybody like Him.

Genuinely concerned for your welfare. You know what he said? He made a blanket statement, a blanket characterization. All the rest? They seek their own things and not the things of Christ.

It's like really, Paul? I'm really blown away by that. Genuinely concerned for your welfare. Paul, He's the only guy I have who's genuinely concerned for your welfare.

I mean, that causes me to look in the mirror. My genuinely concern for the welfare of the people in our church. I mean, I feel that I am, but I wonder if I was being measured by Paul's measuring stick, would I make the cut? That's such a convicting thing that he says there.

It's like even in Paul's day when you take all the Christians and all the leaders, I'm sure what he was saying was not every Christian everywhere. He's talking about the men that he's working with undoubtedly. He's talking about the men that he had high hopes for.

I mean, guys like Demas. All the guys that he worked with for him to be able to say, what a thing to say. Isn't he afraid that Tychicus and Epaphras and Onesimus and Luke and Mark and Silas, isn't he afraid these guys are going to read that? Apparently not.

And yet out of all the guys he can say, only Timothy. Under inspiration. I find that an incredibly convicting thing to say.

I mean, when we look at our lives, where are we at? Are we genuinely concerned for the things that Christ is concerned with? Because no matter if we're in the ministry or not, you can still ask yourself this, do you serve your own things? Do you seek your own things? Or do you seek the things that are Christ's? And he says, that's what they all do. Who's they all? I think he's talking about genuine Christians there. Anyways, we get one shot at this.

And I'll guarantee you this, you guys are going to wake up tomorrow and you're going to be 50 if you're not already. And you're going to wake up the next day and you're going to be 70 if you're not already. And that's if you make it that long.

This life goes by fast. I mean, just today I was thinking, I met a guy from another church that was at the men's retreat. And he saw me.

It was the first time we ever met, but I take it he's seen me on I'll Be Honest. And he says, wow, you're taller than I thought. And he said, you look fit.

And he said, what do you do? And I said, well, I ride bike. And I think he said something like he was surprised that I had a son as old as Joshua or something. I told him I was 54.

And he said, yeah, I was healthy until I turned 55. I was thinking, Kyle White told me that he told me when I turned 50, he said, brother, something happens when you're in your 50s. And so I was thinking today, wow, like if I'm on the same time frame that guy is, I have like months left before everything just falls apart.

And it's like I'm thinking, wow, I got to this point in life really fast. I remember Charles said when Bob died, he wept. He said, I didn't weep for Bob.

He said, I wept because I'm the same age as Bob and I recognized how fast our lives have gone by and we're already at the end. Father, we pray that You'd help us to be violent in the ways that we need to be violent. Lord, put a violence, put a holy indignation into the church of God in our day and among us that are right here in this room.

Lord, I pray that there would be a holy violence. Lord, we want to seek the things that are Christ's. We want to be genuinely concerned about the things that You would have us to be genuinely concerned about.

Lord, we need the grace of God. We need the power of the Spirit to move upon us. We need You to make us all that we need to be.

We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

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