

OH GOD, WOULD YOU REND THE HEAVENS?

by Shane Idleman

Idleman's call for spiritual revival emphasizing that God promises to dwell with those of contrite and humble spirit. He explores the role of holiness in preparing for God's reviving power while balancing between legalism and careless living.

6 Chapters

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Oh God, Would You Rend The Heavens?

Chapter 1 - Oh God, Rip Open the Heavens

I do wanna give you just a heads up on this. This is not going to be a normal audio book where the person recording just reads word for word and perfect, flawless. I'm actually gonna have this be a living type of book where I'm going to add some thoughts as I come across them, maybe, you know, encourage people here and there.

If you know my past, you know, I've grown up with dyslexia and speech challenge and when I read, my eyes skip to the next sentence. And so this is going to be a very, very interesting journey. It's the last thing I wanna do, but many people have encouraged me to read this and then also add my thoughts.

So it's gonna be a whole different type of approach. But in the preface I wrote, I'm not sure how far you'll get in this book, but please make sure to read the final section. Do you really want God to rend the heavens? The need to address revival and the vital role of the Holy Spirit is as relevant today as it has been throughout church history.

My hope is that all of us, including myself, would humble ourselves and find the middle ground, the common ground. The words revival and spiritual awakening are used interchangeably. Historically speaking, a revival is when God revives his people, whereas a spiritual awakening is when the masses are converted.

But these spiritual experiences always overlap. And for added encouragement, this is actually for those who have the ebook, in that version of the ebook, I included links to articles, sermons, podcasts, that you can actually follow up on. You can go to my YouTube channel.

I actually preached a sermon entitled, Rend the Heavens. There's a podcast where I discuss a lot of the topics in the book. There's another sermon, True Revival Has a Cost.

True Revival Has a Cost. I would encourage you to look on YouTube for that one. And then a lot of relevant articles are on my website, Why Revival is America's Only Hope, A Battle Cry for a Dead Church, Will You Pay the Price for a National Awakening, and so on.

And you can actually, if you have the electronic version of this book, you can also just click links in that. I'm also releasing a book simultaneously with this one. I'm working on it as we speak, 40 Days to Reset Your Life, Applying God's Wisdom for Physical and Spiritual Renewal.

So if you're ready, I'm ready. We're gonna begin with chapter one. And again, I'm just gonna, you know, if things come to my heart, I just wanna add to maybe some of the things I've written.

One of the difficulties with a booklet is it's short, right to the point where as I could write a thousand pages on this topic. So here we go. Chapter one, Oh God, Rip Open the Heavens.

As many of you know, it comes from Isaiah 64, one and two. Oh, that you would rend the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might shake at your presence to make your name known to your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at your presence. And that's actually one

of the theme verses for West Side Christian Fellowship, the church I have the privilege of being the lead pastor.

We're located in Southern California, about an hour north of Los Angeles in a little tight community back in the mountain area there called Leona Valley, just west of Palmdale. So anyway, that's neither here nor there. Let me get right into this first chapter.

On April 24th, 2021, an Indonesian submarine sank in the Southern Pacific Ocean. The news report, actually the news reported that the crew may have run out of oxygen and quickly sank below the crush depth. Now the crush depth is the pressure on the outside is actually greater than the strength on the inside.

And let me just pause there for a minute. What about in our own lives? Is the pressure on the outside overwhelming you? It won't if the strength on the inside is greater through devotion to God, through surrender, through repentance, through confession of sin, through prayer and brokenness and humility and fasting and looking to the word of God and then obeying God's word. So it is this thought as to why the submarine had this internal leaking and obviously everyone on that vessel perished.

Now this parallels exactly what is happening in America today. As waves of confusion and chaos overcome the masses, many are looking for the answers in all the wrong places. And many are being crushed by the external pressures of life because the strength on the inside, which is the relationship with God, is not greater than the pressure on the outside.

As I recently wrote in one of my past articles, America has stage four cancer and it has metastasized to the family and the church. We are more depraved than ever before. I also wrote America crossed a dangerous line years ago.

Instead of repenting and turning back to God, we have walked further into the deep waters of ungodliness. The decadence and brutality in our streets is unparalleled in our history. And as a result, there is despair and there's depression and it's overcoming our land.

But believe it or not, I am hopeful. Now I've got footnotes in a lot of what I've already read and again, you can access all of that via the ebook. But it does beg the question, how can I be hopeful amid such darkness and depravity? Because God is sovereign and controls the affairs of men, I am finding great hope.

He often revises people at very dark moments in history. Before an awakening broke out in Wells in 1904, for example, one person wrote this. Now, listen to this carefully.

It is ever the darkest hour before the dawn. The decay of religious faith, the deadness of the churches, the atheism of the well-to-do, the brutality of the masses, all of these, when at their worst, herald the approach of the revival. In other words, it takes a lot of fear and failure to get the church to finally break, to humble ourselves before God.

And when things are going pretty good or a little challenge here and there, we're not as desperate. So when things are dark, when we look around, we see there is no hope. Everything is, what is good is being called evil, what is evil is being called good.

This is the time for the church to press in and be broken before Almighty God. And don't we see similar indicators today? There's dead churches, there's the decay of religion, there's the rise of rebellion and brutality, but don't give up. Instead, prepare the soil of your heart so that God can rend the heavens and release a spiritual downpour.

That's actually the whole point of this book. So next section, he hears the cries of his children. Isaiah 64, one indicates that desperation along with repentance and humility capture God's attention.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens, that you would come down, that the mountains might shake at your presence. Just reading that, I'm getting excited because rend means to burst, to blow out, to explode. What an awesome verse about an awesome God.

And like any parent, he hears the cries of his children as they cry, oh God, would you rip heaven open? Come down and help us. We are lost without you. That's a good prayer, and it takes a very humble person to admit that they need God.

And I think that's the problem in our nation, in the church, and dare I say it, in the family. So many men, and this is to women, of course, too, but I've seen so many men are just prideful and arrogant and not leading their family spiritually. Oh, they're complaining.

They're complaining about the government. They're complaining about this and that, but they're not owning it and putting this weight of responsibility on our shoulders. But on this topic, yes, God is everywhere.

This is what theologians refer to as omnipresence. So how can God come down if he is already here? I'm sure many of you are thinking that. Well, the prophet is pleading for more of God's presence and for the overwhelming power of the Spirit to come upon us.

And it's an interesting topic because we are seeking the manifest presence of God. Now, if an interesting charismatic says that, we kind of just throw it out the window. But when people like Ronnie Floyd with the Southern Baptist, that denomination, I'm reading his book right now, something along the lines of 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting, and he talks about how the manifest presence of God visited his church.

And let me submit to you, that is genuine revival. That is a genuine spiritual waking. That is nothing to be feared.

And many times we think, and wrongly, by the way, this is all not in the book, I'm just adding it here. We wrongly think that, well, when God is moving, surely everyone will notice. Not necessarily.

The hard-hearted, religious, arrogant modern-day Pharisees will often discount a mighty work of God because it is experiential and they have not experienced the presence of God. They've got sound doctrine, and I'm gonna say this later, straight as a gun barrel theologically, but just as empty. They're arrogant, they're critical, they like to put down everyone and they don't lead anyone to Jesus Christ.

It's sad, it really is sad. I don't know if even, many of these people are even converted because that's not the heart of God. Now we can struggle with a critical heart, amen, some of you out there, myself included, but that should not be the tempo of our attitude.

That should not be the pulse of our heartbeat toward God. So anyway, back on track. There are times when God seems distant, hearts feel dry, and evil is praised throughout the land.

But when God comes down, literally upon his people, we experience the joy of his presence and evil is overturned because praying men and women seek him like never before. As the old timers used to say, God heard our cries and showed up today. This is, my friends, this is revival, when God shows up.

So to clarify, yes, he's everywhere, omnipresence of God, the Holy Spirit dwells in the believers. But many people are quenching and grieving the Spirit in their hearts, quenching and grieving the Spirit in our churches, and God will say, you want it? You got it. You wanna just go through the motions? Fine, but if you wanna cry out to me, you wanna get desperate, you wanna say, oh God, would you rend the heavens and come down? That's when he will respond.

And that is the difference maker. Let me tell you, the difference is between night and day. I've been dead preaching sermons and I've been alive with the Spirit of God.

I've been in dead services and I've been in services where you don't even know what time it is. The difference is indisputable. It is, you either have experienced it or you haven't.

So that's my hope for you listening, no matter where your heart's at, is to surrender, humble yourself, if you're carnal, come back to God. If you're arrogant, prideful, break before him. Get to a church that opens the altar and get on that altar and cry out to him and say, God, would you rend the heavens in my own heart? And the altar's really just a step of obedience and going forward and saying, God, I need you as a pastor.

I wanna do that daily. So would be to God that the nations would tremble again at his presence, again in Isaiah 64. So the next section, what, or actually who, we can say both, who can stop God Almighty? Think for a moment, who can stop God Almighty? Like Joshua and Caleb, we too can say, we are well able to take this land.

Like David, we too can cry out, who is the enemy who dares to come against the living God? And like the three Hebrew men in the fire, who can, we can also say, my God will deliver me, but even if he doesn't, I will not bow down to you. And like Elisha, who told 850 false prophets that God would answer by fire, we too can be assured of victory. God plus you is the majority.

I want you to make, I wanna make sure you catch that. God plus you is the majority. Stop worrying about people, you know, not backing you, not supporting you, and I don't think I'm making a difference.

And many times God will take us through that valley of discouragement before the mountaintop experiences. So what entity can ruin God's plans? What leader can overpower him? What government can override him? What army can defeat him? Hope you caught that and not just thinking about other things. Who can stop God's plans? What leader can overpower him? What government can override him? What army can defeat him? No one.

What then shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? As Paul said in Romans eight, Isaiah said that even the mountains shake and tremble in his presence. He no doubt, I think, had Exodus 19 in mind when he penned those words. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke when the Lord's fire descended on it, and the whole mountain trembled violently.

God often shakes us physical to get us to respond in the spiritual. God often shakes the physical, what's going on in your life, in my life, around us, to get us to respond in the spiritual, to get us to bow our knee to Jesus Christ in full surrender. So are you being shaken today? Is our nation being shaken? Absolutely.

Do you see the calamity, the decadence, and the perversion all around us? If so, then why are so many Christians stagnant, inactive, and lifeless? Maybe some of you listening, stagnant, dead, inactive, doing nothing for God, and lifeless, there's no spiritual life. Why are they not hosting rend the heavens prayer meetings and worship nights? Why aren't churches packed and adding more services to accommodate the hunger of God's people? Recently, I talked to Jack Hibbs, a friend of mine, and Rob McCoy. I heard John McArthur speaking on this on YouTube as well.

And those churches that decided to open during, you know, a year ago now it's been, during COVID, actually saw tremendous growth financially, spiritually, in all areas. And they were adding services. I know we've had to add things.

And the need to rend the heavens, folks, has never been greater. And that's my heart. My heart really, if you could, you know, see my heart, see my tears sometimes, it's for pastors and leaders to break under the power of Almighty God.

We are too arrogant. We are too selfish. We're getting caught up in all these ungodly movements out there, viewing skin color a certain way, supporting legislation that's ungodly, supporting groups incorporated that are not applying the word of God to their businesses.

And we've got to get back to being pastors who are preparing our sermons in the prayer closet. That's where the fire of God comes from, the prayer closet. Turn off the media and find out what God has to say.

The next section, never let go when God shows up. Do we really believe that all of this evil will simply reverse itself? No, it's only going to get worse unless God's people pull down heaven. Now, on this point, some people might say, oh, you're putting so much responsibility on our shoulders.

Only if we do this, only if we pray, only if we fast, only, only, only. Oh, that's too much on our shoulders. Well, I don't really want people to feel like that, number one, because that's not true.

