

Acts 13

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon on Acts 13 emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the early church and the urgent need for prayer and evangelism today.

Duration: 1:34:43

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, Zechariah 4:6, Acts 11:21

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Genuine Worship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having the hand of the Lord with us in all that we do, highlighting the transformative power of God's presence in our lives. It challenges the notion of relying solely on human effort without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, stressing the need for spiritual discernment and obedience to God's leading. The message calls for a return to genuine worship and a focus on experiencing God's power rather than seeking entertainment or superficial experiences in church gatherings.

Transcript

Honored to be here this morning. Good morning to everyone. All is well, you got your business meeting done and.

The rest of the time here this morning, we can concentrate on what the Lord might want to say to all of us so that we would be more efficient in what we do for Jesus Christ. You know, the verse just came comes to me on how the church in Antioch that we're going to read about today, how it began. It says certain men from Cyprus and Cyrene.

That's the Mediterranean and northern Africa. Certain men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch. And the hand of the Lord was with them.

And multitudes turned to the Lord. I've often prayed and I express it to God all the time. I'd rather live just six months with the hand of the Lord with me.

Than to live 10 years, just struggling in my own strength. Do I get an amen for that? Because when the Lord is with you, things happen, lives are changed. The gospel shows its power.

Otherwise, you just circle the wagons and you hold on to the faithful 40 or 400 or whatever. And that's not why Jesus Christ came, died, resurrected and then sent the Holy Spirit. So it's a real honor for me to be

here.

And I have nothing to sell. I have no vision to impart to you. I have no formula because there is no formula, there's only nothing works, but God, God works, nothing else works.

And when we say something else works, we grieve the Holy Spirit because he was sent to glorify Christ, not a method or a church or formula. So with that in mind, I'd like to direct your attention to the book of Acts, to chapter 13, which is a kind of turning point in the book of Acts. A lot of things change once you get to Acts 13.

Instead of Jerusalem being the center of attention and the focus of what the Lord is doing, it now goes to Syria in Antioch, which is where all these people are being killed. Killed right now in the civil war and unrest that's happening there. But two thousand years ago, another revolution was beginning.

Chapter 13 of Acts, verse one, in the church at Antioch, there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, which means black, he probably was a black man, Lucius of Cyrene, Manan, who had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul, Saul is not yet the apostle Paul, he's just Saul. And in fact, in this little story, his name is changed to Paul. And while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I've called them.

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. So we're in the Mediterranean now.

This is, by the way, the island where Barnabas came from. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. And John, that's John Mark, was with them as their helper.

They traveled through the whole island and they came until they came to Paphos. And there they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar Jesus, who was an attendant of the procouncil Sergius Paulus. That's a Roman government official.

The procouncil, an intelligent man sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God. Imagine that he wanted to hear the word of God. But Elimes, the sorcerer, for that is what his name means, opposed them and tried to turn the procouncil from the faith.

Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elimes and said, You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right. You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop preventing the perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you.

You are going to be blind. And for a time, you will be unable to see the light of the sun. Immediately, mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

And when the procouncil, Sergius Paulus, saw what had happened, he believed. No kidding. For he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

Brothers and sisters, let's do something that they call in New York City in the streets, let's do real talk. I want to talk just straight to you, because we're at a very critical hour in our country, we're at a critical hour in the life of the Christian church. Across the board, the entire body of Christ.

My background was not seminary or Bible school, but I was an all city basketball player in New York City. Went to college on a basketball scholarship, played in the NCAA tournament school. I went to University of Rhode Island that I captained, beat UConn in the playoffs.

So we ended up going to the big dance, as they say. There was a scoreboard up there. We didn't play by faith alone.

We played by scoreboard. And after eight or nine minutes of a game, if the score was 22 to nine, the other team coach would call a timeout or signal to me and I would run over and call a timeout and we would go in a huddle. And nobody would say like, wow, aren't our shorts nice and the gold trim on the on the pants? And isn't this fun? We're exercising and getting a good workout.

No. We looked up at that score and we said we will turn this around. We'll go to a zone press.

We'll go to a man to man press. We'll speed the game up. We'll slow the game down.

We'll go to a box and one. But we will do something because they have 22 and we have nine. We will change.

You know, Einstein's definition of madness is to do the same thing over and over again and think that there'll be different results. So in sports and in business and in everything else, the children of this world are wiser often than the children of light. Everyone's making adjustments and changing because they want to be more efficient, but it's very hard in the church often to bring about any kind of real substantial change.

Many years ago, when my wife and I first came to downtown Brooklyn and had less than 20 people in the church. And the first offering we took was eighty five dollars was the total tithes and offering. So she had to get a second job.

I got a second job. It is what it is. It was what it was.

And here we were surrounded in downtown Brooklyn by no crack cocaine then, but a heavy duty heroin, a lot of alcoholism, prostitutes trolling the streets a block and a half either way when you walk down. What a perfect place to see the power of the gospel operate. But I had been around people who a lot of times growing up in and around church.

I wasn't a strong Christian in high school or college, but I've been around church enough to know that there were certain people who lived off of what God did in the past, and they were all talking about what God did in the past. The Great Awakening, the second Great Awakening, the Welsh Revival, what happened at Azusa Street, and they would harp on that and tell wonderful stories which are inspirational and true and have their place. But I noticed that some of them went 20, 30, 40 years seeing very little fruit in their lives.

Didn't baptize ten people in two years and yet sinners abounding. Other people lived with the far off future, where before Christ comes again, there's going to be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days, I'll pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Which really began on the day of Pentecost, according to Peter.

But I noticed that they too saw very little fruit. But we're always talking about this far off day. And I'm all for those things.

They have their place. But but I mean, here I was in downtown Brooklyn, surrounded by God knows what, no Bible school training. And I had a Bible and I knew about the Holy Spirit.

So what do you do to see a change? What do you do to make converts? The hand of the Lord was with those men. They had never been to seminary. The hand of the Lord was with those men in Antioch.

And multitudes turned to the Lord. Their lives were changed. They were transformed.

They were lost. Now they were found blind. Now they saw lost, steeped in sin and now being sanctified by the Holy Spirit as they put their faith in Jesus Christ.

So how does that happen? How do you do that? More importantly, how did Paul do that? How did the book of Acts get written? How, without any New Testament being written? You can't hand out any literature with no buildings owned by the Christian church. They didn't own any buildings for 300 years. No literature, no money, no connection with the government.

No, no morality in the Roman Empire. During the book of Acts, men like Caligula and Nero were the emperors. Read about them.

They were perverts, degenerates, amoral. Madmen, crossdressers. And Jesus said, pay taxes to those characters.

And yet you never see anywhere in the New Testament that Paul lifts up his hands and say, what are we going to do? I mean, look at Nero's in charge of this thing. Never says a word about it. It's just like, let's get this on.

Let's preach the good news of Jesus Christ, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power. The commentators are not sure if he spent even three months, some of them in Thessalonica, and he founded a church and ordained elders.

How did he do that? Haven't you ever wondered about that? We're complaining about a hundred different things, and he's just rocking and rolling for Jesus in Thessalonica, turning the world upside down. So we got to do real talk, get away from all denial and all rationalizations and face what is. It is what it is.

