

General Session 2 W/ Pastor Cymbala

by Jim Cymbala

Pastor Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of being with Jesus, the authority given to believers, and the necessity of a personal relationship with God in effective ministry.

Duration: 55:28

Scripture: Matthew 4:19, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 3:13, Luke 10:19, Ephesians 6:11-12, Revelation 2:1-7

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker expresses his confusion about the idea of planning out sermons for the next two years. He questions whether this approach aligns with what Jesus would speak to the church. The speaker emphasizes the importance of pursuing what Jesus would say and being aware of the devil's tactics. He shares a personal story of a woman being set free through the power of Jesus' name. The sermon concludes with a reading of Mark 3:13, highlighting Jesus' selection of the twelve apostles and their purpose to preach and drive out demons.

Transcript

Well, we've already been blessed so much today from our brother, Francis Chan. So, let's just look at a verse you all know. I'll read it once from my NIV.

It's in Mark. And then what you can do is, we'll look at it on the screen just for a second, but it's something familiar to us. Mark 3, verse 13.

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted. And they came to him, and he appointed 12, designating them apostles, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. Let's look at this again on the screen.

We all know this, right? This part of scripture, let's look at it on the screen, okay? Jesus went up on a mountainside and he called to them those he wanted. Now, he had more than 12 followers, but he called the 12 he wanted, and they came to him. They responded.

They could have walked away. He appointed 12, designating them apostles, special messengers or whatever, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. You know, I used the phrase, preaching in South America a few months ago, that my childhood friend, Pastor Dan Impagli, who's here today.

He's a great interpreter. He got stuck on it, and we had to stop the meeting to try to figure it out because it's not something you could translate easily, and it's the English saying this. If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time, and a lot of times, you know, when you play basketball, you're not aiming at nothing.

You're aiming at that basket. You keep your eye on the basket. If you look away when you're batting or you're playing golf, I'm not a golfer, but you gotta keep your eye on the ball.

Tennis, which I do play, you gotta keep your eye on the ball. Almost some of the great ones can actually see the contact. You have to keep your eye on the ball, but a lot of us, it's like, what are we aiming at? Besides spiritual jargon, what are we aiming at? So Paul in 2 Corinthians gives us one of these as a goal, as an aim.

He says, he said to the church in Corinth, I don't need letters from you or to you of recommendation, because all these false apostles were kind of talking smack and trying to put Paul down. So Paul says, I don't need letters of recommendation because you're my letter. God wrote through my ministry on your heart, and you're the proof of my ministry, and that's an interesting thing, ladies and gentlemen.

The proof of our ministry is people, not clever sermons, not clever communications or books that become popular. The evidence of our ministry, according to Paul, is the fruit of human beings. Remember we learned yesterday from Philippians 4.1, what is my joy, what is my crown? All I can present to the Lord is people, like Brother Francis was saying so eloquently.

That's all we can show, is burning up all the buildings. No fame or awards mean anything. What your denomination thinks of you, totally irrelevant.

What your peers think of you is irrelevant. They could overestimate you or undervalue you, but people, that's another whole thing. So Paul then goes on to say, for God has made us competent ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter that kills, but of the what? Spirit that what? Gives life.

Not of the letter which kills. What letter is he talking about? Obviously in that context, he's talking about the 10 Commandments. We're in the new covenant.

We're not like Moses, he goes on to say. Because all Moses could say is, this is what represents God's holiness. Now do you promise to do it? And we're in a different day now.

That's not the ministry. Unfortunately, some have not learned that. They think that by yelling commands at people and trying to get them to make a commitment to follow them, that's Christianity.

No, we are ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter that kills, but of the spirit that gives life. We are trying to lead people to put their faith in Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian eunuch, I mean, Philip just talked to him there on the road, and the next thing you know, I see water here.

Why can't I be baptized? Get baptized. You put your faith in Jesus Christ. It's supernatural.

It's not a guy promising or a girl promising to do anything. It's I'm hopeless, helpless, and always will be, but Christ is my savior, and he's gonna come in and live in me, and he's gonna make me the person he wants me to be. That's the new covenant that we are representing.

So, by saying God has made us competent, it obviously implies you can be incompetent. Brooklyn is called the borough of churches. This is one of the five boroughs of New York.

Legal inhabitants right now, not counting undocumented people and whatnot, there's almost three million people here. If Brooklyn was a city, it would be the fourth largest city in America after New York, LA, and Chicago. There's just Brooklyn.