We know God is sovereign. We know that nothing can stop his plans and no one can make him do anything by twisting his arm through praying and fasting and worshiping. However, who is going to ignore the plethora of scriptures that talk about pulling down heaven and praying to God for the answers and fasting? My book, Feasting and Fasting, goes into more detail on this.

I might talk a little bit about this as we go on. But God wants us to position our heart, or said another way, prepare the soil of our heart for a downpour. So, and my thought is, we do need to pull down heaven.

We do need to spend more time in praying and fasting, and not that it all depends upon us, but it all depends upon God, but we are positioning ourselves correctly to receive from God. So, what's the alternative? Just watch Netflix all day? No need for prayer meetings? No need to really fast? King's stomach is gonna be on the throne from here on out? And then, you know, if it's in God's sovereignty, he'll bring a revival. Well, it doesn't work that way, folks.

We have to prepare the soil of our heart. You will not find any scripture contrary to that. In Isaiah 64, which I read earlier, we must cry out, oh God, would you rip open heaven and come down? We must wait on God and seek him like never before because he acts, here's the thing, he acts for the one who waits for him.

Isaiah 64, and again, I've got references to tons of scriptures I've already read, but you can find this in the electronic book or the print version as well. This type of waiting on God expects something to happen and waits patiently for it. When we wait, anger doesn't influence us.

When you wait on God and expect him to move patiently, you're not in a hurry today, tomorrow, next week, but you're just waiting on him. You're working for him, but you're waiting on him. Anger then doesn't influence you.

Impatience doesn't drive you and impulse doesn't derail you and fear will not stop you. The disciples prayed in an upper room for days until heaven opened and the spirit came down. The filling of the Holy Spirit forever changed them.

They were hungry for more of God. Can you say the same? I know I can most of the time, sometimes I can't and it's a matter of getting my heart reengaged, set back on the things of God. Here's where I wanna get to, exciting point here.

Many years ago, a very old man who experienced a revival, I believe it was the Welsh Revivals, 1904, 1905, when he was younger and they asked him why did the revival end? His eyes were filled with holy fire when he cried out, when you lay hold of God, never, never, never let go. Let this be a warning as well as a reminder to us as well to never let go when we lay hold of God to pursue him like never before. When you were first born again, you had this fire, didn't you? Or maybe some of you haven't because you've been quenching and grieving the spirit this whole time but then life happens and prayer and reading the word gradually becomes an afterthought yet nationwide revival begins with personal revival.

Believers, one by one, begin to seek God again and before long, there are family revivals and church-wide revivals and the community revives. That's really what happens is there's a spark. It's usually from a prayer meeting extended.

It's not like, well, if we worship all night, God will do this. It's not necessarily, it's an extended prayer meeting. It's times of worship.

It's pressing in sometimes for months, sometimes for years before God, I mean, I know as a church, we've been praying for this for 10 years now. This September will be going on 11 years and we've experienced measures of revival that are clearly God working in the church and in our services and so many, I mean, one service comes to mind, a Wednesday night, 25 baptisms. You could just tell this service was different.

Other times on Sunday and, you know, but we're looking for and praying for a larger scale spiritual awakening. But are we welcoming this type of downpour in our churches and positioning ourselves for a downpour of God's spirit? Are we extinguishing it or are we extinguishing it because of pride, sin, doubt, unbelief? We have to ask that question. Let me ask that again.

Are you welcoming this type of downpour in your church or in your own personal lives or are you extinguishing it because of pride, sin, doubt, and unbelief? I mean, we really have to deal with that question. And I believe it's time to break up our follow ground and seek the Lord while he still may be found. Hosea 10, 12.

Here's the key. We provide the sacrifice, he provides the fire.

Chapter 2 - Preparing for the Downpour

Chapter two, preparing for the downpour. And the scripture I like to reference is Isaiah 57, 15. For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy.

I dwell in the high and holy place with him who has a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Now, I'm gonna get into this in just a minute, but think about this. God says, I dwell with those who have a contrite, which is a broken heart, and a humble spirit.

The difference between humility and contrite is humility walks it out, where being contrite is a position or the characteristic of a broken, humble heart, so they go together. And God says, I will revive that person, I will revive the spirit of the humble, and I will revive the heart of those who are contrite. So, incredible, incredible promise, at least in my opinion.

So, in this amazing passage in the book of Isaiah, it's clear that if we prepare the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, God will bring the fires of revival. It's a great reminder that his word always comes to pass. From Isaiah 57, we also see that holiness plays a role in being revived.

Did you catch that? Holiness plays a role in being revived. Now, here's the danger. One extreme is it's all about rules and rules and rules, and you can't do this, you can't go there, and the more rules I follow, the more rigid I am, the more filled I will be with God's spirit.

No, that does not work. And the other side, of course, is it doesn't really matter. You know, we're under the dispensation of grace now, and I can kind of live however I want because Jesus forgave my sins, and holiness was mainly for those Old Testament people and maybe the new church for a little while, and no, that's not it either.

Holiness is desiring what God desires. God is love, but keep in mind that his name is holy. He is referred to as the Holy One of Israel over 30 times in the Bible.

There were times when the church trembled at his word and walked in holiness. Those were and still can be glorious times. God abides with those who have a humble spirit, and holiness is often a mark of humility.

So here's how it plays out. When God changes us through the power of the Holy Spirit, we submit our lives to Jesus Christ, we want to watch things that glorify him. We want to listen to things that glorify him.

We want to treat people the way he wants us to treat them. And as we walk in this holiness, as a result, we are filled with the spirit. And often when we quench and grieve the spirit, it's when we are not living holy lives, that we are living in sin, besetting sin, unrepentant sin.

But I do want to encourage you. If you're caught in sin, repent to God as you're listening to this. Say, Lord, I am sorry, I repent.

And repent means I'm going to change. You can cry about it, and that's not going to really change anything. That's just sorrow.

But genuine repentance actually changes and actually restores things that maybe were taken or restores relationships. If you've hurt your spouse, you've hurt your children, you repent, you acknowledge it, and you turn and you do something different and you begin to repair that broken relationship and restore those areas. If you're just crying about it saying, oh, I'm so sorry, that usually doesn't get you anywhere.

You have to repent and change course. And God abides with those who have a humble spirit, again, and holiness is that mark of humility. So to be clear, again, I want to clarify, holiness involves salvation as well as sanctification.

The only way to be declared holy before God is to repent of our sin and confess Christ as Savior and Lord. Romans 10, of course, if you confess with your mouth in the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. From there, we are called to live holy lives that honor God and our decisions either fuel the fires of revival or quench the spirit.

We either rejoice in God and walk in his word, or we grieve the spirit by disobeying him. The choice is ours. The next section, five ways to keep the fire burning.

Now, this is important because this is how we keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning in our own hearts. According to the scriptures, there are five spiritual principles that often spark a spiritual awakening and keep it going. Prayer and fasting ignite that fire along with worship and the reading of God's word and obeying his word, but following these scriptural truths can continue to fan those flames.

Number one, embrace godly sorrow. Now, I just told you sorrow wasn't important, that it's repentance that is important. However, godly sorrow, the right kind of sorrow, is the precursor to repentance and is desperately needed in the church today.

Second Corinthians 7.10 reminds us that godly sorrow in conjunction with repentance leads to salvation. Check it out. But it also leads to brokenness and dependence on God.

For example, when was the last time you wept over the condition of the nation as well as the condition of your heart? Brokenness breaks up the fallow ground of the heart, and as the scripture says, break off your evil habits, clear your hearts of weeds in order that they may be prepared for the seeds of righteousness. And that is from the Easton's Bible Dictionary and it has a great commentary on what that means. You are breaking up the fallow ground of your heart by removing evil habits, clearing our hearts of weeds, and then now we're able to prepare our hearts for the seed of righteousness, that being holiness.

Now, number two, recommit your life to God. Recommit your life to God. Zechariah 1.3 says, thus says the Lord of hosts, return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you.

Once your focus is back on God, he begins to work in and through you. I recommit my life to God quite often. If I'm just busy with the cares of the world, I'm not in his word as much and I can tell I'm drifting, then I say, Lord, I want to return to you in the fullness of your spirit, I want to return to you in full surrender and get my focus back on you.

And then a change takes place and there's a renewed focus on him. So it's healthy to do that often. I would submit to you that if you don't do that very often, you say, oh, I did that years ago, you probably need to do it because pride can come in and we over magnify how holy we are and we need to get back to that spot of brokenness and recommitting our lives to him.

And then number three, restore what you can. This is what I alluded to earlier. Genuine repentance always leads to restoration, whether it's seeking forgiveness or mending broken relationships, you can never go wrong by making things right.

That can also involve misuse of money with your children or your spouse and say, hey, listen, or business partners, I want to restore this. I've come back to the Lord. The Lord's working my heart.

I want to restore this. And would you help me and maybe make payment plans or pay someone back? And it's part of the restoring process. In Isaiah 58, even their fasting was ineffective because they were harsh and self-focused.

Pride never ushers in a spiritual awakening. Did you catch that? Pride never ushers in a spiritual awakening. A critical heart needs to be crushed under the power of the cross, plain and simple.

So number four, holiness is not a suggestion. Holiness is not a suggestion. Second Corinthians 7.1 says that we must purify ourselves from everything that contaminates our spirit.

And Romans 12.1 reminds us to present our bodies to God as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to him. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. We know that famous verse.

But also, without holiness, no one will see revival. They go together. And then number five, there must be a continual hunger and thirst for God.

Matthew 5.6 tells us that only those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. Again, there must be a continual hunger and thirst for God. The more I feed on the things of God, the more thirst I am for Christ, the more hunger and thirst is increased.

It's amazing. This kind of appetite cannot be satisfied. Where you eat, you're satisfied.

Not with God, that you hunger and thirst for more. And it tells us if you keep hungering and thirsting for righteousness, you will be filled. Filled meaning complete, lacking nothing, fulfillment in Christ.

Continually seeking him isn't optional. It's essential to spiritual awakenings. It is absolutely essential to spiritual awakenings.

Should I say that a third time? Continually seeking God is not optional. It is essential if we want to experience a genuine spiritual awakening in our own lives and in the lives of our church. Now in studying past revivals, many of which were years or decades in the making, I have found that they all begin after consistent and persistent seeking.

The heat of revival never comes from a microwave setting. It's never gonna be quick. It's often through travail, perseverance, pleading, and seeking God.

That's just the realities from a biblical perspective. The next section, answer the call to return to him. Second Chronicles 16.9. It says this, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole

earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are loyal to him.

So it does beg the question, will he find you seeking after him or running in the other direction? Nothing is more painful than seeing an unbeliever on the broad road to destruction or a believer running from God. So my call to you today, my plea to you today is to return to him today and experience the flames of revival. His call is to the prodigal.

Be clear here, return to me and I will return to you. His call is to the exhausted. Come to me all who labor and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

His call is to the fearful. The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. His call is to the barren.

He who believes in me, as the scriptures say, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water. His call is to the broken. I will bind up the broken.

His call is to the sick. I will strengthen the sick. His call is to the lost.

I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away. So even if you're not where you'd like to be, God's love and mercy is continually calling you back to him. You can find these verses in Malachi that I just quoted in Matthew and Philippians and John and Ezekiel 34 was that credible verse that he will bring back what was driven away and bind up the broken and strengthen the sick.

But he says the proud, the arrogant, I will feed in judgment, thus saith the Lord. So again, if you're not where you need to be, that's okay. That's why I'm writing this book.

That's why God's call is to those who are distant often, to the prodigals, to the wayward, to those who don't know him. It's his love and mercy continually calling us back to him today. So make that decision.