Why this moment is so critical is that. In a recent book called The Great Evangelical Recession, the author, whose conclusions I don't agree with, but his data at the beginning is irrefutable. Five major polling agencies, three Christians, two secular.

One is Pew Research. Barna is one of the Christian ones. They did a survey in America of how many people are really Christian.

Using a definition of not right wing, conservative, flag waving things or or or born againers who now that phrase has become part of the culture. It's people who believe it wouldn't matter. Jesus or Buddha or whatever.

I'm just born again. I had an experience, some emotional experience. Not Protestantism, but people who have been born again claim that Jesus Christ believe he's the only way of salvation.

No other name is given whereby we must be saved. They regard the Bible as the only rule of faith and doctrine. They go to church regularly, practice prayer, and they all came five of them.

So, you know, they're on target within four points of each other. The high number was nine percent. The low number was six percent.

That's in America. No, that is what it is. It's not faith to talk fantasy.

Faith never deals with fantasy. You face what it is. This is what's happening in our country, in our cities.

Major Christian denominations in America have been in numerical decline for the last 10 years. The largest denomination in America, I just recently spoke in a couple of their gatherings are in decline over the last 10 years. And this is after 9-11.

This is after America has been put on notice that life can be disappear in a second. Now, has God lost his power? Has the gospel lost its power? It's ridiculous to talk about secular humanism or demonic powers and principalities or the White House or Obama or Bush or the Democrats or the Republicans. That's totally irrelevant to the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Come on. Can we say amen to that by putting our hands together? If they built churches, if they built churches in the book of Acts, in the circumstances I just mentioned, what possibly could stop us if we do this the right way? The problem is never with the culture. The problem is the church has to be the church, which is what I want to lead us to pray about today.

Brother Wood has been kind enough to invite me, which is an honor. And I want to do something. I want to pray with you.

I want to call on God with you. Because God said my house shall be called not a house of singing, not a house of preaching, but my house shall be called what? A house of prayer. The disciples never asked Jesus once, teach us to preach.

But they did say, teach us to pray. As Spurgeon said, that his weekly prayer meeting was the engine that drove his church. So looking at this story, what do we learn about this account of this turning point in the book of Acts? Because now from chapter 13 on.

Almost exclusively, the focus of Luke is going to be on the apostle Paul going out with Barnabas on his first missionary journey, then coming back to Antioch. Reporting to the church, resting up. Then going out on a second missionary journey with Silas coming back.

No more Jerusalem. Judaizers have got in there, have got in there. And legalists were spoiling a lot of the work that was done by the apostles in the early days.

No, it's now Antioch, which is the first place also where you have both people mixing. Christianity at first was thought to be a Jewish cult. An offshoot of Judaism, because Jesus was Jewish, all the apostles were Jewish.

But now in Antioch, you're getting Gentiles and Jews mixing together, worshiping together, having a new life in Jesus Christ. First thing we find out from this story is this. Here's a meeting.

Wouldn't you like to have been there? The drama of it, the spiritual emotion of it. A meeting is going on and they're seemingly have shut things down and they're just fasting and worshiping the Lord. You know, sometimes it's good in our churches.

Just shut everything down and seek the Lord. Because if preaching would done it by itself, we would have already seen it done. We have multiple translations of the Bible.

We got a lot of positive things, new praise and worship courses every day. But still, there's something about just reaching out to God and saying, God, open the heavens and come down while they're worshipping the Lord, ministering to him and fasting. The Holy Spirit said almost certainly through the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a public meeting.

Imagine the drama of it. Names, two people in the meeting. Imagine if that happened today.

Two names were picked out. Separate me, Barnabas and Saul. Saul of Tarsus.

Been a Christian just a number of years, less probably than five or six. Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, to the work that I've called them to do. And then they laid their hands on them and they sent them out.

And then it says being sent out by the Holy Spirit. They started on this journey. Notice the indefinite nature of the command the spirit gave.

Notice the personality of the spirit. Separate me, Barnabas and Saul, to the work that I've called him, called them to do. Notice where, when, how long will it last? I got to, you know, get this in my calendar.

No, there's nothing. Just go. Yeah, but what will happen? Just go.

You'll find out when you go. If we're control freaks and we want to control them, every service and every facet of the church, you can control it, but you won't have the Holy Spirit guiding you at the same time. You cannot control the mic and have the Holy Spirit move at the same time.

Come on. Can we say amen to that? There has to be direction. There's leadership.

There's words of exhortation and teaching that are needed. But if you're so organized, I was recently at a conference somewhere. So they had me in the green room, a large conference.

And they said, so, Pastor Jim, so here's the deal. And they had the script of the meeting. So they're going to have praise and worship for 14 minutes.

And then they're going to have announcements in a video about a missions project. That's going to go seven minutes. Then the choir is going to sing two songs.

One's four minutes and 15 seconds. The other one's three minutes and 40 seconds. And they got it all lined up like that.

Then they're going to take the offering. A lady is going to come up and sing. That offering will take a minute to set up, a minute and a half.

And then the offering, her song is three and a half minutes. And then a guy is going to come out and introduce you. Do you want us to introduce you in any way, certain way? No, whatever.

Just say my name. I'll walk out there. No, the introduction will take about a minute.

OK, then you're going to preach for 22 minutes. Then you got to turn it back to us because don't lead the people to pray. We don't do that here.

But we had a patriotic number that's going to last four minutes and 10 seconds. And then we dismiss. Is that right, Bobby? Is that right, Bill? We got this down.

OK, so here let's go in the meeting now. And then they pray. Holy Spirit, come down and move among us and blow like a mighty wind.

Where? How? There's no time for him to get in there. Now, listen, now listen, I know where there's multiple services. Sometimes you have to watch the time of his service.

We have nine, 12 and three o'clock services, about 10,000 people coming every Sunday to our church. But we space them so we're not crunched as best we can. But the reason that meetings have been shortened is not multiple service is that a lot of pastors have figured out the folks don't want to be there for very long.

They don't mind if the NFL game goes into overtime. No better. And they don't mind the movie they rent or watch.

They don't care how long that is. But church, you got to keep it shorter. Folks are going to find another place to go in the house.

That's going to look when you're running less than you were running last year. That's the way the game is played. You know it and I know it.

But that doesn't bother us. Wouldn't that bother you if you were a pastor in his presence? There's fullness of joy. But folks don't want to be in God's house.

Why would they want to go to heaven if there's nothing up there but his presence? Just think of that. Wouldn't it? Wouldn't that wouldn't that affect your preaching? Wouldn't that keep you awake at night? Folks who come and sit under my ministry don't want to be in the house of God for a long period of time. But other things in this world, they don't give a hoot about how long it is.

Wouldn't that just stop you unless you're living delusionally, unless you're in some kind of denial? If they really know Jesus, why wouldn't they want to be with him? Why wouldn't they want to be hearing the word of God? Why wouldn't they want to wait in his presence? This is not dinosaur talk. This is not new school, old school. That that's silly.

People say, no, I'm doing church the new way, the old way. There's no new way. There's nothing new under the sun.

The Bible says, if it's new, it's not true. And if it's true, it's not new for there's nothing new under the sun. It's not new school or old school.

It's Bible school. We got to look in the Bible and say, can you imagine when Peter is preaching? Someone say, no, we got to go. The chariot races are beginning.

