

# On Finishing Well In The Christian Life

by David Ravenhill

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*This sermon focuses on the theme of 'Surviving the Anointing' by exploring the challenges spiritual leaders face in maintaining their anointing and integrity. It delves into the importance of dependency on the Lord, the risks of losing the anointing seen in biblical examples like Saul, Solomon, and others, and the alarming statistics of pastors facing moral failures and burnout. The key message emphasizes the need for spiritual leaders to dig their own well, spend time with God, and allow the pressures of life to drive them closer to God, the ultimate Counselor.*

**Scripture:** Ezekiel 28:14, 1 Samuel 26:21, 1 Kings 11:4, 2 Chronicles 26:16, Numbers 22:22, 2 Timothy 4:10, Matthew 5:3, James 4:10, Psalm 62:8, Proverbs 3:5

**Topics:** "Spiritual Leadership", "Maintaining Integrity"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I'll do about six hours on this particular topic, but I'll just take a few minutes to explain the book that you will be receiving, or possibly have already got already, *Surviving the Anointing*. About 30 years ago, I was in Singapore and on my way to India, and there were some problems in India. We got to stay in Singapore an extra week, we were ministering there, the Assemblies of God opened up a facility so another brother and myself could stay there.

We were asked, or I was asked, if I would address the leadership of this rather large congregation. I took a piece of paper and I began to write down what I titled, *Essential Qualities of a Spiritual Leader*. Then after I'd sort of begun to develop that a little bit, I was sitting under the ministry of Paul Cain.

Some of you may remember Paul Cain's ministry in Kansas City with Mike Bickle. During the course of one of his messages, he made this statement. He said, very few people survive the anointing.

Very few people survive the anointing. That somehow resonated in my spirit. I couldn't get rid of that particular statement.

Ironically, at that stage, nobody knew what Paul was doing on a personal level. But I just capsulized that statement, surviving the anointing, and I changed the seminar that I'd begun to develop at that stage from Essential Qualities of a Spiritual Leader to Surviving the Anointing. I have had, I'm sure you know of people that you know personally that have been in the ministry, many of them very successfully for years and years and years, and then all of a sudden you find out that they've had a secret life and so on.

We've had the tragic news just, what, the last number of months or so about Rabbi Zachariah. Boy, that was a shockwave that went around the world. I don't know the end result.

I don't know if he repented of what the situation is. That's not my business. But you know, you can multiply that thousands and thousands of times.

I have a survey here that goes back to about 1980, I think, or even before then, done by Focus on the Family, and he makes a statement, 1,500 pastors leave the ministry every month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, contention in their congregation, as well as a variety of other areas. But 1,500 ministers, these are men, women in some cases that have had some sort of call, some sort of training, Bible college or seminary, had an actual flock or congregation of 1,500 a month leaving. That translates into 18,000 leaders stepping down every year.

And of course, the Bible is full of individuals that lost their anointing. Lucifer, of course, was the first one. You were the anointed cherub who covets, past tense.

You've lost what you had. I've got a list of people like Saul, Saul at the end of his life, he says, I've played the fool, I've erred exceedingly. Here's a man again with the anointing of the Spirit of God on him, and yet at the end of his life, groveling at the foot of a witch, seeking counsel from a medium.

You have Solomon, nobody quite knows whether Solomon came back to the Lord or not, but here he was at the pinnacle of his ministry where the kings of the earth came, seeking the counsel. Nobody has ever achieved that from that day till this. The kings of the earth, not just the Queen of Sheba, but men from every branch of society, if you like, every kingdom on the known earth at that particular time, making a beeline, if you like, to the anointing that rested upon Solomon's life.

And yet at the end of his life, again, he's married multiple wives, he's erected temples to foreign gods, and so on and so forth. You have Uzziah, the Bible says as long as he sought God, God prospered him, but when he became strong, God forsook him. You have people like Balaam, gave some of the most beautiful prophecies in the Old Testament, and yet when we come to the New Testament, we're warned about the error of Balaam, the way of Balaam, the teaching of Balaam.