I don't know where you're at, but if you want to prepare your heart for a downpour, just like the title of this chapter suggests, you have to remove the weeds via repentance and humility and say, God, I'm preparing the soil of my heart. Would you come down? Would you rend the heavens? God, rend the heavens today. I'm contending for my family.

I'm contending for my marriages, for our nation, for our churches. God, I've been distant. I don't know where you've been the past weeks or months or years, but I'm coming back.

Lord, the prodigal son is coming back and I want to do a massive amounts of work for your kingdom. I don't want to let discouragement and defeat stop me anymore. God, I'm coming home and you will experience the flames of revival in your own heart and that will lead to change in other areas as well.

And we praise God for that. But I feel the need to pray for you and Lord, I pray for those listening right now who are discouraged, they are defeated, they are caught in shame and guilt, maybe addiction, strongholds, bondages that they have not been able to break free of, that they are staying in the cycle of shame, defeat, guilt, and they go back to the sin. Shame, defeat, guilt, go back to the sin.

You seem distant. You seem far away from them. They don't see you working in their lives anymore.

They don't have a heart for you. The Bible's boring. They don't want to go to church.

God, would you break that in Jesus' name? And Lord, we ask these things not only be done quickly, but Lord, also that you would confirm what you're doing in the hearts of those who are wanting to seek after you. And Lord, I pray that you would strengthen the listener, strengthen the listener spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Lord, I pray you would show them how to put on the full armor of God, look to your word, look to your truth, put on the breastplate of righteousness and live righteous, holy lives.

And the sword of the Spirit, they would wield that like never before. God, honor them and bless them and remove anxiety and fear and depression. And I ask all of this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you guys. Now on to the next chapter.

Chapter 3 - Don't Extinguish the Flames of Revival

Chapter three, embarrassed by the spirit, don't extinguish the flames of revival. It's gonna be a very interesting chapter and I'm gonna try to add to some of the things that aren't in the book as we go through it. But the key verse that we're beginning this chapter with is Matthew 3.11. I indeed baptize you with the water unto repentance, or actually the, if you're reading the Greek, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance is how it reads.

But he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire, Matthew 3.11. But I wanna clarify up front, as far as the way I read the Bible, what I teach, what I believe, is that there is one baptism of the Holy Spirit where we're all baptized into the body of Christ when we believe as Christians. But there are subsequent fillings of the Holy Spirit and Peter being filled with the Holy Spirit and Paul being filled with the Holy Spirit and you name it, there's subsequent fillings of the Holy Spirit, not to be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.

So the verse here is saying that Jesus will baptize people, overwhelm them with the power of the Holy Spirit, which is often aligned with fire, the fire of the Spirit, the anointing of the Spirit, the unction of the Spirit. I'm not too concerned with what you call it, even though we wanna make sure we have correct theology on this for sure. I'd rather see that you have it.

Like R.A. Torrey said, I'd rather miss the exact theological definition and have the power than have the theological term just right and miss the power. You know, it's a constant struggle or desire for many of us to be filled with the Spirit and sometimes we get so caught up in arguing and debating. The bottom line is, have you received a mighty filling of the Spirit, an unction, an anointing that has radically changed your life? If not, I would encourage you to seek that out and recommend a good book, They Found the Secret.

No, it's not the secret that's on Oprah or has been on Oprah. It's They Found the Secret, short biographies of Christian men and Christian women who receive this mighty filling of the Holy Spirit years sometimes after conversion. Oswald Chambers, Amy Carmichael, Adonai Judson, Hudson Taylor, John Bunyan.

The list is Oswald Chambers. There's a huge list there and it will encourage you as well. But let me just give you some of my background in getting into this chapter.

I tend to be safely conservative. I wasn't raised to be emotional. I'm not very emotional, kind of just level-headed and that's where God has me.

I use the MacArthur Study Bible. I read Spurgeon's sermons and I enjoy commentaries from the Puritans, Love Anything by D. Martin Lloyd-Jones and so you get the point. Most view me as calm and collected and my father was an extremely hardworking man who grew up on a farm in Oklahoma.

As a result, I was raised in a tough environment where crying was not allowed and emotion, except for anger, was rarely shown. In my younger years, I made fun of those who genuinely worshiped God. Sure, I would get emotional while watching the NFL or Mike Tyson hitting someone in the first round, but in church, no way.

I believed that I was strong because I could bench press over 400 pounds, drink a 12-pack of beer, and win most of the fights that I was in. I didn't have control of my life. My life had control of me.

Sometime later, I began to thumb through the pages of my Bible. I realized just how far I had drifted from the truth. Isn't that interesting when you're prideful, filled with pride, you think that you're pretty spiritual, you think you're a pretty good person, but when you start to compare it with Scripture and the life of Christ, you realize that you are desperate, desperate for more of God, for him to change you from the inside out, and the more humble you become, the more you look to God's word because you realize if it wasn't for the grace of God there, go I. So by God's grace, I put my complete trust in Christ.

Joy, happiness, and peace filled my heart. From that came books, speaking engagements, radio programs, articles, and ultimately a church, that being West Side Christian Fellowship in Southern California. In short, God took a small town boy with learning and speech problems, like I mentioned at the beginning of this book.

That's why it's ironic that I'm actually reading this book to you on audio, and I've been nervous the whole time because this is not my expertise, and I mess up often when I read, but here we are today showing what God can do with someone who surrenders his life to him. Graduated high school with a 1.8, did not go to college, yet God filled me with his spirit. Over the last two decades, I still remember that special day where I ended up kneeling on the floor, Bible wide open, crying out to God, and just filled completely in tremendous brokenness and pain, emotional pain, but God filled me with the spirit, and there was tremendous joy that I can't explain.

The Bible came alive. Worship music was just something I had to hear every day. I turned off my country music.

Not that, you know, maybe some artists sing some noteworthy songs, but overall it made me wanna hop on a train, grab a 12-pack of beer, and cast my sorrows to the wind, but not worship music. It makes me come back closer to Christ, and it's amazing. So anyway, although there are many times when I pray and worship when I don't feel like it, amen, we gotta do that, I have received many subsequent fillings of the spirit since that day, whether it's when I'm preaching a sermon or during an early morning devotional.

Rivers of water, living water, often pour into my soul. Give me an example. Often I get to church.

You know, getting to church can be a challenge. We've got things going on. Things are breaking.

The baptismal isn't working, or the heater in the baptismal isn't working, or people don't show up, or the sound system has some glitches. I mean, you name it. When you're leading a church, there is something every single Sunday, and Saturday nights when we do services, and Wednesdays, and so, you know, it's the attitude's there, and I repent, and Lord, I don't feel anything.

I don't feel anything right now, and I need your presence. I need your power, but when I get to the pulpit, and we open God's word, and we're there before God's word, and we're listening to worship, a complete change takes place. There's a boldness and a zeal for the things of God, and scripture comes alive, and my preaching just takes on life, and I believe that's a subsequent filling of the Holy Spirit, and Peter when he was filled, and Paul when he was filled, and Shane when he was filled, and your case, put your name in the blank.

When Mary, Josh, Mike, Chris, Bill, Luke, Abram, Levy, Susie, Kyla, Ray, Ron, Yvette, Linda, Phil, Kerry, Morgan, Aubrey, you just put your name in the list there. Kind of naming some names here, people I know. Filled with the Spirit.

Filled with the Spirit. That's when you begin to do a lot of things for God. Boldness rises up, and zeal for God's house consumes me, and it consumes you, like Psalm 69.9 says, that there is a boldness and a zeal for the things of God, and when I add fasting to this equation, my soul hungers even more for God.

So my goal in this booklet really is to fan the flames of revival in your soul as well. Again, if you provide the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, God will provide the fire that I can guarantee you. Next section, we mock what we've never experienced.

So here's why a lot of people mock a genuine work of the Holy Spirit. My position has always been conservative, theological, wanna lean on Scripture, our grounding is in the Scripture, our foundation is the Scripture, but when God moves, you experience it, and it's not always what you had in mind. Services, extended services, heartfelt worship, people begin weeping, and it's uncomfortable for those whose hearts are not right.

I'm just shooting you straight. Now, I have been disheartened over the years when people trivialize and mock deep, genuine experiences that others have had with God. Unknowingly, they are extinguishing the fire of the Spirit that they themselves desperately need.

Ian Bounds, famous for his books on prayer, which I will recommend, once wrote about a devout Christian named Edward Payson. I love this story. Payson fueled the fires of revival during the Second Great Awakening in our nation through his persistent intimacy with God.

It was said that he would wore grooves into his hardwood floor as a result of many hours and hours of praying. I found this story deeply inspiring, but a famous Bible teacher here in Southern California actually said he couldn't even comprehend that kind of behavior, and I just was left perplexed and confused. Now, you know, you can take anything too extreme, and we're not, oh, look, there's grooves in his hardwood floor.

Oh, he must be so spiritual. So I understand that. We don't rate things by grooves in our hardwood floors, but that type of persistence inspired me.

See, the problem is many Bible teachers have not experienced the power of the Spirit where they'll spend an hour or two in prayer and worship, and God, these are all consuming fire. They're straight as a gun barrel theologically, but they're just as empty, and I like what D.L. Moody said in his day, and going off memory here, why can't they see, and talking about these Bible teachers, he said they are good teachers, good Bible teachers, but why can't they see that they themselves need this power, this anointing, this unction of the Holy Spirit? So when the Holy Spirit breaks you

and fills you, you'll be at the altar. You'll want to worship.

You'll want to be in prayer, and stories from Ian Bounds won't threaten you because you've never experienced it. You desire and crave more of that. So how anyone can mock that is beyond me.

When I read Payson's story, I feel the complete opposite. Instead of being unable to comprehend his behavior, I was inspired by it, and I prayed, Lord, please bring a downpour of your Spirit into my dry and barren soul. Oh, God, would you revive me again so that I can rejoice in you? Praying fervently to experience the power of God, as Payson did, is not uncommon.

Both early believers and persecuted Christians today would be shocked at how little we actually pray. It was said of John Hyde, who left for the mission field in 1892, that he would stay on his face before God until the answer came. John Welsh, the great Scottish preacher who died in 1622, would sometimes spend four to six hours in prayer.

John Fletcher, one of the leaders of the Methodist movement, it was said that he stained the walls of his room with the breath of his prayers until he died in 1785. What causes people to ridicule deep moments of prayer and worship? Well, my guess is that jealousy is what is happening. They mock what they've never experienced, that being the overwhelming power and presence of the Spirit.

And this is, you can see it divides the church. It's a dividing line. I've seen many times when people say, why are we singing those songs? And why are we singing so many of those songs? And why are we so emotional about these songs? And why are people at the altar and prayer meetings all night, I don't understand this.

And so they begin to mock it instead of embracing it. My goodness, can you imagine more people at the altar crying out to God, extended worship, people actually feeling the lyrics that they're singing? Now again, our feelings are the, or feelings, I guess to pronounce it better, are the caboose of the train. They're not the engine.

The theology, who God truly is, is the engine. But the caboose follows. Feelings should follow our relationship with God.

Be excited about worship, excited about the Word, not stiff-necked, proud, arrogant. I mean, some people, it's like they're at a funeral. It's just sad.

But the reason is spiritual pride often follows those who are skilled in the Word because knowledge puffs up. First Corinthians 8, one tells us this. The more I read the Word, the more knowledge I have, the more puffed up I can become if I don't stay humble and broken.

And how you do that is you go out and minister to others. You become teachable, wanting to know where people are coming from. You might find yourself at the altar and humbling yourself.

And all these are characteristics of someone who is wanting to stay humble in the midst of increasing in knowledge. As a result, though, spiritual pride causes many of these people to discount the experience of others. So that's basically what's happening.

Now, I'm not excusing weird behavior. I'm not saying that if it's odd, it's God. But I am saying, in studying dozens and dozens of revivals, that when God's manifest presence hits a place, a

building, a conference, a home, it's outside of your box, of your definition of who and what God does often.