We got to get out of here now. Can't be watching all this wasting time in church. Minister of a very, very, very large church in Dallas told me when the Cowboys are playing early on the East Coast, even if they're serving communion, the folks are walking out, he told me.

They're walking out. They're going to see their boys play. They're going to see those Cowboys play.

While you're serving communion, would that be anything to do with the religion of this Bible? Is that have anything to do with Christianity? Have we created an American hybrid? Something that is so far removed from the the Christianity handed down to us that we're not even recognizing it. Here's the first thing we learn. Let me do this.

The first thing we learn about this as the Holy Spirit sends out Saul and Barnabas is this. You can't conduct church work unless you're led by the power and the person of the Holy Spirit. You don't follow marketing tactics.

You don't invite business people who don't know God to dictate what you do. We're not selling computers. We're preaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

And the Bible still tells us that without the help of the Holy Spirit, we're hopeless. Samuel Chadwick, the old Methodist preacher in England, said Christianity without the Holy Ghost is hopeless. That's not old school.

That's true. It's not new school. Without the Holy Spirit's help, how are you going to do this? When Jesus said, it's better for you than I go, because unless I go, I can't send the spirit.

But when he comes, it'll be a better day than me here physically, because I've been with you, but he will be in you. This is why Jesus chose 12 disciples who would be fishermen and tax collectors and zealots. Why? He could have chosen 12 rabbis who knew how to reason biblically and were gifted in rhetoric.

No, he chose losers like Peter and James and John. Why? Because when they started, they would have nothing else to trust in but the power of the Holy Spirit and the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's why he chose them on the day of Pentecost.

If you had just denied the Lord three times, 50 days earlier, who would you be depending on when you preached? Think of that. We wouldn't even have Peter come and preach in our meetings. I could see me introducing him at the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

So, folks, let's give it up. Peter's in the house and he walked with Jesus for three, three and a half years. And recently he denied the Lord three times and cursed the third time he did it.

But everyone has days like that. So let's give it up for Peter. Come on.

He's going to come and bless us. And yet they were pricked in their hearts when he spoke. Why? Not because of his eloquence.

Read the sermon. A first year Bible seminary student could do better than Peter's sermon in Acts two. What's that? Quoting a bunch of verses and telling people about Jesus.

We've made it into an art form. We've made it into cleverness and stand up comic routines. But who's that going to change? Who is that going to change? I'm asking you, who's that going to change? Look at the decline in Christianity.

We're living right now in the largest decline in Christianity in our country's history. We're down to nine percent or six percent of the population. Every month in America, 1500 pastors leave the ministry.

Fifty a day. Today, while you're meeting, 50 are going to quit. And it's cross denominational.

More than 50 percent of all the ministers who are in the ministry, no matter how they pound the Bible in the pulpit and put on the minister routine, more than 50 percent of them, Barna tells us, would leave the ministry next week if they could only get a job that would pay the bills for their family. So imagine the level of discouragement. I did a district meeting in one of the states of the United States, and great men and women and went to the altar and saw men, 30, 40, 50 years old, crying and broken.

And I said, how can I help you? I had preached and how can I help you? How can I pray? How can you help me? I haven't baptized 10 people in the last two years. Had Pentecostal distinctives, but no fruit. Just because you speak in tongues doesn't mean you're automatically going to fruit.

Am I correct or not? I'm all for speaking in tongues. I'd love to be able to say I speak in tongues more than all of you. I believe that practice that.

But I've been too many places, and so have you, where if you think that's the magic wand, you're wrong. But we can't go on without the Holy Spirit leading us, helping us to make decisions. How did Barnabas and Saul go on that missionary journey? Because the Holy Spirit said, go think of the decisions we make.

Think of the paradigms that pastors are following today. It's as if God is dead. It's as if God is dead.

And I'm talking about all denominations. It's as if God is dead. They follow these paradigms of churches that are spiritless.

No Bible being preached. Jesus not being exalted. No mention of sin.

And that's what you're going to follow. How could that possibly be? There is almost like a madness. Blanketing the body of Christ, a madness.

My son-in-law, Pastor Al Toledo, just recently went to a church in a southern city to one of these church growth gurus. 15 minutes before the meeting began, it started with 15 minutes of secular music. Great band, good singers, secular music, no mention of Jesus.

Because, you know, you got to relate. You got to make people feel comfortable. I don't find that in the Bible, but this is the reasoning.

But it's like what Jesus said about the Sadducees. You neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God. You neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God.

How would the Holy Spirit be invited in if you're not singing about Jesus? Then praise and worship, well done, but about, he guessed, 1 or 2% participation. Brothers, pastors, listen, you got to be careful of praise and worship. It's not a concert.

You got to get everyone to sing. It's not about somebody doing a gig up on the platform. It's all the people are supposed to sing.

Most of the people are just standing and watching. That's so typical, isn't it, now? Nobody's singing, nobody entering in, but they're all hyped up on the platform and doing their songs and the key changes and the whole thing, and that's great. But if the people aren't singing, what are we doing it for? God is the audience in praise and worship.

We're not the audience. So, wait, wait, I don't have that long. Wait.

So, then the guy got up to preach, who everybody runs, you know, got to hear what this guy said. And he's doing a series after the offering. He's doing a series on, wasn't it stupid how we grew up in church? That's the series.

You know, like when the preachers would say the purpose of prayer, the power of prayer, and they'd rhyme everything with P. It was so stupid. Remember that lady would get up and sing, and her vibrato would be, you know, and like, and this guy's father is pastoring in the same city. You just, you would think he'd be embarrassed.

And this is who they're flocking to. No mention of the Bible for the first 20 minutes, my son-in-law promised me. No mention of the Bible.

And then a remote little reference to the Word of God. And then no mention of Jesus or the presentation of the gospel. And if you want to know more as we dismiss, because I know you got more important things to do, and then as we dismiss, if you want to know more, visit our website.

And like, yeah, boy, we did church. That's sad. You need to know the Scriptures nor the power of God.

This is why ministers are quitting. I know this. I've been doing nothing but pastors conferences the last five or six years.

I've done my own anecdotal study on this. You know what the guys do? They do Willow Creek for a couple years. They follow this other guy for a couple years.

Then they try this for a couple years. And then when none of it works, they go, you know what, I must not be cut out for this. I'm out.

But they don't try Jesus and the Word of God. They don't try the power of the Holy Spirit. They don't get on their faces before God and say, God, either use me or take my life.

Listen, when I was, I'm not saying this for melodramatic reasons, when I came to the Brooklyn Tabernacle and was in this so dismal situation, it was so depressing. I didn't want to go to the church and I was in charge. And that's never a good sign.

One Tuesday, I was walking back and forth in the afternoon in front in the altar area, knowing that there'd be three or five or seven people in the prayer meeting. And I was so burdened. I was so conscious of my weakness, my inefficiency.

I was just like, you know, the worst nightmare to me is to be a phony preacher. To me, that's the worst. To me, that's my like my ultimate nightmare.

Be just changing my voice and acting. Praise God. Hallelujah.

Praise God. Not care about the people, not be close to God. And walking back and forth there, I said to God, God knows this.

I said, I don't know how the words came out. They hadn't been thought through, but it did come out of my soul. I said, God, if you're not going to use me, then take my life.