It's interesting that there's no Balaam's spirit. Jezebel got all the attention, and yet the Bible never calls her a spirit, never warns us about her necessarily. But when it comes to Balaam, nobody writes any books about it, and yet we have three references to Balaam, and only one about Jezebel.

But anyway, I'll leave that up to your imagination. We have Demas who was part of Paul's apostolic team, and yet Paul says, Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and we could go on, the list is endless even from the Word of God. And so surviving the anointing has been the passion of my life for many, many years to try and stop the hemorrhage, if you like, in the body of Christ.

And I bring it back to the very first chapter, and if you've got the book, you'll be able to read it, but to the word dependency, where we have to constantly depend on the Lord. The very first thing that Jesus taught His disciples there on the Mount of, not Mount of Transfiguration, the Beatitudes there on the mountainside, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. And you think, well, how can you be happy and be poor? Incidentally, the word blessed there means to have the right orientation.

According to the Old Testament, the word asher means to be on the right track, be rather like getting lost in the woods, maybe on a chilly evening, you don't have any coat or anything with you, you just intended to go for a walk for a little while, then you get lost. The night begins to set in, it begins to rain, you begin to shiver, and you think, boy, if I don't get out of here, you know, there's going to be serious problems and die of hypothermia or some other thing, and then all of a sudden you stumble on the road that you came in on, the path that you came in on, you recognize it again, you're on now, you have the right orientation. That's the root meaning of the word blessed.

As we do it God's way, we'll be happy, but He said blessed are the poor. It's one thing to be poor, but the word that is used there, as you know, you're all pastors here, many of you, but it's the word beggar. It's one thing to be poor, it's another thing to be a beggar.

There's a lot of poor people in the world, but they make it. But a beggar is absolutely dependent on somebody else. I was in India many years ago, driving around with a friend, showing me around the city of Hyderabad, and we pulled up at a traffic light, and if you've ever been to India, you know that every contraption under the sun that they use for transport, everything's piled up to heaven.

You know, you get five people on a moped, and so on, and I'm just enamored with what's going on, and I heard a voice, about four lanes of traffic, supposed to be three, but that doesn't matter in India, possibly more than that. But then we pulled up, we're in the middle lane of a very busy highway, waiting for the traffic light to turn, and I heard a voice, and I turned to the driver, we were in a Jeep, and he was looking straight ahead, and I thought, boy, I thought I heard somebody say something, and then I heard the voice again, looked around, and finally, the third time, I looked down, and here on a little medium strip, not any wider than this podium, was a beggar boy. I don't know what his age was, because he looked like he weighed about 50 or 60 pounds, possibly between 11 and 14 years of age, I would imagine, his body was all contorted, twisted up, his legs twisted up underneath him, and he was begging.

I remember getting back to the room, and thinking, this is exactly what Jesus meant, blessed are the beggars. You see, that boy realized that he did not have the ability to do anything, he could not operate a machine, he didn't have the mobility, the dexterity to function normally, and so his only means of survival was to take his resources from somebody else. In other words, if he lived off somebody else's resources, that's what Jesus said, is the very first law of my kingdom, blessed are the beggars, for theirs, what, is the kingdom of God, not will be, there's a will be aspect to the kingdom, but theirs is the kingdom of God.

In other words, the kingdom of heaven is available if we recognize that in and of myself, I can do absolutely nothing. One of the things I thank God for over the years, I think I shared last night, two brothers that were top of the class, I was always at the bottom, but you know, I thank God for my poverty. I've wept many, many times before God in my devotional life and said, God, I can't believe I'm doing what I'm doing, but it's all because I've learned that there are resources that I don't have that I can plug into, and I thank God for that.