It's called the borough of churches. Why? Because there's all these historic buildings, most of them all empty. Why? Because people left orthodoxy? No, because a lot of pastors who even believed in the word were not competent ministers of the new covenant.

They didn't have the juice. There was something missing, and they couldn't grab the attention of the people and see converts made by the grace of God and see the church flourish like it did in Corinth and Ephesus and so on and so forth. So not everybody who plays basketball is good.

Not everybody who shoots foul shots is good. I was a point guard for the University of Rhode Island, and we beat UConn in a playoff game in my senior year and went to the NCAA tournament. I think I'm somewhere in the top three or four still for a foul-shooting percentage for a career and for a given year.

So the coach liked that I was holding the ball as point guard because if they fouled me, we had a fair chance of getting some points out of it. But there's some guys like do not foul that guy because he will send a brick up there at the rim. Not everybody who plays plays well.

Not everybody who shoots shoots well. Not everybody who pastors pastors well. Not everyone, look, it is what it is.

Not everyone who preaches preaches well. It's just like that. Come on, we all know that.

Some guy will make you listen like we just did and hang on every word. Another person will speak and put you to sleep. And they're not preaching false doctrine.

It's just there's no anointing, no life, nothing coming from the heart. They're not competent ministers of the new covenant because remember, it's all judged by fruit. Wisdom is justified by her children.

These are just the facts of life that we have to face. God has to help us as our brother just said. We're gonna be more competent than ever ministers of the new covenant.

How many wanna be more competent, do it better than ever? Wave your hand at me. I wanna do it better than I've ever done it before. I know I do.

I wanna do it better. Not doing it so good, but God's gonna help me to do it better. He's gonna help you to do it better.

So what are the secrets of it? So how do you get to be a competent? Well, there's many things we've been talking about. Preach the word and care about people and all this. We've discussed that yesterday, Ravi and then Brother Francis and I wanna bring this thought to you today.

When Jesus called the disciples, he went up on a mountain. The Bible says he had been fasting and praying over the mountains. He went up in the night and he called those that he wanted into the ministry.

That means you and me. You did not call him. You didn't volunteer for this if you're a real minister.

What an amazing truth. He called Jim Simbala into the ministry. I'm one of three children and was the worst Christian of all the three.

My brother was a stronger believer. I think my sister was too. I wasn't even a strong believer in college.

I was all wrapped up with basketball and trying to be a big man on campus and all that foolishness. Didn't live strong for the Lord and yet he didn't call my brother or my sister. He called me in the ministry.

Isn't there something awesome about that? How many are so thankful God called you into the ministry? Aren't you? I mean, what did he see? What does he see when he looks down? I mean, he called Peter. He called, I mean, Thomas, who would doubt till the end and so on. But he called them.

He could have chosen 12 trained in rhetoric rabbis to follow him. He didn't. He chose fishermen, tax collectors, losers.

The whole part that Christianity struggled with at the beginning was these guys were such losers that people were, you know, from Nazareth, Jesus from Nazareth. These guys are from the Gentile-dominated Galilee, the northern part of Israel. And fishermen and, I mean, tax collectors, these are losers.

What do you tell? They're in charge of world missions? This is the best you can pick? It was ludicrous. But God did that on purpose so that we would have to trust in him. They would have to trust in him.

If you were a fisherman all your life and you stood up to preach on the day of Pentecost, who would you be depending on? No training, nothing. Just, oh God have mercy, help me. And on top of that, denied the Lord 40 days earlier, 50 days earlier.

That's heavy. But anyway, he called us and we've responded by the grace of God. Now notice what he called them to.

Not to preach first. To be with him. Then that he might send them out to preach.

And thirdly, that they might have power over evil spirits. Here was the calling, the original calling of the first 12 disciples slash the apostles, whatever. Number one calling.

Don't go anywhere, don't build anything. Don't talk to anyone. You be with me.

Then I'll send you out to preach. And then I'll give you authority over evil spirits. I don't know why this just came to me, but because there's people who don't believe in these things.

I wanna tell you, and I think it's gonna happen more and more now, we just had another encounter with some evil spirits just last week here. Somebody came in possessed. But there was a prayer meeting a lot of years ago and God has given us authority over evil spirits.

First of all, let's take that literal approach our brother just pointed us to. How many believe there are evil spirits in the earth? Okay. And that people are possessed.

What does that mean? Controlled. Just like people are, some Christians and churches are full of the Holy Spirit, controlled, i.e. controlled by the Spirit. Some are not, like Laodicea.