Carol and I had one child, my oldest girl, Chrissy. She was little. Take my life because I knew God would take care of Carol.

I knew God would take care of Chrissy. But the thought of just being futile, the thought of not seeing a breakthrough, I couldn't take that. Just use me or take me home because I'm going to live forever anyway.

Brothers and sisters, what's the point? We're New Testament Christians. We're not living in the old covenant where living a long life was a big thing. It's better to live a short life and be effective than live a long life and just be hanging out.

Because we're going to live forever. How many are going to plan on living forever with Jesus in heaven? All right. So you got it? We're living forever.

So while we're here on earth, what's the point? A long life or an effective life for Christ? Bearing fruit or just hanging out? We cannot do this without the Holy Spirit. You know, part of the problem today that's brought us to 6% to 9% is that the answers are the problem. The answers we've been fed for the last 10, 15, 20 years, they're the problem.

Most of them are coming from spiritless people who are technicians and are getting their ideas of leadership from Forbes 500, not from the Bible. They want to copy CEOs of Apple and whatever, AT&T, GE. They're not God, use me like you use those men.

That's like passe. Hey, Jim, what are you, nuts? That's for another day. Isn't it interesting that in the last 20 years, we've had more conferences on church growth than in the history of Christianity and the decline has been precipitous in America.

Wouldn't somebody stop and say, time out? What's that all about? More conferences, more books on church growth in the last 20 years than in all the history of America before that. And the church is going like this, down. There's more books about leadership, more conferences on leadership, more like, you know, 10 ways to organize your ministerial life.

Here's how you preach through the Bible, more computer printouts and software to help us and ministers are leaving at 1,500 a month. A leader of the largest denomination in America told me, Jim, the truth is we have more empty pulpits than in the history of our denomination. Burnout, personal failure, just despondency, discouragement.

I'm trying to talk the way it is, brothers and sisters. Faith talk and hype doesn't change anything. That's like going into the huddle and it's 22 to 9 and you look up and the coach says, look at the score and you say, I don't receive that.

I'm not really receiving that. No, I don't receive that. Hey, yo, yo, it's 22 to 9. You can receive it or not.

It's 22 to 9. So, so a major church in the city where I'm in, you know, I just learned of this through someone coming asking counseling for me because they were leaving that church out of discouragement, good pastor, godly guy. But the church had that malaise, offerings down, attendance down, no converts being made, people not reproducing themselves, sheep not bearing sheep. You know, that feeling of like something's wrong, but what do we do? You all know that feeling, don't you? Oh, come on.

So, you know, that malaise, something's wrong. So, so they went out and everybody, we're all going out to Montana, North Dakota, wherever there's some new paradigm. They know how to do church.

So they all haul out there, the woman tells me with her husband, they all haul out there, you know, five, six years ago and they're going to implement this because now you're going to do church. They have small groups. That's the answer.

You don't even have a church unless you're doing small groups the way they do it. They got DVDs. They got study guides.

Hey, so he comes back. Everyone's hyped up. He casts the vision.

Have you ever thought about this? People come up to me, Pastor Jim, what's your vision for the Brooklyn Tabernacle? I have never had a vision for the Brooklyn Tabernacle. I don't have a vision now because it's not my church, it's Jesus's church. Why would, wait, wait, wait, don't say a thing.

Why would I have a vision for someone else's church? I don't read that you died on the cross. I thought he did. As my friend Warren Wisby said, Jesus never said, I will build your church.

He didn't ask you to build his church. He said, I will build my church. And if you work with me, we'll see my name glorified on the earth.

That is really crazy. People are getting visions for their church which now depart from the Bible, but it's all justified under, that's my vision. It's a new vision.

Why would you have a vision for someone else's church? That's a lot of chutzpah. That takes a lot of nerve. You have a vision for Jesus's church.

He died. He gave us the book of Acts, first and second Timothy. He gave us Titus, but now you're going to revise or revisionist theory of what the church should look like.

I don't think that's nice. So, they come back. He cast his vision.

Now we're really going to have church. Listen, I know this like the back of my hand and you know what I'm talking about too. So then what happens? I asked her and him, 18 months later, two years later, guess what? Church is going south more than it was before.

Same malaise, more people leaving, tendons down, you know, more empty seats. Everybody's getting nervous. But now there's a 900-pound gorilla in the room that nobody could talk about.

Everybody's secretly one asking, yo, I thought this was the answer. It's obviously not the answer. So I said, then what happened? Well, after about 18 months, two years, you know, of seeing all of that, now we're all going to a new paradigm.

And everyone's hauling out there. And you know what the recommendations were? Listen to the two first recommendations that were given to this church. In New York City, now you all know a lot more about a lot of things than I do.

But I was born and raised in New York, Brooklyn. So I know a little bit about New York City. After all of this stuff and analyzing and having consultants come in because now you're going to see a turnaround, boy,

wait till you use our formula.

You know what the first two changes were, Brother Wood? They spent \$30,000 on different lights and changed the color of the paint on the wall of the sanctuary. Now stop. Listen to that again.

They changed the lights so it would be like, come on, we're going to get down with some lights here. And they changed the color of the paint. Do you think any demons in New York City? We got young people being recruited by the junior crips, the junior bloods at 11, 12 years old.

We got crystal meth. We got crack. In the inner city, every kid you meet, they don't even have, 9 out of 10 don't have a dad they can identify with.

If you teach them the Lord's Prayer and say, our Father, they go, yo, what's Father mean? And you think lights and a change in the paint color is going to have anything, what world do you live in? So this lady and her husband said, we can't take it anymore. No mention of prayer. No mention of the need of a revival.

No getting back to the gospel. No saying, God, either come or we can't go on. No, none of that.

We're going to do this by cleverness. And listen, I'm all for lights. Have any lights you want and change the paint color every month if that's what you want to do.

That's not what Christianity is about. Please don't do that. Don't say that.

That dishonors Christ. That grieves the Holy Spirit. You can't run the Church of Jesus Christ without direction from the Holy Spirit.

The only reason Barnabas and Saul went out there, and you see through the whole book of Acts, Paul wants to go into Asia, which we would call Turkey, and the Spirit forbids him. And then he wants to go to Bithynia because he can't go there. And again, the Spirit of Jesus says, no, you can't.

So he doesn't know what to do. And when you don't know what to do, you just stop. But then he has a dream at night, and he sees a man from Macedonia saying, yo, come on over and help us.

The Spirit is going to guide us. The Spirit will lead us. You mean God gave us His Son to die on the cross while we were yet sinners, and now we're representing Him, and He won't send His Spirit to help us? If we humble ourselves, confess our sins, if we lay out before God and cry out to God, you mean God won't help Carol and me? I rebuke you if you say that to me.

Of course, what, God is not going to help me? God's not going to help you? You won't see your church turn around? How could that be? Then throw away the Bible. Call upon me, and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things you've never seen before. But it's like the Sadducees.

We've been invaded by a spirit of Sadducees. You neither know the Scriptures nor the power of God. A lot of sermons are becoming just comic routines.