Again, it all aligns with His Word. It's just more experiential because the heart is engaged. Our heart should be engaged.

So when confronted, though, about their lack of Holy Spirit fire, they often snap back in anger. But, but, I'm standing for the truth. Doctrine, doctrine, doctrine.

And thank God for the truth. Thank God for doctrine, doctrine, doctrine. I love theology.

I stand for it daily. We must also remember, though, that we were created to experience God. So these people who have a lack of experience for God, they're hard and rigid in their homes.

They're hard and rigid at church. They're not pliable. They're not teachable.

They're not humble. You can have strong theology. Jesus had the best theology ever known to mankind.

Yet, He remained humble, meekness. And we just don't see that in a lot of people that are coming against a genuine work of the Spirit. If more men and women sought Him, God, with all their heart and soul, according to the truth, I believe America might actually experience another profound revival.

Next section, straight as a gun barrel, but just as empty. Several years ago, I was at a large conservative pastor's conference in Southern California. Most who were present were sensationists, meaning they don't believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the miraculous I guess would say, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for us today.

So I was surprised when a man who escaped persecution in China told of how the Holy Spirit had prompted him to take another route on his bike. They had this big screen up and this persecuted man who's now in America, I believe is a seminary teacher. He told how the Holy Spirit prompted him to take another route on his bike.

He barely escaped being caught by the police. We all applauded and thanked God for his guidance. But if a man from outside their circle had given the same testimony, say for me, for example, many would have said, oh, Shane, he believes that the Holy Spirit is still working in the miraculous today and he's probably hearing voices and God doesn't do that today anymore and so are you confused? So was I. It's interesting, maybe some of those people maybe inside weren't clapping but outside everyone is applauding, praise God.

And see, that's all we're saying, the Holy Spirit still does move today. Actually, what this is, it's a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge. The Holy Spirit prompted him via a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge to take another route on his bike.

So you can't say the Holy Spirit doesn't do that anymore and the gifts aren't available today yet applaud a man at your conference who gave an example of it. Just mind-boggling to me. But it's spiritual pride.

Now again, don't misunderstand. We need sound doctrine. Our motto at West Side Christian Fellowship is times change, truth does not.

But we also desperately need the power of the Spirit because as you heard me say earlier, it's possible to be Bible-taught but not Spirit-led, straight as a gun barrel theologically but just as empty. The letter kills but the Spirit gives life. Check out 2 Corinthians 3 when you get a chance and read that whole chapter, specifically verse six.

Experiencing God doesn't invalidate theology. You need to catch this point. Experiencing God doesn't invalidate theology.

It actually confirms it. If my experience lines up with the word of God, I'm in good company. I'm in God's company.

Many pastors spend countless hours preparing sermons, purchasing thousands of dollars in sermon software and buying tons of commentaries and dictionaries but the greatest preparation is in the prayer closet. Before God uses a man greatly, it's been said he humbles him deeply and that's exactly what needs to happen in our churches today. If you avoid emotional worship, you avoid extended prayer, you avoid times at the altar, you avoid fasting for spiritual renewal, you're not running on all eight spiritual cylinders.

All these things are marks of Christians throughout the ages. As Charles Spurgeon once noted, nobody can do as much damage to the church of God as the man who is within its walls but not within its life. You know, and I can say I've been in ministry 20 years, pastoring 10 years, that is so true.

Those who do the most damage in the church, I would say they are cancerous, they have spiritual cancer, are those who are Bible taught but not spirit led. Those who are, it's all about theology and they love to pound their fists, they love to point out sin, they love to put everything down, they're not teachable, they're not humble, they're not broken, they lead others astray. They are cancer to the church and they will pull those away who are not grounded in their faith or they've never experienced God themselves and this person starts to put doubt in their mind and families begin to leave and I've seen it, I've seen it so many times, it's actually sad and it does not please God.

So I'm asking you, are you alive spiritually? Are you hungry for more of God's presence? Are you divisive and combative? Or are you teachable over this topic of the power of the spirit? I mean, that says it all. Sadly, the church splits that I have witnessed again over the years or small groups of people leaving were mainly over this issue. Rigid conservatives at odds with those who want to press in and experience God.

Oh, how it must grieve the heart of God. Think about that for a minute. Those of us wanting to press in, press in, get to the altar, get there at the church in the morning, have a couple hours of worship in the morning.

These people mock that. They don't go to worship, they don't go to prayer meetings, they're just, they're dead and it is sad. They need to be revived spiritually.

A baptism of fire, next section. How is it that so many pastors recommend Martin Lloyd-Jones' fantastic book, *Preaching and Preachers*, yet they conveniently avoid the last chapter? This is

interesting to me. And that chapter is the demonstration of the spirit and of the power.

Are they embarrassed that Lloyd-Jones drove this point home in the opening paragraph? He said this, I have kept and reserved this last lecture what is after all the greatest essential in connection with preaching. Think about this, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones in this great book, Preaching and Preachers, he said this is the greatest essential to preaching. I'm wondering how many people glossed over this last chapter.

He said this, and that is the unction and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. If you don't have that, you don't need to be in the pulpit because preaching comes through a man who is on fire for God. Actually, it was D. Martin Lloyd-Jones who said preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire.

So have you received this unction, this baptism of the fire that John spoke of in Matthew 3.11? Are you truly desperate for more of God? A.W. Tozer insightfully said if the Lord's people were only half as eager to be filled with the Spirit as they are to prove that they cannot be filled, the church would be crowded out. I sincerely believe that the greatest need in the church today is to confess our sins, obey the word, and to be filled with the Spirit. God put a round in Oswald's chamber in the next section, and this is incredible story, check this out.

Oswald Chambers, I don't know if you know who he is, he wrote My Utmost for His Highest, and regarding the time before he received a mighty downpour of the Spirit, he said this, he admitted this, God used me during those years, but I had no conscious communion with Him. The Bible was the dullest, most uninteresting book in existence. Oswald was straight as a gun barrel, but just as empty.

A few years later, he wrote, if the four previous years had been hell on earth, these five years have been truly heaven on earth. Glory be to God, the last aching abyss of the human heart is filled to overflowing with the love of God. What happened? God put a round in Oswald's chamber and pulled the trigger.

Heaven was rent, and the downpour came to this parched soul. In short, he humbled himself, he surrendered everything, and God filled him with the Spirit. He had sound doctrine, he was teaching there at a seminary, but he missed that experiential relationship with God.

Now the decision is yours. Don't extinguish the flames of revival by mocking the work of the Spirit. Fully surrender your life to Him today.

Christian history records countless testimonies of those who received a mighty filling of the Spirit years after conversion. The Holy Spirit is in you, but that's not the same as the Holy Spirit upon you. These Greek prepositions make a world of difference.

Two of my favorite books, which I mentioned earlier, one of them is They Found the Secret, but the other one is Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians by James Gilchrist. That would be an incredible book to read. Also my article, America's Achilles Heel, Powerless Sermons in Prayerless Churches.

Also speaks to this important issue. You can find that at my website. Don't handcuff my emotions.

This is the next section. Sadly, many conservatives also chastise emotional and extended worship and avoid it like a plague. To them, fasting is outdated.

Lengthy worship is brainwashing, and weeping at the altar is too emotional for them. Boy, oh boy. Is it wrong when prodigals come home and can't contain their emotions? Should we be embarrassed when addicts are weeping because the Savior set them free at the altar? When was the last time you wept over the condition of our churches, families, and nation? If you never have, then you fill in the blank.

Let me be brutally honest. Many who show contempt for profoundly deep and moving experience with God have never experienced them for themselves. If they avoid prayer meetings, complain about extended emotional worship, and they never miss a meal for God, are they unaffected by the depravity around them? I mean, what is going on? Are they too mature to go to the altar? Are these people truly filled with God's spirit? I think we know the answer.

They love to read the Bible, but they don't want the Bible reading them. Granted, granted, hear me here. There are seasons when we aren't involved in a lot of things, but excuses should not hide our lack of hunger for God.

Do we really believe that Jesus would tell us to sit down and be quiet during worship? Would he want us standing like dead men in a cemetery? Not a chance. Our hearts should be deeply engaged during worship. Jesus might rebuke silly trends and sappy worship songs with no theological bearing, but would he handcuff our emotions? I don't think so.

Granted, I'm not talking about becoming emotional for the sake of emotions. We can't fake a move of the spirit, but there should be a yearning and a desire to worship God reflected in our actions. If you disagree, you'd be hard-pressed to find any scriptures to support your view.

How to prevent deception. Here we go, the next section. Emotions can be deceptive, so we must be careful.

More on this later. George D. Watson notes this. True saints of God have in all generations had to walk between the two extremes of cold formality on the one side and wild, ranting fanaticism on the other.

Dead formality and the false fire of fanaticism are both Satan's counterfeits, and he does not care into which extreme the soul plunges. Wow, what a powerful statement. He's basically saying we've had in all generations to walk between the two extremes of a cemetery and a circus environment.

We've gotta find that middle ground. And on this point, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones reminds us that we should never interpret scripture in the light of experiences, but rather interpret our experiences in the penetrating light of scripture. We can prevent deception by making truth the engine of the train and emotions the caboose.

Again, I said this earlier. Emotions do not lead, they follow. But when God's spirit is truly moving, our emotions will be engaged.

One example of this is illustrated in the life of Griffin Jones. He preached during the Welsh revivals of the 18th century, and it's recorded to say that the tears of the congregation began to flow in

streams down their cheeks. Soon, they wept openly and cried out, what shall we do to be saved? I'm always wondering, what would the modern day Pharisees say about that experience? What would the modern conservatives who are hard-hearted, what would they say about the upper room experience? Would they even wanna be in the upper room? I don't think so, I really don't.

And that's why my prayer is that more people would experience the power of God. Because when our experience lines up with scripture, the emotions that follow can be good and God-given. As I said earlier, we are in good company.

We are in God's company when that happens. Don't confuse me with the facts. During the beginning of the lockdown in 2020, right before we reopened our church in California, along with Jack Hibbs and Rob McCoy and John MacArthur, I preached a series on genuine revival.

Again, you can get these links in the e-book. And some people voiced concerns over the guest worship leader who led worship via a video feed. And I asked those who had questions or concerns, I asked them four questions and they never got back to me.

Again, you can see the interview, you can see all this on the e-version of the book. And on YouTube, if you put in YouTube, Shane Eidelman interviews Kim Walker-Smith. You can hear the interview, asked a lot of the hard questions.

But I asked them, well, were the services God-honoring? Were the lyrics theologically sound? Were the messages biblically accurate? Could there be abundant fruit? And again, not surprisingly, no one responded to my questions because the answer to all those is positive. But they've already made up their mind. And as they say, don't confuse me with the facts when I've already made up my mind.

And that's what happened here, sadly. Proverbs 18, 13 reminded me to reach out to the so-called controversial worship leader before forming any judgment because a foolish person answers a matter before hearing both sides. And sadly, you'll see in the interview, when I asked her the very first question, has anyone else who has issues or questions reached out to you? And the answer was no.

And that just revealed everything to me. See, we love to be armchair quarterbacks. We're really not looking for the answers.

We don't wanna change our view. We just wanna pound people with the word of God and critique and criticize them because we don't fully agree with them. And it just revealed so much to me.

Again, none of my critics apologized after the interview revealed that 99% of the information they had was not true. Apparently, all of them had already made up their minds and they didn't want to be confronted with the facts. Granted, I share many of your same concerns about some of the weird churches out there.

I'm not endorsing any weirdness, but I wanna draw my conclusions by going directly to the person in question when possible. Anyone can manipulate footage and quote things out of context. And many of the websites out there, some are doing great work, but many of them are simply heresy hunters.

