

# Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire-I Interview: Jim Cymbala

by Jim Cymbala

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*The main problem with modern churches is their focus on numbers and money, rather than prayer and teaching, and the key to a successful ministry is humility and obedience to God.*

**Duration:** 14:37

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 2:5

**Topics:** "Interview"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the decline of Sunday night services and the lack of depth in preaching. He emphasizes the importance of genuine motives and preparation in delivering the word of God. The speaker reminds the audience that they have been entrusted with the gospel and will be held accountable for their work at the judgment seat of Christ. He also shares the story of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, highlighting their humble beginnings and the transformation they experienced through their ministry.

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## Transcript

Welcome to another edition of For Faith and Family with Dr. Richard Land. I'm Harold Harper. And on our last broadcast, we started sharing an incredible testimony of a person that's making a huge impact in the community of New York.

Every Tuesday evening, they have a prayer service that draws in so many people that the auditorium fills up to the point that they have overflow rooms for prayer. Of course, this church has not always been this way, but it did start when a pastor first came to the Brooklyn Tabernacle. There was only a small handful of church members there at the time, and now there are thousands of members who are making a huge difference in the city of New York, all because the pastor had a burden to call his church to prayer.

Folks, the first time that I heard about Brother Jim and about what God was doing in and through him in Brooklyn was when I heard him preach at a tremendous conference, a pastor's conference, where he just electrified everyone and challenged people in a way that they've seldom been challenged. And I want to take you into that convention center where Brother Jim is speaking and sharing with them the message that God has laid on his heart. In case you don't know anything about the Brooklyn Tabernacle or our ministry, 26 years ago, my wife and I came to a run-down building in downtown Brooklyn, a depressing

situation with less than 20 people in the church.

The first offering I took on a Sunday morning was \$85. That was the total tithes and offerings for that service. We were in the ghetto, inner city, drug and alcoholism all around us.

But on top of that, I had never been to seminary. I was a basketball player in high school and college and came into the ministry in an unusual way, which I won't belabor now. And my wife, although she's won two Grammy Awards now, my wife has never learned to read or write music technically.

She's not trained, so she can't read or write the music that she's producing where other people are singing it. So next to that verse in the Bible, God uses the foolish things of this world and the weak things. My picture is right there in the Bible next to that verse along with my wife.

Because God's not looking for talent. God's looking for availability. God's not looking for geniuses because he knows everything already.

The Lord is just looking for somebody who he can break and make and fill and use for his glory. So it's a real honor for us to be here. We had four services yesterday in New York City and we got on that airplane early this morning.

But we really counted, as I said, an honor to be here to minister the word of God. I'd like you to turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of First Thessalonians, and I want to read some portions of scripture. And if you don't mind, I'm going to ask you to read little clumps of verses because it's not one particular sentence I want to focus on.

But it's it's an aroma. It's a it's a fragrance. It's an atmosphere that I want to direct your attention to today.

In First Thessalonians, the second chapter, Paul is talking about his ministry among the people there in Thessalonica. And we pick it up in verse five as he's reviewing his time with them. You know, I'm reading from the NIV.

You know that we never use flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

As apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Then look down at verse 17, same chapter.

But brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time in person, not in thought, out of our intense longing, we made every effort to see you for we wanted to come to you. Certainly, I, Paul, did again and again. But Satan stopped us for what is our hope, our joy or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. And we sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ to strengthen, encourage you in the faith. And then in the third chapter, verse six, he's giving the account now of Timothy's return.

But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brethren, in all of our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith.

For now, we really live since you are standing firm in the Lord. Now, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters in the ministry, people on the platform, let's talk. We'll cut all the preachers talk and let's just cut to the chase because the hour is late here and I want to really open my heart to you about something of real concern.

You know, this conference is so important and what happens in each session is so important because the calling that we have and what we're involved in, we're not selling thumbtacks. We're not we're not slinging hash somewhere. We have been entrusted with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you're here in this building and you're involved in service for God, you have been entrusted by God, chosen before the foundation of the world, not because of anything in you, but just God's sovereign choice. You've been entrusted to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ in the part of the vineyard where he's put you. And I want to remind all of you here today that at the end of your life, you and I are all going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and the quality of our work is going to be reviewed.

Why these sound guys and guys who are helping from the church, why they're really doing it? Are they doing it for a buck? Are they doing it to be noticed? Are they doing it out of a real service for the Lord? The Bible says God's going to check and look into the motives of the heart. Why is Jim symbol of preaching? Why is he in the Brooklyn Tabernacle? What kind of preparation goes into those sermons? Why is he preaching? What's his relationship with those people? You're not going to be reviewed by your peers. It won't matter who thinks you're hot.

Your Sunday school numbers won't mean a bit of interest to God. Because he's not looking at quantity. One of the disturbing things about the ministry today is that when you talk to 99 out of 100 pastors and you say, how is your church doing? They talk about three things.

The attendance, the budget, and the plant. The attendance, how many they're running, the budget, how much money they're taking in, and how big their building is, and how extensive it is. And none of those three things are mentioned in the New Testament.

None of those three things are even mentioned. Our religion began meeting in caves and upper rooms. In Jesus' seven letters to the church in Revelation, we don't know what one of them was running on Sunday morning.