I'm all for a sense of humor and laughing, but, I mean, is that what this is about? Christ died on a cross so we could entertain people and make them laugh? They're not supposed to leave the building, pastor, saying, wasn't He good? That's a sign the meeting was a failure. Someone leaves and says, wasn't Pastor Simba good? Or wasn't that choir the bomb? That means the meeting was a failure. I want them to leave saying, surely God is in the midst of those people.

I don't know what's going on in there. Can we all put our hands together and, in front of God, say amen to that? Don't ever be intimidated by these technicians who are slick and all of that because the statistics are the statistics. The data is the data.

We're going down quickly here in America. And someone's responsible for this. Number two, would you just notice with me as I try to wrap this up? That as they prayed for them when they sent them out, God gave them an open door.

This is something you got to pray for, pastors. It's something we're going to pray for today, an open door. Paul mentions that in his epistles.

You know, pray that God might open a door for the gospel. Pray that the gospel might run and be glorified. There are open doors that only God can give you so that you can spread the gospel.

And in this case, Sergius Paulus, the Roman official, says, Hey, I wanted you to talk to me. Tell me more. Now that's an open door.

That is an open door. We got to teach our members in our churches to pray for open doors, to witness to other people. Someone just gave me a statistic at breakfast.

Two percent of all the Christians who go to church share their faith with anyone. Two. It's becoming spectatoritis.

Folks sit in the church. Everybody performs on the platform. I want to hear that choir.

I want to see the ministers. And then keep it short now because I got things to do. But then I'll come back next week.

So most people are thinking now that Christ died for them and they're born again. So they go to church once a week. That is the prevailing thought.

Not I'm a member of the body. I got to function. God can use me.

My goodness, Philip and Stephen were just handing out food to widows in Act 6. And the next thing you know, they're being mightily used by God. Why can't he use me? Why can't he use every member in your church? Why can't we lead them to a place in God where they get boldness to open their mouths and talk? They prayed for an open door. Now, notice what happens whenever you have an open door.

Whenever God is with you and working with you, in the middle of the night, like God woke me up, I'm supposed to tell you this and for somebody here who's ready, you know, you're discouraged. I've been there, done that. I tried to quit the ministry twice in the early years and God blocked it both times.

Because I was just so beat down. Whenever God is with you and he opens the door, there will be an attack of the enemy. There will be an opposition.

There will be a mountain in front of you. Remember what Paul says in one of his letters? I'm staying here for a while because there's a great open door for ministry, but many adversaries. Whenever there's an open door, there's adversaries.

And in this case, it's this witch, this Simon Bar-Jesus, this Elimes, this Brujo, this witch. And what he's doing is he's turning Sergius Paulus away from the gospel. So here, an open door, Sergius Paulus wants to hear from Barnabas and Saul, but then you got a guy close to him who's saying, don't believe that.

They're against Caesar or this is a crazy religion and these are troublemakers and they're disloyal to the empire. Whatever he was doing, whatever trash he was talking, it was being effective. And then notice Saul, who was also called Paul, full of the Holy Spirit.

Here's what I want you to know. Whenever God opens a door, there will be a huge, huge block. There will be an adversary.

There will be an attack. There will be something that will want to discourage you. You must realize that that will always happen.

Don't throw up your hands and say, what's going on? It means you're in the fight. We're in a fight, brothers and sisters. All I've ever known all my life is to fight.

That's all I know. All my wife and I have ever known is one discouragement after another. That's what it's about.

Paul didn't say at the end of his life, I have danced a good dance. He said, I have fought a good fight. Christianity is not about dancing.

It's about fighting. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against people like that. So don't throw up your arms.

I'm amazed younger pastors are like, I love God and he called me, but look what's happening. It's supposed to happen that way. But God, the Holy Spirit, will always show you what to do.

Because he showed Paul what to do. By the way, isn't that remarkable how God worked Paul out of that situation? Talk about not being user-friendly, seeker-sensitive. Oh, my goodness.

Paul says to Elymas, you son of the devil. Yo, Paul, we thought you were a man of God. You son of the devil, full of mischief.

You're always perverting the ways of the Lord. What's up with you? Guess what? And the Holy Spirit had showed him what God is going to do. Because God doesn't give any of us power to make people blind.

If he did, there'd be a lot of blind folks in our churches walking right now. No, the Holy Spirit many times shows you before what God is going to do. And then you work along with the Spirit, with God.

What a powerful witness. He always shows you what to do. He will always show you what to do.

I don't care what you're facing today. Ask the Holy Spirit for his guidance. He will show you what to do.

Internal problem, division, prayerlessness, lovelessness, racism in your church. People are talking smack about Jesus and the gospel and all of that. And then they don't want people of another color coming in their church.

You got to deal with that. Holy Spirit will never help you. You got a racist church.

No, no, no, no. And that goes for black racism too. Just as ugly or Latino racism.

You got to deal with that. But how? That's the block. God's with you.

But now there's this block. The Holy Spirit will always show us what to do. He's always giving answers.

Study the Bible. Paul's always running into problems. In prison, not in prison.

Kicked out of a city. Always knowing what to do. For what people mean for evil, God works for good.

If we follow the directions of the Holy Spirit. Notice it says, full of the Holy Spirit. You know, since the Holy Spirit is a person, he's not a gas or a liquid.

When it says full, that word means controlled by. Demon possession is the counterfeit of spirit filledness. Demon possessed people are controlled by evil spirits.

Spirit filled people, full of the Holy Spirit, are controlled by the Holy Spirit. And then you find out, it says there must have been some special anointing and control or fullness. Paul, Saul calls Paul full of the Holy Spirit.

Why would Luke add that? Because God wanted us to know the spirit was working through Paul and helping him. He'll always show you what to do. I don't care how deep the discouragement is.

Have I faced some discouragements? Sometimes it's to do something. Other times it's, you know, one day, let me just give you two quick instances. One day years ago, I was preaching a sermon and the Lord was really helping me.

Oh, this happened in our previous facility, a theater. We're in a new theater now in the last 10 years that was built in 1917, the largest theater in North America when it was built, 4,100 seats, bigger than any theater on Broadway. And it's right downtown Brooklyn where the subways and buses come.

It's good. It's good. People can get in and out quick because more than half our people don't have cars.

So I'm in this previous facility and I'm preaching and the Lord is helping me and I close my eyes to make an invitation. And I'm half praying and half pleading with the people. I preached about the love of God and I'm saying to people, don't fight off this love.

Don't fight off this love. Come now. Come to Jesus now.

Not join the church. Never lift up your denomination. That grieves the Holy Spirit.

If you bring any of those elements in, the Holy Spirit goes, oh, no, no. I wasn't sent to lift up your personality or the Brooklyn Tabernacle or your denomination. I was only sent to glorify Christ.

If you glorify Christ, oh, I'll help you now. You're going to lift up Jesus. You're going to lift up that.

This is why a lot of ministers are not anointed like they can be because they're mixing elements that you don't find in the book of Acts. Study Peter in Acts 2, Acts 3, Acts 10 at Cornelius' house, Paul in Acts 13 in Pisidian Antioch in the synagogue, Paul in Acts 20 with the Ephesian elders, later in Jerusalem when they almost kill him. Study every sentence of those gospel messages.

See if that's the gospel you're preaching. It's not join my churchism. It's not right-wing republicanism.

It's not black culture. It's not white culture. It's not the Dallas Cowboys.