And I'm wondering if many of them are even converted. Have they had a genuine experience with Christ? And I have some questions. I have some concerns because of the hardheartedness.

It's just amazing. Again, we can have concerns. We can have questions.

We should be able to vocalize that. We should be able to lovingly challenge people. But what is the condition of our heart? That's really where the rubber meets the road.

Embarrassed in the upper room. Although I consider myself a conservative, I often wonder how so many conservatives can quote people like George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, but conveniently avoid the mighty uncommon moves of the spirit that occurred under their preaching. Is it because these things don't fit within their theological framework? I don't know, you be the judge.

Although many powerful experiences during the spiritual awakenings parallel the book of Acts, many critics still refuse to accept them. They avoid words and phrases like revival, moves of the spirit, and the deeper life. But these themes are used throughout the Bible.

How many times did God say that he would pour out his spirit? How often was the heart cry of God's people focused on revival? Will thou not revive us again? God, please, we need to rejoice in you. And isn't seeking God with all our heart part of the deeper life? Absolutely, the living water Jesus spoke about is not dead and stagnant. Why would we fear encountering God in powerful and profound ways? We shouldn't.

To be stoic and stiff is fine for a graveyard, but not for a dynamic worship service. I wonder if these types of people would be embarrassed if they were in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on that historic day in Acts 2. I think they would in many cases. Why don't you take time now, read Acts 2, and truly ask yourself, would I be embarrassed to be there? If you would, then I think you need to ask God to reveal himself to you and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Everything should be done in order. If a pigskin can travel 100 yards across a football field and millions get emotional, shouldn't Christians saved by the power of God get emotional when they experience him? Sadly, 1 Corinthians 14.40 is often used as a fire extinguisher to quickly quench anything out of the ordinary. The verse says this, let all things, meaning in the church primarily, be done decently and in order.

And sometimes, to be honest with you, I'm accused of being too conservative because I want to honor this verse. I believe that a circus environment is not healthy or beneficial, but I also believe that a cemetery setting can be just as damaging and just as damning. When sinful men encounter a holy God, it's often controversial.

It goes outside of our preconceived notion of what God does and who he is. We need shepherds who can steward the flame of revival, not snuff it out. I will never forget many, many years ago when a man found his way to the altar during closing worship.

He was weeping and crying out to God, and I was a little nervous wondering what people were thinking, to be honest with you. I was in the back praying and his friend came over to me and he said something that changed my life. He said the man at the altar just found his son, I think a few days ago, hanging in the garage.

He committed suicide. And I immediately made my way to the altar and I wept with him. I was flooded with so much emotion that I couldn't even pray.

And God broke me that day. Another time when the service didn't go as expected was when I was speaking at a friend's church and the power of God was so apparent that I could barely get through my message without breaking down. When the service was over, no one left.

There was a holy hush as tears were heard throughout the sanctuary. The first service ran into the second service and this happens on occasion at our church as well. The parking lot was a mess but it was beautiful.

It was a beautiful problem to have. Sometimes we're more worried about parking than we are worried about people. And George Whitfield, once perplexed by the emotional things taking place, when he preached, asked Lady Huntington, I believe her last name was, for advice on containing it.

She said, oh George, oh George, leave them alone. What they are experiencing is from God and it will do far more than your preaching. And see, that's the challenge.

Jonathan Edwards had to write a book about revival and the work of the spirit. Whitfield was perplexed sometimes, as was Wesley, as was any of us involved in revival because we know when God is awakening his people, the enemy is also moving and stewarding that gift from God can be challenging. But you'd have a better chance of damming up Niagara Falls than containing a move of God.

Bold but not weird. To be clear, I'm not validating weird behavior. Just because something is odd doesn't mean that it's of God.

In my readings of Charismatics and Calvinists and Pentecostals and Puritans and countless biographies of people such as Martin Luther, John Knox, Robert Murray McShaney and so on, it's clear to me that these leaders never encourage hysteria or the outright weirdness we sometimes see today. The fruit of the spirit is not weirdness, it's boldness. It doesn't promote hysteria, it promotes holiness.

Granted, there were times of strong conviction, such as when people held on to trees because they feared that they were falling into hell during Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. And people did cry out to God and fall on the ground under the strong conviction of sin during the revivals of Whitefield and Wesley. But this is because sin, righteousness and holiness were preached.

The Apostle Paul wrote that if an unbeliever or an uninformed person enters a meeting where the Holy Spirit was moving, he would experience conviction. And falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you. That's 1 Corinthians 14.

True revival is emotional and it's unpredictable. We need to recognize that. Again, don't misunderstand what I'm saying here.

Theology is vital, but are theology students also encouraged to fast and pray as well as study? How often are they taught brokenness and repentance in addition to translating the Greek

language? How often are they taught the surrendered life? We can sometimes be more concerned about a master's degree than a degree from the master. The forgotten God. The Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures and empowered Jesus and the apostles.

We are desperately remiss if we fail to recognize his vital role in our lives as well. I agree with Leonard Ravenhill here. He said, we need to close every church in the land for one Sunday and cease listening to a man so we can hear the groan of the spirit which we in our lush pews have forgotten.

I say amen loudly and clearly to that. Are you truly a lover of his presence or have you been guilty of mocking the work of the spirit? Take time now and humble yourself before God. I believe that a genuine spiritual awakening can take place.

God will rend the heavens and fill you with his spirit if you humble yourself under his hand and he will exalt you in due time. My prayer for you when you listen to this and even now is that repentance would take place and cry out to God and say, Lord, I've been hard-hearted. I've been critical.

I've been judgmental. I want to stand for your truth. I do not want that to be removed from my life.

I want to be a contender of the faith. I want to guard the word of God. But Lord, I want to be humble and teachable.

I want to be moldable. I don't want to think I know everything. I want to be gracious to people.

I want to be loving to people. I want to be gentle and not critical. God, would you break that from me today? In Jesus' name, amen.

And I believe God will honor that request.

Chapter 4 - If It's Odd, It's Not Necessarily God

Chapter four, if it's odd, it's not necessarily God. First John 4.1, beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. So as we begin chapter four here, it's important to note that I'm not saying if it's odd, it's God and that weird things happen and we should just assume that it is God.

I'm not saying any of that. All I've been saying up to this point is when God brings a spiritual awakening, it often does not fit within our theological box that we have put God in. Sometimes he breaks out of that box as long as it lines up with scripture.

So here we go. Christians can embrace one of two extremes concerning the word revival. At one extreme are those who embrace pure emotionalism and hysteria.

If it's odd, it's God and all weird behavior is excused. The other extreme that I just addressed earlier in this, if you go back and read chapter three, this extreme lacks a living, vibrant spiritual life. The church feels dead, cold, and lifeless.

Talk of reviving the things of God is either dismissed or it's ridiculed. Both extremes can hinder the work of the Holy Spirit and genuine Christian growth. Those extremes being the circus or the cemetery.

But in this section, I will primarily address the first extreme of hysteria and pure emotionalism. I view videos of people supposedly getting high on the Holy Spirit, toking the Holy Spirit, drunk on the Holy Ghost. This is not the same as being filled with the Spirit.

Now there are times when people just have tremendous joy and people might make fun of as laughing and a lot of the videos I've seen about the laughing sure seem fake to me. But I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about just tremendous joy and crying out to God and excited and sometimes that seems bizarre or weird to people.

And yes, I'm serious. I've seen bizarre and grossly unbiblical manifestations that are not reflective of one filled with the Spirit. You cannot toke the Holy Ghost and get high on the Holy Ghost.

This is coming from people with no spiritual character. Those truly filled with the Spirit reflect the personality and the nature of God. Next section, I know it seems bizarre, but when people are questioned about extremes and this type of odd behavior, they cannot give any answers from Scripture.

Common responses are, oh, I know it seems bizarre, but, or I know it's weird, but, or Shane, you're quenching and grieving the Spirit by not being open. No, I don't think so. These are not biblically sound responses to bizarre manifestations that do not line up with Scripture.

The Holy Spirit is not quenched and grieved when we honor God's Word and test the Spirit, whether they are of God. Again, 1 John 4, 1. So I'd rather say, Lord, I don't know if this is you. I wanna test the Spirit.

God, would you confirm? Would you lead me into confirmation in your Word? Lord, I'm waiting on you, but I don't have a good feeling about this unless it's blatantly false. That's what I would do in certain situations that aren't crystal clear. And God is quenched and grieved when we do not test the Spirits, when we allow the Holy Spirit to be misrepresented.

And so a lot of this falls on the shepherds of the church, where we should steward what God is doing, discerning the Spirits, testing the Spirits, but at the same time being open and teachable and wanting God to change the lives of people he comes in contact with. And normally when God is filling someone with His Spirit, setting them free, it's not a passive type of experience. Our emotions are engaged.

The Apostle Paul said that we are to judge or discern all things in 1 Corinthians 2. Someone truly filled with the Spirit, although bold, is often not bizarre. Now prophets in the Old Testament did some bizarre things, laying on their side for a certain period of time and these different things, but this was imagery that God was giving to the nation of Israel. And we don't believe that the prophetic type of ministry is on the same level of the prophets of the Old Testament.

We believe the gift exists, but the office of prophet as outlined in scripture and who breathed life into scripture and were used of God to write the scripture, we do not see that same type of level of, well, I don't know what the right word is. I just know that office of prophet or the gifting of prophet, prophetically speaking things, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, and even prophetic preaching like Leonard Ravenhill, A.W. Tozer is still valid and active today, but the office of prophet, that's where we really need to be careful in how we define that because people do not speak the words equal with scripture or we look to their words as above scripture or new scripture, new truths. If it's new, it's not true.

And if it's true, it's not new. So that's how we kind of work around that issue. But sadly, scripture is often used in an attempt to support very odd behavior.

For example, Acts 2.15 says, for they are not drunk as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. And John 18.6 records that men drew back and fell where? To the ground when Jesus surrendered himself shortly before his death. These scriptures, when used to validate wild ranting fanaticism are incorrect and misleading.

Granted, we cannot dismiss the truly miraculous works of God that happen daily, nor can we minimize the incredible power of God to radically change lives through the power of the spirit. However, in our zeal and excitement, we often minimize the need for discernment. Sincere but wrong.

A discerning person considers supernatural experiences in light of God's word. That's all I'm saying. We look at his nature and his character, and then we consider those supernatural experiences in that light.

We ask, is there genuine fruit? In other words, does the experience align with God's word, his nature, his character? Is the fruit of the spirit found in Galatians 5 present? Love and joy and peace and longsuffering and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control, are those things present? Now, self-control is interesting because sometimes if the Holy Spirit overcomes a person, when he's overcome my emotions in the past and I just start

weeping before preaching and I can't go up and preach sometimes, and I'm trying to control myself, but it's hard when God's pouring into your heart. So this fruit of the spirit, self-control, is controlling yourself when that presents itself. And it doesn't give us an excuse to speak in tongues in public and do all these weird things and say, ah, the Holy Spirit's moving, man.

I just can't control myself. Now, you can control yourself in those types of things, but sometimes it's hard to control yourself when God's pouring into your heart and you're trying to control your tears. That's when it gets challenging.

A true, genuine experience with the Holy Spirit will produce godly fruit and obedience to God. It seeks to promote those things that are pure and righteous. But a word of caution here.

Even those in the New Age movement experience powerful feelings of love and euphoria, but it doesn't draw them closer to Jesus Christ or lead to repentance or surrender to the true God. So those types of feelings are not good and God-given. Although sincere, we can be sincerely wrong and seriously misled.

Having an experience or being enlightened can create feel-good emotions, but it does not necessarily mean that it is of God. That's why God's word is so important. Does this line up with God's word, number one? Number two, look at their character.

I don't care how high you jump. I wanna know how straight you walk when you come down. Many of these people at these highly emotional services or different things, they have no character.