It could have been Laodicea was running 4,000, but it didn't matter because they all were going to be vomited soon out of the Lord's mouth. Smyrna or one of those other churches might have been running only a faithful couple hundred, but they were people who were really in tune with God. God was reviewing not quantity or numbers.

Big buildings God gives to cults. We know that by being here in this city. Big buildings don't mean anything.

Large amounts of money don't mean anything. God gives that to people who curse him. The Brooklyn Tabernacle is going to be reviewed.

My ministry is going to be reviewed by what kind of people are in the Brooklyn Tabernacle. What are we making of the Christian church? And this is an awesome day that we live in because the church of Jesus Christ has been invaded by technicians. Not men of God, not men of prayer, not men of the scriptures, but clever people.

People who are better with computers than the Word of God and on their knees. And they have brought in a revisionist theology that has now revised what the church is. And I want to remind all of you today, nobody has a right to change the church of Jesus Christ.

You didn't found it. Jesus founded it. You don't have to reinvent it.

Just do what the book says. God doesn't need any creative thought. How many say amen? So the Bible tells us that days like this would come.

Men have come in now and revised what the church is instead of a spiritual organism. They continue steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and in the fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. We have made it.

How can you get people for one hour on Sunday morning into the building? That's the church. I want to remind you tonight that is not a church. That's a meeting of people for one hour.

And now it's don't mention sin. Don't get anybody's face. User friendly, secret sensitive nonsense that will never wash when we stand before the one whose eyes are like fire.

Never going to wash when we stand before him. So what has happened, ladies and gentlemen, is we have this pathetic situation where pastors tell me they can't let the run meeting run past an hour because everyone's looking at the clock. They'll walk out even while you're serving communion to go home and watch an NFL game that's going to go on for three hours or an NBA game that's going to go on for three hours.

And doesn't somebody think this is not what God intended when he started the church? I mean, doesn't that dawn on anybody that the people today don't want to be in the presence of God? They're shortening the meetings, shortening the meetings. Prayer meetings died out decades ago. Sunday night services are going the way of high button shoes.

And we're hiding behind doctrinal statements and the fact that we've programmed these little Protestant masses for one hour and people come. But listen, trouble is looming. When I played basketball, you didn't do it by faith.

You had a scoreboard. And when you were playing for eight or nine minutes and the score was 22 to six, the coach called a timeout and we go over there and nobody looked and said, isn't this fun? We've got nice uniforms with gold trim. The coach would say, we're going to change.

We have to change. We're going to press or we're going to go into a zone press or we're going to run the ball or slow the ball down or go to man to man or do something. But we're losing.

So we change. We are now divorcing in the church at the same rate as outside the church. The divorce rate is just as high.

People professing Christ in the church as outside of the church. And last year, evangelical ministers divorced at the highest rate than in history. Church meetings are getting smaller and there's less mention of sin because pastors have yielded to.

I've got to accommodate the lowest carnal denominator because some of these people give big money. And if I offend them by following the Holy Spirit and letting the meeting go too long or really step on their toes, they'll leave and my budget will go down. So I'm going to have to dance with them and sacrifice the teaching of the true word of God.

But brothers and sisters, I plead with you in the name of the Lord. Your work is not going to be reviewed by people. Your work is going to be.

My work is going to be reviewed by the king of kings and the Lord of Lords. And we cannot compromise to keep the numbers up. I mean, what does it matter what the numbers are if the people don't want to be in the house of God? I talked to well-known ministers, well-known ministers who write books, who are famous, who tell me over a cup of coffee privately off the record.

Jim, I couldn't have a prayer meeting in my church. Nobody would come. They'll pay \$15 for a Christian concert to hear a Christian singer.

And for free, they won't come into the presence of God and call upon the name of the Lord. And yet every revival has been characterized by what? Great teaching, great puppeteering, eloquence? Never. Prayer.

When God's people, when his people begin to pray, something good begins to happen. And am I the only one embarrassed in America that's a minister when you hear ministers pressing these political buttons and saying, isn't it terrible we don't have prayer in schools? Are you kidding? We don't have prayer in the church. The Bible, the Bible never indicates there was prayer in the Roman Empire in schools.

But the early church seemed to be doing pretty good because they had prayer meetings in the church. Why should they pray in school? I'm all for prayer in schools. But wouldn't it be better to begin in church? If the people don't want to be in the presence of God, how good could your sermons be? I think it's time for us to humble ourselves and look at some of these things.

Because you know what? If I'm doing something wrong, I want God to break me now and change it. I don't want to find out at the judgment seat of Christ that I was, I was, I was just building on puff. This American church system is so skewed that sometimes when we read the Bible, this is like a foreign element to us.

If you're here in this building and you're involved in service for God, you have been entrusted by God, chosen before the foundation of the world, not because of anything in you, but just God's sovereign choice. You've been entrusted to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ in the part of the vineyard where he's put you. And I want to remind all of you here today that at the end of your life, you and I are all going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ.

And the quality of our work is going to be reviewed. The Bible says God's going to check and look into the motives of the heart. Why is Jim symbol of preaching? Why is he in the Brooklyn tabernacle? What kind of preparation goes into the sermons? What's his relationship with those people? You're not going to be reviewed by your peers.

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