It's not a good old boy gospel. It's not a revival gospel. It's not a prayer gospel.

Those things have their place, but it's not in what they preached. It's not sell out and give everything to Jesus or you're not really a Christian. Study those messages.

None of that is found there. Spirit deals with people later on as we walk with the Lord, but that's not the good news. My denomination has an inside track on truth.

You will not see any of that in there. God dealt with me about this some years ago. And don't go into the Old Testament and preach some verse in the Old Testament unless you're going to get back to Jesus.

The demons are not afraid of Jehovah or God the Creator. Those names do not bother them at all. It's Jesus.

I was determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Well-known preachers have told me, Jim, you're right. I've made forays into the Old Testament and never got back to Jesus.

Well then, what are we, followers of Moses? The law came through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. What are we preaching? The only name that can change anyone is Jesus.

We better be preaching Jesus every sermon. My late friend Dave Wilkerson told me before he died and in a public meeting the last time he preached in my church at a pastor's conference with Tony Evans and Franklin Gray. And Brother Dave said, listen, I don't listen to a lot of my older sermons because I didn't get people to Jesus.

I was preaching Old Testament, always looking for verses in Habakkuk or Zephaniah or somewhere there. Well, that's great. It's all inspired, but you better get to Jesus.

God in sundry ways and diverse manners has spoken in the past through the prophets, but in this day he has spoken through his son. What God is saying today is Jesus. Come on.

Can we put our hands together? He's saying Jesus. Not join my church, Jesus. So I'm calling people to come to the Lord.

And some crazy guy in the back draws a gun out, puts it on me, aims it at me, and starts walking down the aisle with a gun drawn on me. And my eyes are closed. And my wife is playing the piano behind me.

And this guy is walking up, security didn't get him. And she's playing the keyboard. And she sees him coming, but like a good pianist in a church, never stop playing.

And she's playing. And she yells, Jim, Jim. But I'm lost.

I'm telling people come to Jesus. Meanwhile, I'm on my way to Jesus, and I just didn't know it. And she's playing.

And he walks up on the platform. Now he's coming at me with a gun drawn on me. He's a Jewish dude that someone had messed with his girlfriend.

He went out and got a gun. He was going to take care of this guy. And by the providence of God, he came into church.

And he heard the gospel, and he heard about God loving him, and his wires weren't good upstairs. And he just said, I got to give this gun up. Who can I give it to? I'll just give it to the preacher.

But it didn't look like that. He had it drawn on me. And it was loaded, .45. And you know, they told me later, I laughed so hard when they told me, my wife, she got so afraid, it really shook her up.

A week she had a battle with that. God had to deliver her from that fear. She said to me, where's security? Is this the way it's going to end for us? All these meetings downtown here, and it's going to end? The guy's going to walk up.

I thought he was going to blow you away and then turn on me. But they told me later, she got so nervous because it was happening, she kept sinking down, down. So all you could see was her hands on the piano still courting.

Ha ha ha! You can't even make that up. You can't even make it up. Where is she? No, just her hands.

The guy throws the gun down on the pulpit. I hear the sound. My eyes fly open.

There's a gun on my pulpit. I mean, what Bible school tells you what to do in a situation like that? I grab. I look at the gun and then touch it.

And I see him. He's like running off like this and going, help me, help me. And I run after him.

I'm just reacting. I don't know what to do. So I trot after him, and I go, no, no, no, don't run, don't go.

And he goes off the side, and he goes down the aisle, and he falls in a heap, and the security people are jumping on him. And I said, no, don't hurt him. Don't do anything.

And he's crying out, I need you, Jesus. Help me, Jesus. Well, now everything's going crazy in the service.

Some people had their eyes open and saw him coming. They almost had a heart attack. Others, just like, what's going on? Imagine a first-time visitor.

How was church at the Brooklyn Tap? Oh, it was great. A guy with a gun came up and almost shot the minister. I went to the pulpit, just not knowing what to do.

Holy Spirit, show me what to do, please. And I took the gun. I hate guns.

And I held it up, and I said, look what the love of God can make you give up. What does he want you to give up? And suddenly, people are running to the altar. We baptized, wait, we baptized like 17, 18 people just from that meeting.

Every time there's an obstacle, every time there's a problem, every time there's an attack, the Holy Spirit will always show us what to do. And sometimes the thing is to do nothing, but to hold on. When we were in this building project which involved dozens and dozens of millions of dollars, and I never raised money once, I knew it would disenfranchise a lot of the people in our church who live hand-to-mouth, mostly.

I had signed away all the royalties from my books before I wrote the first one to the church, and then fresh wind, fresh fire, one book of the year, and all this money was going to church, and then Zondervan gave me an advance of \$2 million that I was able to give the church, and even a loan, and everyone, it was just, we had to find money another way, you know. I'm all for budgeting, but if you have no money, it's very hard to budget. My wife and I have never known to have money.

We've never been around that. So as we're entering into this project, 700 Club, Pat Robertson, without me asking, gave us a million dollars. We took that as a sign from the Lord.

Go, go ahead. Buy this thing. Holy Spirit, are you saying this? All the pastors, we fasted, we prayed, and they said, this is what God wants us to do.

But the renovation, all H, you know, all, just new, heating, air conditioning, just everything. The place was just a disaster. They had turned it into a quad.

Cineplex. But it was one of the grand theaters. The Three Stooges played there, live.

That's one of our claims to fame. Very few churches have had the Three Stooges there. So, the building was in such disrepair, friends of mine came and saw it, they thought I had lost my mind.

Rats running around in it, big rats, with attache cases, New York Times underneath their arms. That's never good. And, well anyway, an organization, a godly organization approached me and said, we want to help you.

We'll lend you a lot of money. We'll lend you money. We believe in what you're doing.

They called me, I never called them. So, I said, wow. We prayed about it and we said, yeah, this is going to be great help.

So, they made the purchase of the building really possible in the initial stage. So, we gave them plans and we're moving ahead, but we're doing this by faith. That's the only way I've ever known to live.

I've never had access to a lot of money. So, then one day, I'm on my way to Argentina for ten days of ministry to poor pastors, feed them, try to encourage them. And a guy from the denomination calls me a numbers cruncher and he goes, hey, Pastor Simba, we just did some analysis and I think we made a mistake.

It's like, even if we lend you this money, for you to get in that building, stage one, and be operational, you're short six million dollars. That number will get your attention. So, I said, what do you mean? He said, no, what I just told you.

How are you going to get the six million? Because you're going to have the building not done and you'll be in it. And we'll lend you the money, you won't have enough, the building will be half-baked. What are you going to do? I said, well look, I didn't call you, you called me.

And I told you how we're doing, we're doing it by faith. He said, okay, what are you going to like, trust God and pray? I went, yeah. He said, that's great.

Now how are you going to get the six million dollars? I said, no, don't you get it, sir. I don't know how I'm going to get the six million dollars. That's how you do it by faith.

So, what are you going to do? Like, shut down the service on Sunday sometimes and just stay in the building all day and fast and pray and have the congregation call to God. Yeah, we do things like that. Yeah, that's great, but how are you going to get the money? I said, he was starting to move me toward a place I didn't want to go in my heart.