They have no spiritual maturity. So they're just getting loud in a circus environment, but there's no godly character and you have to look. There's no fruit there.

So it's not hard to see if something is genuine if you look at the fruit, the character of the people. What is being produced is God's word being elevated and Christ glorified and hearts broken and repentance taking place and holiness sought. I mean, if it is, that's a no-brainer.

Now, even though there is flexibility and freedom, our experiences must align with Scripture and the character of God. Remember what I said earlier from D. Martin Lloyd-Jones that we should not interpret God's Scripture in the light of our experiences, but rather we interpret our experiences in the penetrating light of Scripture. Do not touch my anointed ones.

Feelings can be good and God-given. However, we cannot forget the prophet Jeremiah's words that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Profoundly moving experiences do stir our emotions.

Did you hear me? Profoundly moving experience. You could say profound. These moving experiences are profound in my life.

They do stir emotions and they may feel right, but emotions are primarily a vehicle for expression, not a gauge for truth. So that's where you see the difference. I'm having a moving experience that is stirring my emotions.

Okay, that is a vehicle for expression, but that does not gauge truth. How do you gauge truth? By the truth of it, according to God's word, God's character and nature. But as I'm embracing the truth, my feelings should be engaged.

Sadly, some of the disturbing behavior mentioned earlier has been excused and some of the leaders of these movements are rarely challenged. They can divorce their spouse and remain in leadership using 1 Chronicles 16.22 as a proof text. Do not touch my anointed ones and do my prophets no harm.

Boy, that is out of context. The context is when I have called someone to prophetically speak my word, do not touch them. Do not try to harm them because I will defend them, thus say the Lord.

God is not saying he will defend wrong, abusive, manipulative behavior. That's just not the case. This is an abuse of grace at the highest level and a twisting of scripture.

We should forgive people and there's grace, but reinstating them in the ministry, that raises several questions if they're not yet ready and a period of time has not elapsed. And it takes time. Again, that's a whole other subject.

But in our zeal to defend the Holy Spirit, we sometimes run the risk of defending wrong behavior. They can rise to the top because of ability, let's say, but plummet to the bottom because he or she lacks character, spiritual character. In other words, they rise to the top because they're charismatic and all these things, but they plummet to the bottom because they lack spiritual character.

And throughout the Old Testament, God gave people the opportunity to be leaders, but it was their character and their humility, not their position that determined their outcome. But to counter this criticism, some of the followers of weird movements say that those who oppose them will suffer the judgment of God. Well, when in reality, it's those who refuse God's correction and God's offer of salvation who will suffer judgment.

A person is not judged for seeking discernment, they are judged for rejecting the truth. What you seek is what you find. Although some well-intentioned Christians are anxious to hear from God, many seek signs and wonders rather than seeking God.

We cannot become unstable, I'm sorry, we can become unstable, confused, and deceived when our spirituality hinges on signs, wonders, and manifestations. Instead, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and everything else will fall into place. Please understand, it's not my intention to paint experience-oriented movements with a broad brush.

Praise God when we experience him. God wants us to experience him. The presence and the power of the Holy Spirit can provoke overwhelming feelings, and rightly so.

When truth penetrates the heart, excitement, passion, and enthusiasm often follow. As stated earlier, these emotions can be good and God-given. So my goal is not to limit the gifts, the power and presence of the Spirit, but to seek balance and discernment.

And again, I'm not painting everyone with a broad brush. There are different types of ministries, different types of callings. Some have genuine fruit, some have fake fruit.

It's hard to really pinpoint this whole topic down unless we look specifically at the ministry, the fruit that is being produced, what the teacher is saying, their own personal relationship with the Lord. There's so much there. But one of the reasons people embrace unbiblical experiences is because they are not in the Word seeking balance, confirmation, and discernment.

Simply stated, if we are not in the Word, the Word will not be in us. Did you catch that? If you're not in the Word, the Word will not be in you. We can easily be deceived.

Searching for spiritual fulfillment isn't wrong, but where we search can be. Spiritual hunger is good, yet we can become so hungry spiritually that we'll consume anything. Eagerness to consume anything can lead to experience-oriented movements with no scriptural basis, especially when we begin to look to experiences to validate truth.

God is working whether we feel something or not. Toking the Holy Ghost. Some of the events where oddities occur can feed sinful desires rather than challenge them.

Granted, some people who attend these events are truly seeking God. I'm not minimizing that. I applaud them for seeking.

But the signs and wonder gospel is not the real gospel, nor is the prosperity gospel the real gospel. God may prosper us and miracles do happen, but these are secondary. Christ is primary.

That's why in this issue I mentioned earlier of toking the Holy Ghost and things like that, that is blasphemy. That is something that should be rebuked. And we have to recognize that many godly people do not experience great prosperity, great blessings, great riches, knowing that those things can draw us away from God.

The greatest miracle is that God saved us and now calls us to help others and live holy lives. Granted, Christians can look odd to the culture and spirit-filled Christians can look odd to modern-day Pharisees and carnal Christians. God is not predictable.

But this is not what I'm referring to. Instead, in this section and earlier what I mentioned, I'm referring to bizarre occurrences such as people appearing drunk at the pulpit, toking the Holy Ghost, acting like animals, and screaming as if they were on fire. Can we honestly believe that Jesus, Peter, and Paul would endorse or worse, partake in such weird behavior? Now granted, there have been times in deliverance ministry where somebody is being set free from demonic bondage and strongholds.

The word is demonize in the New Testament. And there is screaming, there's acting out. But I'm talking right now about a person filled with the Spirit of God and how they conduct themselves.

I think we have to be careful. We have to put some things under a microscope and be careful that we are leading people in the right direction. Again, it's hard to paint all experiences with a broad brush because there are different experiences.

I've seen people weeping at the altar and just so broken over their prodigal son or daughter. And it sounds a little odd. I mean, it's like travail, like a woman giving birth.

But who am I to say that God is not moving powerfully in her heart? How else would human beings, how else would we respond when a holy God fills us mightily with His Spirit? Some people, there's tremendous joy and laughter and they're just excited and they can't contain it to some degree. And other people, there's so much brokenness and pain and tears and weeping. And so, you know, again, we have to be careful.

But at the same time, we don't want to quench and grieve a genuine work of God's Spirit. That's why it's all about stewarding what God is doing, making sure your heart is right first. Because that verse definitely applies where we have to remove the plank from our eye before helping our brother remove the speck in theirs.

And I'm amazed at how many heresy hunters and conservative, arrogant, stiff-necked believers want to pull the plank out of the eye of others instead of the little splinter there. And they neglect the very large plank of pride and arrogance and having an unteachable spirit in their own heart. But with that said, falsehood and confusion, they do go hand in hand.

So when something is false, it gets confusing. And Paul often corrected errors in his epistles. And at 1 Corinthians 14, 40, he said, let all things be done decently in order.

That's why I believe he did that, is to not let things get out of hand. I like what D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said many years ago that living children need rules, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14. Dead children do not.

So you just take that however you want, but he made a great point there. Living children, living, vibrant, filled with God's spirit. We need boundaries sometimes.

We need that because it's living and vibrant. But a dead relationship with God, really there's no rules there because it's a cemetery environment. But rather than quenching and grieving the spirit, Paul is pleading for sound action, decency, and order within the church when possible, as the standard.

According to 1 Timothy 3, the church is to be the pillar and ground, not of air, not of weirdness, not of hysteria, but of truth. The church is the pillar and ground of truth. Being controversial isn't necessarily wrong.

There are incidents of odd behavior in the Bible. I've said that before, such as the man from the country of the Gadarenes who was possessed, but after he met Jesus, he was sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. We also have an account of a man who brought his possessed son to Jesus.

But again, these are all demonic possessions. And so it does make you wonder when certain things are manifesting at events or church services. Not everything's of God.

The enemy is working overtime as well. And it's going to take people loving others enough to tell them the truth, hold to God's truth, and not allow things to go beyond the scope of what the Holy Spirit might be doing. The account of the man who was possessed, the demons threw him down and it convulsed and Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit.

He healed the child and he gave him back to his father in Luke 9. It's an incredible story. And in these cases, though, very odd behavior is the result of people needing Christ. Did you catch that? In these cases, very odd behavior is the result of people needing Christ and his presence and deliverance brings peace and order.

Think about this for a minute. So a genuine move of God's spirit, a spiritual awakening, there's odd behavior. Well, why rebuke the whole movement if a few people are experiencing deliverance? So

these oddities that are happening, how do we know the person doesn't need to be prayed for and delivered? Why would you say, oh, that church is odd or too charismatic, look what happened in the service.

Well, look what happened in the service. This demon manifests itself and the person got delivered along with God moving among his people. You see, where God's moving, so is the enemy.

Where there's wheat, there's tear. Where there's truth, there's air. Where there's light, there's darkness.

Where there's right, there's wrong. And we have to be able to discern that and not throw the baby out with the bathwater. As a student of revivals, I understand that being controversial isn't necessarily a bad thing.

All revivals are controversial. Every revival I have studied, there's always a word spoken against it. Always a word spoken against it.

And sadly, it often comes from very conservative, rigid churches who haven't experienced the power of God and jealousy comes in and they put down other churches. I know that's happened to us many times within our community as well. And it's sad to see, but all you can do is keep serving God and let him sort it out.

Again, God is not predictable and odd things can happen when a sinful person is overcome by the power of God. And as I read the journals of George Whitefield, the Welsh revivals and the firsthand accounts of the first great awakening in America, I found that Pastor Jonathan Edwards, I had some interesting points here, about five points, and he observed that the work of the Holy Spirit, a true work of the Holy Spirit, would be evident because it would elevate the truth. At a church or at an event or wherever, is the truth being elevated? Where some of these churches that are called revival churches or whatever, there's no call to repentance.

There's no promotion of the inerrancy of scripture. They're embracing ungodly organizations and they're sappy, what I call sappy. It's all about love and love and love and love.

No, no, when God's really bringing revival, the truth will be elevated. And when the truth is elevated, timeless truths are elevated. Foundational truths are elevated.

The sin of man, the blood of Christ, the judgment of God, the necessity of repentance, those are all signs of a genuine move of the Spirit. Number two, exalt Christ. Christ will be exalted, not necessarily the Holy Spirit.

And I talk about the Holy Spirit a lot, but I make sure that it points people to Christ. And a genuine move of the Holy Spirit will oppose Satan. There will be demonstrations of spiritual power that will oppose Satan.

Number four, a genuine spiritual awakening points people to the scripture without a shadow of a doubt. Not only does it elevate the truth, but it points people to the scripture. Let's see what the Bible says.

Let's see what the Bible says. Some of these guys that don't wanna see what the Bible says, that's because they're not following what the Bible says. You should be able at any time say, let's put my

words under the microscope of God's word.

Let's put this experience under the microscope of God's word. For example, a couple years ago we had a service and it went on for a little while. People were at the altar and the worship leader was camping out.

You know, just singing, worthy is the Lord, worthy were, and just, I can't sing, but you know what I'm saying. And he was just camping out there like, I don't know, five, six, seven, eight minutes. And that bothered some people.

They said, oh, oh, I don't know what's going on here. This is like demonic. Um, no, no, no, no, it's not demonic.

It's elevating the truth in the service. We're exalting Christ, we're opposing Satan, we're pointing people to the scriptures. And then number five, it results in love for God and others.

The problem is this person was just uncomfortable with emotional worship. Their heart's never been engaged with God to that level and that makes them feel uncomfortable. Then they have to say, well, clearly this young worship leader is not more filled with the Spirit than me.

Clearly, look at these people praising God. They're being brainwashed. No, no, no, stop that silliness.

You need to humble yourself and repent of your hard heart. And that's, I see it all the time. I see people, they look at people experiencing God and they say, well, I'm more spiritual than them.