So that's basically the essence of what the book is all about. Let me just read a couple more here, 50% of pastors' marriages will end in divorce, 80% of pastors feel unqualified or discouraged in their role as a pastor, 50% of pastors are so discouraged they think of leaving the ministry if they could, but they have no other way of making a living, 80% of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years, 70% of pastors constantly fight depression, almost 40% poll said that they had an extramarital affair since going into the ministry, and it goes on and on. I mean, the list there is shocking to say the least, but there is an answer, and that is to dig your own well and spend time with God.

I'll close with this. I had the privilege of working with a mentor, a senior pastor in New Zealand by the name of Peter Morrow, he's gone to be with the Lord now. We had, at least for a while, we had the largest church in New Zealand, a team ministry.

He was the senior pastor, I was sort of the teacher on the team, but every once in a while I would get a call in my office, we had a big old theater building that we'd renovated, and it held about 1,500 people, and there were four stories of office space and so on, and the phone would ring, and the reception would say, Brother Peter's on the line, I'd pick up the phone, and Peter would say to me, David, I'm coming into town this afternoon. He did not office at the church, he had a little closet in his bedroom. We always called it the Holy of Holies, we only got in there about once a year.

But that's where he hung out, he fasted and prayed, he was the skinniest man I think I've ever met. He wore long johns year round, even in the summer where it gets pretty hot in New Zealand, but he was just skin and bones, but he spent all his time fasting and praying. But he would call, he'd say, David, I'm coming into town this afternoon, do you have time to get together? And of course, nobody ever said no, and so he would come to the office, we'd walk down four flights or take the elevator, and we'd find a coffee shop somewhere, sit in the back somewhere, and he'd begin to ask me how things were going in my life, how's my relationship with Nancy, and so on and so forth, and then somewhere in that conversation, he would always ask me about my prayer life.

And he would say, David, remember, I don't ever want you coming into the office until you've spent at least an hour on your face before God. And as a young man, he established a pattern in my life that to this day, very, very seldom do I break. My wife will vouch for that.

That is the key. I know there's a lot of people going through struggles and so on and so forth, but listen, the key is dig your own well and get to know God, you know, and if problems do come, let me just share one thing I noticed in my notes here, and I thought it's worth, yeah, I opened to it, so it must be God. Some of you remember many, many years ago that there was an experiment done, I think it was in, somewhere in Arizona, where they had the biosphere, the world's largest sort of greenhouse, basically.

They put a bunch of scientists in it, and it was supposed to be the perfect ecosystem. Let me read this to you, it said the trees inside Biosphere 2 grew rapidly, more rapidly than they did outside of the dome, but they also fell over before reaching maturation. After looking at the root system and the outer layers of bark, the scientists came to the realization that a lack of wind in Biosphere 2 caused the deficiency of stress wood.

Stress wood helps to, a tree to position itself for optimal sun absorption and also it helps the tree grow more solidly. Without stress wood, a tree cannot grow quickly, sorry, it can grow quickly, but it cannot support itself fully. It cannot withstand normal wear and tear and survive.

In other words, the trees needed some stress in order to thrive in the long run. God knows that we need the pressure. It's those pressures that drive us to God.

They shouldn't drive you to the counselor, they should drive you to the counselor. And when we get to know the counselor, then a lot of those problems are erased automatically. How many of you know Ray Comfort? You've heard the name, street preacher.

Ray used to be in our church in New Zealand, and he was also an associate pastor in one of our congregations. And he had a policy, he told me, that whenever there was an altar call, the very first thing he would do, he would go up to the individual and said, I want to ask you a question. Do you have a consistent quiet time? And if the person said no, he said, I'm not going to pray for you.

He said, that's why you're here. That's a good pastor, you know. Our job, again, is to drive people to God.

He is the, and still remains, the counselor. And I think many times we're stuffing pacifiers in people's mouths, and so on, and it's all because they don't have a consistent quiet time. Okay, I'll stop meddling and let you go.

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