Because I was born in Brooklyn, I was like, come on, we'll talk about this, let's see. So, I go to Argentina and then, one of the last days I'm there, I'm in a city called Madre Plata. And boy, this number was getting to me.

Shouldn't I be back home? Shouldn't I be raising money? Who do I know that has a lot of money? No one. I'm being a bad steward. I'm not a good leader.

What should I be doing? Six million dollars? Then the devil starts whispering to me, you're a chump. You're a chump. You're a chump.

You're talking all this smack about Jesus and God and faithful and you're going to have half a building and run out of money and oh boy, fear attacked me. I'm not usually fearful, fear got me. I said to Carol, I'm going out for a walk to talk to Jesus.

I went out for a three hour or something walk. Walking is a good way to pray, isn't it? You can't fall asleep. You can't get stiff.

And I'm walking and I just start crying out to God. God, you got me into this. They gave us that million dollars.

We all felt this was you. Now God, what do I do? Should I race back early? What should I do? And I'm all stressed out about it. Six million dollars is a large number.

And I just called on God, wept, I could see myself walking down near the water in Mar del Plata and just calling on God. And then the Lord speaks to me and says, I got you covered. Don't worry about it.

Stop worrying. Philippians 4.6 Don't worry about a single thing. But in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your needs known to God.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds. Christ Jesus. Suddenly the Lord just baptized me with a peace.

Oh, that's so good. If you're all stressed out today, let me pray for you that God will baptize you with peace. Just peace.

If he sent his son, how much more will he give us everything we need to do his work? I go back, overnight flight from Buenos Aires. I go into the office. We get in six in the morning.

I just turn around quick, shower, shave, and go into the office. I got emails, text messages, every kind of thing piled up. My secretary says, you got a whole bunch of stuff.

So I get there at about 10.30, 11 o'clock, and I start opening stuff and talking to pastors. I've been away 10 days. At 12 o'clock, I open a letter from a man in Chicago, businessman, who I had met once or twice, but I wouldn't know him if he had walked in, didn't know his face.

And he says, you know what? I visited your church. Your choir sang a song, and one of the lines in that song was, the Lord, the Holy Spirit, just made it so real to me and stopped me from doing something, an investment I was going to make, and it turns out I would have lost everything, all the money from my family. So God spoke to me.

I'm going to give you a million dollars. So I run over to the people who finance and who were watching over the project. I said, God just gave us a million dollars.

They're rejoicing. We're high-fiving. Praise God.

I go back. Ten minutes later, I open another letter from a woman I have yet to meet to this day. She wants to remain anonymous.

Yet to meet her. Didn't know her. Never talked to her in my life.

She said, I understand you've been in the project, and our foundation just wants you to know we're giving you five million dollars. So wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. In ten minutes, God provided, not four million, not seven million, the exact amount that that guy said to me.

Hey, pastor, don't you get it? You're short. Six million dollars. Isn't God amazing? Come on, let's put our hands together.

So if whatever you're facing today, whatever you're facing today, don't worry about it. God's going to take care of it. And boy, guess the first number I called on that phone.

Yeah, like, hey, guy, how you doing? Sometimes the Holy Spirit tells you to do something. Sometimes He tells you to stay put. But you can't do it by copying another church.

Please, I plead with you, don't copy any church. That's an insult to God. That grieves the Holy Spirit.

Find out what God wants you to do. Don't copy someone else. That's corporate America.

Who's making money? How do they sell their products? We'll copy them. That's corporate America. That's the wisdom of this world.

That's not the wisdom that's from above. Let's learn from who we can, but that's not what Christianity is about. So now, let me end so we can pray.

So the best part of this story is this. Not that the guy was blind, that the mist came over him. Not that the apostles were mightily used of God.

The angels don't rejoice when God uses me. Don't you get it? The angels don't rejoice when we speak in tongues, and that's an important thing to do. Don't you get the payoff of the story? And then, Sergius Paulus believed.

The hardest thing to do in the ministry is to make converts. Not rob people from other churches. Not get people who are half-baked and not converted and haven't come to your church.

And then, keep away from any subject that would offend them, so that they can keep coming so that it makes it look like you're successful. God doesn't want you to be successful. He wants you to bear fruit.

And that's the hardest thing in this world. That's the hardest thing right now in New York City. Hardest mission field in New York City? I think it's the hardest mission field in the whole country.

Young, urban, minority youth, or Caucasian, but poor, minority youth, full of anger. Joy is going to come on the piano. Full of anger.

How do you reach it? People running out of money. People discouraged. People being abused by churches they've gone to, so that the devil uses that to just make them all, like say, church is not the answer.

Now brothers and sisters, look. We're all in on this thing, aren't we? How many are all in for Jesus? Listen, we're going to see God do something in our churches or what? How many say amen? Now listen, He always saves the best for last. Remember the widow, the wedding in Cana of Galilee? The best wine came last, so God has the best thing waiting for us.

And He's going to help you? He's going to help me? What are you kidding me? He's not going to help us. He sent His Son to die for us and now He won't help you if you ask for His help? That's ridiculous. Have faith.

Have faith in God. I don't care what you're facing today. Don't give me your environment and what's gone in the church and the board and all of that.

God has an answer for every single thing. He didn't put us in the positions we're in to go under, but to go over. To be effective, to see what our souls want, to preach the good news of Jesus.

Do not preach your church. If you want church membership and that's a subtle, cursive thing. If you want to have a big church, the Holy Spirit will pick up on that and you won't have His influences.

No, He won't. He does not glorify churches or denominations or Pastor Symbol or the Brooklyn Tab or five-point Calvinism or Arminianism. Read the gospel message that they preach in the book of Acts.

None of that stuff is in there. It's just Jesus. Your life can be changed.

Then, wherever God leads you, go to church. That's cool. I don't care if you come to Brooklyn Tabernacle or not.

God didn't send me to build a church. It's to build His kingdom. Then God will take care of your church.

There'll be lines outside your building that's going to start with us ministering to the Lord and saying, God, I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. The same old same old is, I want a breakthrough. Don't you want a breakthrough? I said, don't you want a breakthrough in your ministry? I don't care how young you are, how old you are.

There's no retirement with God. He wants to give us a breakthrough. I need a breakthrough in the Brooklyn Tabernacle.

We baptized something like almost 400 people in the last four or five months. That's nothing. Think of the city.

Think of the city. I'm trying to help this girl. We're not doing very good right now, but I'm not going to give up praying for her.

She started cutting herself. A lot of the kids, they're pulling their hair out. These clumps of their hair.

This girl's cutting herself. Tried to take her life twice now. We told her, you're going to end up in a mental institution.

They're going to medicate you. Then we won't be able to love on you. Not going to be able to help you once they lock you away.

But she's so desperate and needy that she took a knife and in the part of her thigh, she wrote help. H-E-L-P. Help.

Now what do you think is going to change her? Some lights? Some joke I tell? Serving Starbucks in the lobby? Do you think that's going to change anybody? I'm all for it. You want to do it? Go for it. Go girl.

Go guy. Do it. But that's not Christianity.

Only God can change that poor thing. Can he do it? Come on. Can he do it? He can do it.

Let's close our eyes. Let's close our eyes. If you're a pastor, pastor's wife, official, leader of any kind in the body of Christ and you want to just spend some time up with me here praying, why not have a little prayer meeting? Sounds biblical to me.