I've memorized the whole book of James. How can they, this can't be real because I'm not experiencing it. And we put down, and God uses the foolish things.

He will use the foolish, why he called me to do what I'm doing is that is my life verse. He uses the foolish things of this world to confound, to confuse the wise, the wise in this world. I've seen it so many times.

So if that's you, I would just encourage you to humble yourself and repent of your hard heart and say, God, work in my heart. I want to have sound doctrine. I want to hold your truth, but I also want to experience you in a profound way.

Not everything done in God's name bears his approval. Some suggest that today's battle is not so much against liberals in the church, but against those who are not open to new prophecies and visions. Those who religiously hold to the written word of God alone.

I guess that must be me then because I'm not open to new prophecies and visions. I believe in the gift, the prophetic gift and the word of wisdom, word of prophetic words. And God can use visions and dreams, but we do hold to the written word alone.

These things never supersede the word. If anything, they supplement the word. They confirm what God is already doing in your heart.

And this statement concerns me because it can be used to promote anything done in the name of the Lord. Now, granted, Acts 2.17 is relevant for us today. And it shall come to pass in the last days, God will pour out his spirit on all flesh.

Sons and daughters will prophesy. Young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. That's biblical.

So I just find it ironic that all these people, conservatives, they say they hold to the Bible alone. But when somebody says, you know, I just, this vision or this dream that God put in my heart. Oh, well, brother, that's not for today.

God needed that to guide Joseph and the wise men, but not for us today. Well, what do you do with Acts 2.17, especially when Peter said, today the scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. But you have to balance the scripture with 1 John 4.1. Beloved, do not believe every spirit.

Okay, don't be gullible. But test the spirits, whether they are of God. So we test the spirits by going to God, by asking for confirmation, by looking to his word.

And it says many false prophets have gone into the world. That's why we have to test the spirits. And not everything done in God's name bears his approval.

Did you get that? Not everything done in God's name bears his approval. And I would go as far as to say, anytime people are forcing that, hey, I'm a prophet of God. I'm an apostle such and such.

Look at my business card. God has called me to do this. You better listen.

And they have to do that? Then I would really have a problem with them because God's word and a true work of God, and when God reveals himself in the season of revival, people are not elevating themselves. You don't have to say, oh, this is truly of God. Listen to me, I'm an apostle, I'm a prophet.

No, you just let God prove it. And you stay back like John the Baptist. He must increase, but I must decrease.

Even a broken clock is right twice a day. A prophet, as mentioned in the Bible, can be anyone in a position of spiritual authority or claiming to be. They are not to be elevated or idolized.

We follow Christ, not men. False teachers aren't dressed in red and armed with pitchforks. They often look credible and talk convincingly.

However, they bring destructive teachings into the church. And I've noticed, at least during this season, it's a lot about love, like just love people, love this movement, love this organization, just love people who are sinning. And that's true, we are to love, but if that love overshadows theology, like the other side of God, love is one attribute of God, not the only one.

God is also God of holiness and righteousness and calls people to repentance. So false teachers often gravitate just towards love. I can't say anything about abortion because the government, we're under the government's control.

I can't say anything about gay marriage or LGBT or transgender, just love them. And we are, that's we're to love them. But we also have to speak the truth in love.

So that's one of the signs of a false prophet is they avoid the difficult things. They tend to avoid difficult truths. They don't mention sin, judgment, repentance.

And they focus really on what people want to hear rather than what they need to hear. Think of some of the most popular pastors right now in the United States on TV, not all of them, I know some of them, but a lot of them, they're just focusing on what the audience wants to hear, not what they need to hear. False teachers provide layers of truth mixed with error, but even a broken clock is right twice a day.

Now we do need to be careful, just because a pastor or a leader is more of a motivational speaker, that doesn't mean they're a false prophet. A false prophet is intentionally deceiving people. They are not saved, they are not sealed by the spirit of God.

Some pastors and Christian leaders are just, they've been given the gift of love and grace and a motivational speaker. They have a shepherd's pastor's heart. And so you're not gonna see them preaching like say a Paul Washer or a Leonard Ravenhill or a John the Baptist.

You're just, you're not gonna see that because they have a different calling. So they're not false prophets. And in other cases, some of these people have quenched and grieved the spirit because they're chasing the wrong things.

And so they're not false prophets. So I'm just careful when I use that statement. I think we all need to be careful.

But today when the truth of God's word is spoken, people are often offended because they've been conditioned to hear feel-good messages that do little in calling out sin. As a result, churches are filled with people whose lifestyles reflect little change. William Steele said it well many years ago, many who for the first time come under the sound of Holy Ghost preaching are mortally offended because they have never been exposed to the white light of the spirit.

And that's just the truth. The reason the true preaching offends people is because they've never been exposed to the word of God going and penetrating their heart and dividing it and dividing right from wrong and good from evil, the blackness of satanic influence to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. And Jesus warns, beware of false prophets.

They will come to you in sheep's clothing. And there are false teachers within the church and we're encouraged to pray for wisdom and discernment and words from the Lord should not supersede the Bible but instead confirm what the Bible says. And I like what Wayne Grudem in his book on systematic theology said prophecy involves not authoritative Bible teaching and not speaking words of God which are equal to scripture but rather reporting something which God spontaneously brings to mind.

We hold religiously to the written word of God because it's our guide to test what is being said. The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, 1 Corinthians 14. The speaker should be careful since his words must be under or subject to God's word.

If those who look to the word are accused of quenching and grieving the spirit, we are reminded that Jesus used the word of God himself for finality, discernment, and power. But what if a prophet is wrong? Okay, well I'm gonna try to get through this quickly here. What about if a prophet is wrong? Can a person have the gift of prophecy yet still make a mistake in which case an apology is required? What do we say to this? The prophecy fiasco during the 2020 election is one such example.

But I don't think we can make a blanket statement nor should we let opinions sway our thinking. For example, I know very godly people with the gift of prophecy. They've been so accurate that only God could have revealed the information they've conveyed.

But there have also been a few times when these same people told me things that didn't come to pass. So are they false prophets? Well, in the Bible, it's crystal clear that false prophets intentionally deceive people. Jude 4 says that certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for condemnation.

The people mentioned above, however, love the Lord, but they allow emotion and personal desire to lead their words. Some become overconfident because of past accuracy. So when these people miss it, I don't consider them a false prophet.

Their mistake was that they didn't take their word to the Lord and ask for confirmation. They reacted on impulse rather than receive a true burden from the Lord, much like the prophet Nathan, who told King David, go, do all that's in your heart and the Lord will be with you. Build the temple.

It was a good idea, but God said, no, that's not my idea. So God corrected Nathan and told him that David was not to build a house for him. A false proclaimer of God's truth is much different than godly Miss Martha, for example, not a real name, who loves the Lord and has the gift of prophecy, but she missed it because of her desire for godly leadership, as in the case of a presidential candidate.

Granted, if Miss Martha keeps missing it, we have a problem on our hands, but not necessarily a false prophet. In this case, she needs to take a season and not exercise this gift and instead seek God for wisdom and discernment. I would also add that people should not be quick to exercise this gift.

It should be a burden that God puts on you and it can be tested, it can be weighed by others. An example of the gift of prophecy. A true prophetic word is specific and often speaks to a particular issue in your life.

It will always align with scripture and God's wisdom and is never to take the place of God's word. I will never forget a night in 2003 when my wife and I were visiting a church. I was digging ditches and working hard in construction and I came back to the Lord a few years prior.

Each day when I studied God's word, I kept sensing powerful, bold messages rising up in my spirit. At one point, I even told my wife, these messages are bold. People are going to think I'm arrogant if I say these things.

God, please show me what you're doing. I knew that God was calling me to preach, but I kept backing down because of what I just mentioned to you and to my wife. It was a crucial turning point.

Would I become a preacher or a motivational speaker? Approximately 200 people were present at a church service. The man who was the guest speaker that night completely spoke to this issue. He said, young man, stand up.

And I was the only one to stand up and he gave a word to that night. He said, God is giving you boldness. It's not arrogance.

I believe you can actually hear it in the e-book version of this book. So he just started saying it's boldness. It's not arrogance.

It's God. God's gonna call you to this bold ministry and it was incredible. It was life-changing and just what I needed to move forward.

It has motivated me countless times to preach boldly in the face of adversity. That's why it's called a gift. The spirit helps us discern God's will and confirm his calling on our life.

Another incident I'll just give you real quick was a few years ago, I had to say something hard to the church and I was saying, Lord, I don't know if this is me or you. I'm just angry about this issue. I'm not gonna say it unless I know it's you.

And right then, this older lady who's passed away now, Marilyn, got up, came right to me and she said, today, I believe God's putting on my heart to tell you to preach what God has put on your heart. Do not hold back a word. Say everything that God wants you to say.

And she went back down to the altar and began praying. I'm like, okay, wow, are these incidences and many more simply coincidence? Oh, not a chance. The gift of the spirit is, the gifts of the spirit is so relevant today, it's not even funny.

A final word to those who mislead. A false prophet intentionally misleads people by influencing them to act in a way contrary to God's word. They don't apologize when they're wrong and they, maybe they might say a quick apology, like, oh yeah, I'm so sorry, but it's more of an excuse.

It's not really a heartfelt apology. And false prophets are often flamboyant, but they lack godly character. They usually include the title of prophet or apostle on their business card.

Not always, some people are just overly anxious to promote themselves, but sometimes they do. They're wolves in sheep's clothing and they often focus on making money or sensuality or drawing congregational members into sexual activity or promoting sin. I know one false, I would consider a false prophet, and I've been praying for him, a pastor who embraces gay marriage and he also told people in his congregation, if you ever struggle with those feelings, just embrace them and go with it.

That's a person who's unconverted and they're not telling people the truth. Have you been manipulating or falsely misrepresenting the work of the spirit? Don't live your life with a question mark here. If you are walking that tightrope of possibly being a false prophet or someone leading others astray, are you truly saved? Are you truly saved? Because those who are truly saved want to protect and honor the work of the spirit.

I want to just encourage you to repent, let others know, let God know, I need to repent of this. I've been leading people astray. Don't waste another minute living like this.

Take time now and repent. God will rend the heavens and fill you with his spirit if you follow his order outlined in his word, and that order is repent of your sin, repent of being a false proclaimer of genuine truth, and say, Lord, I'm giving my life completely to you. I want to know who you are,

what your word says, and I want to help people.

This is not about me anymore. This is about others. God, I repent of my selfishness and my desire to lead others astray or my desire to promote myself.

God, I want to throw all that at your feet, and I pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Chapter 5 - Revival Will Cost You

Chapter five, revival will cost you. Now, if you have stuck with me this far, I want to congratulate you. That is a major accomplishment.

There's many different types of people who will read this book, listen to this book. The first group is those who are hungry for more of God, and they're saying amen after every chapter or every subheading. Then there's those who are what we would consider carnal Christians who aren't ready for this type of commitment yet.

And then we have those who are hard-hearted, which are threatened by a lot of what we've been talking about. But if you've made it this far, this chapter is where the rubber meets the road. Revival will cost you.

And I'm gonna talk a little bit about fasting and prayer and a couple of other things that are vitally important. For those who want information, I did write a book entitled Feasting and Fasting, What Works, What Doesn't and Why. As far as fasting goes, it's probably up there with those types of books who get right to the point.

So it's not long and winded, it's a short book and it gets right to the point. But let me just get to this book right now. Decades ago, Gordon Cove challenged readers when he wrote, you have not sought the Lord with all your heart until you have tried a protracted season of prayer and fasting.

Could a lack of prayer and fasting be one of the hindrances to a spiritual awakening? Absolutely. Desperate times call for desperate measures. A full stomach makes seeking God difficult, prayer hard and worship challenging.

And I can tell you, as a person who preaches often, that I need to fast before I preach, even sometimes 12, 16, 20 hours before speaking. Just feeling that hunger, feeling that emptiness inside of the stomach leads, in my case, to being filled with the Spirit. This doesn't mean if you eat, you're not filled.

What I'm saying though is if I get filled up on big breakfast, like it's hard to speak at a men's breakfast or big lunch, big dinner, it's hard to preach later that evening or big breakfast on Sunday, it just makes it very difficult. A lot of it has to do with your body's processing. Food takes 50% of your body's energy to convert that food into energy that it needs.

So let me just get back to what Gordon Cove finalized when he said those words about not seeking God with all your heart, with all your soul. He finalized that statement with this. In many cases where fasting has been added to the prayers along with deep consecration and weeping before God, the answer has miraculously come.

So fasting doesn't twist God's arm, but it does bend my knee. Fasting is not a work. It's exchanging one appetite for a greater one.

The spark that ignites the flame. My goal isn't to overemphasize fasting, but it is clear that fasting has fallen by the wayside and King's stomach is still on the throne. In reading about the spiritual renewals under the preaching of John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Duncan Campbell, Evan Roberts, some of the Puritans, the first great awakening, the second great awakening, many other books on revivals, I have found that along with keeping the word of God front and center, intense prayer and vigorous fasting were the sparks that ignited the flame.

God heard the cry of his children. Fasting is more about desperation than it is discipline. Although it is a discipline, the discipline is an outworking of the desperation in our heart.

Granted, in the same way we cannot produce a field of corn by making it rain, a spiritual awakening cannot be orchestrated. It's God's work alone, but we can prepare the soil of our heart by fully surrendering our lives. God revives those who submit themselves to him with an open and empty hand or hands.

Let me repeat that. God revives those who submit themselves to him with open and empty hands. Isaiah 57, 15, check it out.

So it's a joint relationship where God says, you do this, I'll do this. So I love God's sovereignty, I rest in God's sovereignty, but with the sovereignty comes responsibility on our end as well. Jesus said that when he is taken away, his disciples would fast.

Notice he said, when you fast in Matthew 9, in Matthew 6 and 16, check out both those chapters, Matthew 9 and also Matthew 6. He said, when you fast, not if you fast. So there is a call to fasting. The excuses range from, well, it's not for us today, and the one I love the most, I'm just not convicted about fasting.

That's like saying, I'm not convicted about praying. You can't say that because it's part of spiritual disciplines. Granted, I don't wanna put fasting on a pedestal.

It's just one of many tools. I also like when people say fasting is legalistic. Leonard Ravenhill was famous for saying the things in the Bible that we don't like, we call legalism, and that definitely applies to excuses about fasting.

I love what A.W. Pink wrote in his commentary titled Gleanings from Joshua. In other words, his thoughts on what is going on in the book of Joshua. He said, indeed, it would be strange if we apprehend how that on one hand, Canaan was a free gift unto Israel, which it was, and they entered by grace alone.

But on the other hand, they had to fight for every inch of it. And although we are totally dependent on God, a spiritual awakening will not come without a fight. Did you get that? A spiritual awakening, personally, corporately, in our nation, in our church, in our state, will not come without a fight.

There is a cost, there is a price to pay. Ask any farmer who gets his field ready for planting and then harvesting, and then preparing the soil again, if there is any work involved. And God would often parallel spiritual awakenings, pour out your rain on a dry and barren land, a thirsty land, and till up the soil of your heart, break up the fallow ground.

And even if you go back to farming hundreds of years ago before heavy equipment, you had to work very hard to produce that fruit. So the same thing applies here. And again, not talking about works, not talking about rules and regulations, and, oh, I have to do this checklist for God.

It's out of obedience to his word and our relationship with him that we want to incorporate spiritual disciplines into our life, and then there is fruit. Look at the book of Joel, for example. The people's provision had dried up and withered away.

That's what the book of Joel is about. Everything is dried up, the locusts have devastated the land and they were desperate, and God did not give up on them. To show the magnitude of their sin and the need for humility, God told Joel, consecrate a fast, which is call a fast, set aside time to fast, and cry out to God.

Crying out, fasting, and repentance were the sparks that ignited the flame. And it is the same today, that that type of desire, fasting and repentance and calling out to God, those are the sparks that ignite the flame. Now, I should clarify here, I'm not a person who cries out to God publicly and bares my heart and wears my emotions on my sleeve.

You know, I'm pretty reserved, pretty conservative, but there are times even at home or sometimes at church where you're agonizing. God, please visit us today. Save our kids in the children's ministry.

God, bring salvation. I'm so desperate to see you move in our nation. I'm so desperate for godly legislation.

Oh God, would you rend the heavens and come down? Lord, I'm crying out to you. I don't know what else to do. And God says, I'll hear the cries of my children and I will answer them in my time.

So don't give up, look up. So close yet so far. Many people say that they desire a spiritual awakening, but when it actually happens, they're often the first to criticize it.

A spiritual awakening, especially in a corporate setting, deeply affects emotions because sin is brought to the surface and spiritual deficiencies are brutally exposed. Unless a person's heart is tender and pliable, they don't like those things happening to them. Again, let me say that.

Unless a person's heart is tender, pliable, teachable, they don't like things happening to them that are outside the box of their expectation of what God is. They're comfortable, they're uncomfortable Christianity. And as soon as you shake the comfort zone, many people don't like that.

As a result, they develop a hard heart to deep movements of the spirit. If I had a dollar for everyone who left the church because worship was too emotional and convicting, I would have a nice slush fund to spend on the weekend because, oh, it's just too emotional, too much time at the altar, why is worship so long? And a heart that's crying out to God and looking for God, looking to God to revive them and recognizing he's our only hope, they're not gonna be in a hurry to worship. Granted, there's times when we're in a hurry, I'm not saying that, but more often than not, there should be a desire to sit at the feet of the Savior, to soak underneath the breadth and depth of the cross and what happened there.

Now, I'm just shooting you straight. The biggest critics of this book will be those who need to hear it the most. It's without fail.

They like the section on false prophets, go get them, Shane, but they will tune out the rest because they're not in tune with the spirit. They prefer to be stoic and dispassionate and unmoved because the doctrine of the Holy Spirit exposes their complacency and their lack of spiritual fervor and fire. They prefer to only talk about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Word.

Some of you will catch that. They prefer to talk only about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Word. No, the triune nature of God is the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

How truly sad it is, like a man dying of thirst in a boat on a beautiful lake, but too scared to jump in. They are barren, dry, and thirsty, yet so close to living water. Do you really want God to rend the heavens? I released this closing paragraph that I'm about to read a few times over the year.

The relevance is so important that I'd like to share it with those who are listening. Again, and even if you've heard it before, I think it's worth noting. Nearly a decade ago now, I prayed, Lord, bring revival to the churches, but I was not ready for the response that followed.

After I prayed, it was almost as if God was saying this. You don't want revival. It will ruin your schedule, your dignity, your image, and your reputation as a person who is well balanced.

And that is so true, because appearance. I don't want to get carried away. I don't want people to think we're part of this charismatic hype, but I just want more of God.

Lord, what does that look like? So again, you don't want revival, Shane. It will ruin your schedule, your image, and your reputation as a person who is well balanced. And I think well balanced is good, but God was hitting the nail on the head.

Men will weep throughout the congregation during a genuine revival. Women will wail because of the travail of their own souls. Young adults will cry like children at the magnitude of their sin.

And with the strength of my presence, the worship team will cease playing. Time will seem to stand still. You won't be able to preach because of the emotions flooding your own soul.

You'll struggle to find words, but only find tears. Even the most dignified and reserved among you will be broken and humbled as little children. The proud and self-righteous will not be able to stand in my presence.

The doubter and unbeliever will either run for fear or fall on their knees and worship me. There can be no middle ground. The church will never be the same again.

Shane, do you really want revival? It will cost you. And I had to ponder that for a few years. And I spoke, I think it's embedded in the ebook here.

The title was The Cost of Revival. And you can find it on YouTube. And I opened up and I said, I'm ready for this, Lord.

I want this. I'm not gonna hide behind appearance and wanting to be well balanced. We want more of your spirit.

And national revival, as most of us know, begins with personal revival. We must look in the mirror, repent and turn completely toward God. Take time now and fully embrace his promises.

Return to me and I will return to you. If you seek me, you will find me. If you hunger, you will be filled.

If you thirst, you will be satisfied. Check out all those promises. God says, if you return to me, I will return to you.

If you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me. If you hunger, you will be filled. If you thirst, you will be satisfied.

And I began to put two and two together. We think that we are waiting on God, but often God is waiting on us. So I hope this book was a tremendous benefit.

I hope it pierced your heart like it did mine when God was just putting all of this into my heart to share with you. You could even pray, Lord, I want to experience a genuine, a genuine spiritual awakening in my life. Show me what that looks like.

Help me lead my family, my children, my grandchildren, my spouse. Let me be a good influence at work. God, revive me.

I want to break before you and humble myself before you so I can be filled with your spirit. And that prayer, my friends, is something that God will honor. Now, when I close here, I do want to mention some other books that will help you that I have written over the years.

We're working on it right now. All of these should be available as free downloads on my website, church website. We're just going to have PDF files.

We want to get the message out there. The first book is 40 Days to Reset Your Life. Whether it's a global reset, a financial reset, or a health reset, it's clear that we are intrigued with starting over.

And this book will help people break strongholds, addictions, and get back on track and renew their focus with God. The other book I've mentioned before is Feasting and Fasting. And it's a smaller book that focuses on fasting, the spiritual and physical benefits.

Another book I wrote is titled Help, I'm Addicted. Help, I'm Addicted. And this is for those who are, everything from opioids to alcohol to lust, all different kinds of addictions and strongholds.

There's a common denominator there. And in order to break them, certain biblical principles need to be applied. So that title, again, is Help, I'm Addicted.

And then one of my favorite books is If My People. It's about 2 Chronicles 7.14, if my people humble themselves and pray and seek my face. And it's a modern commentary on what is going on now and how we can, once again, seek the heart of God.

Even though that verse was a promise to Israel, I believe that the principles still apply, the principles of seeking God and praying and turning from our wicked ways. So the title, again, is If My People. I believe the subtitle is, read this in case of national emergency.

Another book is Desperate for More of God. It's a little meaty, and it focuses on how we can develop passion, a passion for God and be desperate for more of him. Another book that I really enjoyed writing about the history of our nation is One Nation Above God.

One Nation Above God. And I'll read David Barton, his endorsement from Wall Builders. He said, what America is and has been was a result of previous generations.

Everything she will become depends on the rising generation. Shane fully understands this and has provided our next generation of leaders with an understanding of the principles that will keep America great. This book can help secure America's future as one nation under God.

So it makes a great homeschool resource as well. And then another book, Answers for a Confused Church, tackles some of the controversial issues out there. Number eight, What Works for Men.

This book was written primarily for men. What Works for Men, the subtitle is Regaining Lost Ground. Another title is What Works for Young Adults.

This was written specifically for young adults, probably 18 to 28. What Works for Singles tackles the relational aspect of being single, but it also helps those who are married or going through a painful separation as well. And the final book in this section is What Works When Diets Don't.

Learn what works, what doesn't, and why when it comes to losing weight and keeping it off. This book approaches weight loss from a biblical perspective and offers hope and encouragement. Diets don't work, but lifestyle changes do.

Well, I sure hope this book benefited you in a great way. If you need additional resources, you can find us on most social media platforms. We'd be happy to reach out to you and encourage you and pray with you along the way.

Our website, as many of you know already, is westsidechristianfellowship.org. Again, that's westsidechristianfellowship.org. My website is shaneidleman.com. Again, that's shaneidleman.com. So thank you for listening, and I hope that this resource helps in more ways than one. Thank you.

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