I've often believed that a sermon that doesn't lead to prayer is not a true sermon. Sermon's supposed to be an arrow to get us to God. The throne of grace.

Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace. Never says let us come boldly to the church or let us come boldly to the sermon. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.

If you're hungry here today, like these people who have come before I could even ask them. If you are desperate and hungry and say, God, I know you have more for me. This is not.

I am not living in the full blessing of the Holy Spirit. I'm not. You just get out of your seat and come.

Whatever you have to do, God, do it in our lives. Cut out the stuff in my life and in their lives, Lord, that shouldn't be there. Create faith to replace discouragement.

Take away fear and give us boldness. Take away complacency and give us fervent, burning love. Help us to love all the people.

Help us to see people the way you see them. Help us to feel what you feel. God, how can we do your work unless we see them the way you see them? Unless we feel what you feel.

Let's lift up our hands and open our mouths and just begin to praise him. Before we ask him for anything. Come on, let's minister to him.

Praise him for calling you in the ministry. Praise him for saving you. Praise him for filling you with the Holy Spirit.

Praise him out loud. Come on. Open up your mouth and praise God.

We bless you. We praise you. Gloria a tu nombre, Señor.

Gloria a tu nombre, Señor. Gloria a tu nombre, Señor. We bless you.

We praise you. We magnify you. Come on, lift up your voice from the bottom of your soul.

Let out all that frustration and all those questions. God, we're crying out to you. We worship you.

We worship you, God. We worship you, God. We worship you, God.

We worship you, God. We praise your name. Come on, lift up your voice.

Lift up your hands. Lift up your soul to God. As they ministered to the Lord and prayed and worshipped, the Holy Spirit broke in and did something new and wonderful.

Change us, God. Change me, God. Change me, God.

Change me, God. Change us, God. Change us, God.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. We praise you.

We praise you. We magnify you. We glorify you.

We honor you, Jesus. We honor you, Holy Spirit. Let Jesus be glorified in our lives, in our churches, in our ministry, in our sermons, in our youth department, in our senior's department, in our praise and worship.

To save my heart. Sing, everyone. While another's thou art called.

Do not pass me by. Lift your hands and your voice. Sing.

Savior, Savior. Sing that chorus again. Savior.

Let God hear it. Everyone sing out. Savior, Savior.

Savior. Te amo, Señor. Te amo, Señor.

Te amo, Señor. We praise you. We praise you, Jesus.

Love us. Look up here for a second, everybody. Here's what I want us to do for the next five minutes.

I'll tell you when to stop. I want every woman, when I tell you, to turn and just face one other woman. Every man, find one man, face him, join hands in front of you.

And then at the same time, don't pray for yourself, pray for that sister. God will honor that if you pray for someone else. Pray for that other brother.

Out loud. Pray at the same time. God will hear everyone.

Come on, everybody find a partner now. I don't want to hear any other sound, but the sound of praying. Come on, my house shall be called a house of prayer.

When you call, I will answer. Come on, I will answer. Ask and you shall receive.

Seek and you'll find. Knock and it shall be opened. For God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

And they lifted up their voices and they prayed in one accord. And the place where they were was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Pray out loud.

Pray out loud. Ajuro nos, Señor. Ajuro nos, Señor.

Hallelujah, Lord. I need the all I Join somebody's hand and sing it. Look up here.

Oh, bless me now. My Savior, I come. Let's lift up our hands, everybody, as a sign of faith and surrender.

We need the all. We need the Let's sing we. We need Oh, bless us now.

Oh, bless us now. My Savior, we come to How great is our God. Sing with me.

How great is our God. Oh, we'll see how great how great is our God. Sing louder.

How great is our God. Oh, sing with me. How great is our God.

Oh, we'll see how great how great is our God. Name above all names. He's the name above all names.

You are worthy. You are worthy to a vow. My heart will sing how great is our God.

Let's put our hands together and just praise him out loud. While we're clapping you can shout or whistle or yell or give God a hallelujah. We bless you, Lord.

Shout unto the Lord with the voice of triumph. Father God, I thank you for the privilege, the honor of being with my brothers and sisters today. Thank you for your word.

Oh, are we encouraged today, Lord. Now I come against any and all attacks of discouragement in this place. I pray that the Holy Spirit will encourage every single man and woman of God here.

And they will go back to their place of ministry encouraged, full of faith, looking forward to seeing the great things you're going to do in and through us, Lord. I come against all fear here, fear of finances, fear of failure, fear of I don't know what to do next. We come against that in the name of Christ.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love and power and disciplined mind and boldness through the Holy Spirit. So we come against discouragement and fear. And Lord, we commit our churches and our ministries to you in a new way today.

We dedicate ourselves like Hannah dedicated Samuel in Shiloh all those years ago. Speak, Lord. Your servants are listening.

Show us what to do. Lead us by your spirit. Help us to preach better, with more clarity, with more power.

Let our preaching not be with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit, so that people's faith will not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. We dedicate our churches to you. Let them be Holy Ghost hospitals where people of all backgrounds and all problems can come in and be loved, not judged, not judged, loved, embraced.

We have no target group, except everyone who Christ died for. We don't want any age group. We want every age group, every color, every background.

We say no to the wisdom of men, and we say yes to the power of God today, Lord. And I pray that every church, Lord, I pray personally to every church represented here today, give them the best Sunday this coming Sunday. Give them a visitation of your Spirit.

Give them something that can come only from Heaven. I pray that in Jesus' name. And why wouldn't you do it, God? If you don't work with us, how can we do this? If we only have words only and not power, we can't do this, Lord.

The things are so horrible out there in this world. It's a wicked and perverse generation, but we're glad that we can shine for you. And greater is He that's in us than the one that's in the world.

We thank you for that. We pray for finances to be provided for that one who's here today who's ready to quit because he doesn't know how he's going to get the money for his project or the money to live on. God, take that fear away and provide like you have done for me and so many of us a thousand times.

Do it again. And God, we promise you today by your grace that we will give all the glory to Jesus. No church name, no denomination name, no pastor's name.

Save us from all of that. Let all those names perish. Let Jim Simbel and the Brooklyn Tabernacle name perish, but let Jesus be glorified and praised and exalted.

Help us to love one another. Break down all barriers between us. If there be any divisions here in this room, how can we minister the love of God if we're not full of love? How can we hold up the fact that God is love and that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son if we're not walking in love? Take away harshness from us.

Take away critical, cynical words and thoughts, Lord. Help us. Make us sweet.

Make us sweet, Lord. Make us kind. Just make us kind and sweet to everyone today.

Save us from that professional clergy trap and just make us just regular people in love with Jesus, in love with the world. We ask all these things in your name, Lord. Look at me for a second.

It's been an honor to talk to you and I love you. If you come to New York, I'll buy you cheesecake. If you want to come, come.

That junior's cheesecake. That's right. Can we dismiss the way we do it in our church in Brooklyn? Can we dismiss this way? I want all the ladies to hug.

No handshaking now on. Every lady hug about 10 ladies and give her your favorite verse. Just whisper and then hear her favorite verse.

Every brother hug 10 brothers. No handshakes. Don't be cool.

Don't be macho. Just hug somebody. Come on.

Everybody. Men with men. Ladies with ladies.

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