One of the qualifications for being a deacon was you had to be known to be full of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, all believers are not. Paul says in Ephesians, keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Obviously, why would he say that if all Christians are at all times filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit? But he's given us authority over people who are controlled and influenced by evil spirits. So this prayer meeting a lot of years ago in another building that we were in, they came and told me, someone called me during the day and said, look, there are two of us, we're in the choir, a brother and a sister, siblings. We got a friend.

We got a friend, this girl, she's on drugs, she's messed up, she's in gangs. She's just a messed up young lady. If we bring her tonight, we've been trying to get her to church.

If we can get her to church, would you pray for her? Could the church pray for her? I said, yeah, that happens a lot. So they are sitting out there with her. I don't know that, I'm not aware of it, but it was written down for me to remember.

We have some little praise and worship, and before we get going in the service to pray for other needs, I remember, oh, that girl's been brought here. So I say, okay, there's a girl congregation that's been brought here. She's struggling with drugs.

I hope she doesn't mind me saying that, but we're gonna pray for her that God would deliver her. But what they didn't tell me was that the girl's mother and family or whatever gotten into voodoo, hoodoo, santaria, all this stuff, bathing her with herbs, saying incantations over her and all the rest. They didn't tell me any of that.

So they come out of their seats and they're walking down the middle aisle, the brother and the sister next to this short little girl, and she's walking down. And when she gets about 10 feet from me, I get a warning from the Holy Spirit, an outright alarm. Something's gonna happen.

Something's gonna go down. And my heart starts to pound and there's nothing. The girl's got her head down, they're walking up, and there was a female evangelist from Puerto Rico who was visiting the prayer meeting that night.

And I said to her, Sister Cortese, come and help me pray for this young lady. And she got up and she must have sensed something, but she, because as she just started walking towards me, now the girl's five feet away from me, and she just says, Jesus, just Jesus. And at the name of that, mention of that name, this little girl, not even five foot, three inches tall, five foot two, she explodes, rushes me.

I was up against the front of the platform. It wasn't like this. It had a facing to it.

She drives me against it with her hands on my neck. And suddenly she loses all, no personality. And suddenly these evil spirits start screaming out through her mouth at us.

Leave her alone. You'll never have her. Leave her alone.

She's ours. Get away from her. And she's just clawing at me and panic all over the church.

I mean, not panic, but people praying, you know, hiding their head. I don't know what they were doing. But she's just got her hands on my throat and suddenly everyone rushes, you know, and I toward the front, the deacons and the people in the front, and I take her hands off of me and to get her off of me.

And as I'm pulling her away from me, she takes her little hand on my, I had a dress shirt, not a button down shirt, a dress shirt, you know, starch dress shirt. She ripped the collar off of my shirt like it was tissue

paper. And I throw her down on the ground and they're just screaming.

And we're telling them, shut up. You be quiet in the name of Christ. You're not talking here.

You shut up. And her eyes are rolling and everyone's praying. And I lean over her and she spits in my face twice.

And we got a Holy Ghost rumble going on right there. I mean, it was on. And I had a deacon, a precious man named Isaac Calderon from Puerto Rico.

He was there praying. We're all over her. The church is praying and she's a little more quiet, but she's thriving, fighting.

Took five people to hold her down, okay? And he taps me on the shoulder and we're praying and I go, what's wrong? And he goes, pastor, I think she's demon possessed. It was a prophet. He was a prophet.

That's the truth. It wasn't funny then, but afterward I thought, oh, you can't make this stuff up. Well, anyway, five minutes later, the Lord had set her free.

You know, the name of Jesus and faith in the name of Jesus is more powerful. So, I just want you to know these things because these things are real. And you encounter them.

You don't back up. You're not afraid of anything. We're not afraid of anything.

Greater is he that sent us than the one that sent the world. So, five minutes later, she stood up, kind of came to where she was. I remember the tears glistening in her eyes.

I held up her little hands, her arms, and we all began to sing, oh, the blood of Jesus. Oh, the blood of Jesus that washes white as snow. She's converted.

She served the Lord. And all these years later, she was living in Pennsylvania for a while. Now, she's back in New York and she's working here at the church.

I want you to see her. Come here, come on. Come on out, Diana.

Come on, let's praise Jesus. Hallelujah to Jesus, whom the Son sets free. It's free indeed.

Okay. Thank you, Diana. Thank you, Diana.

And you know what? Just while she's still there, look at me, Diana. She never bought me a shirt. She owes me a shirt 20 some years.

Girl is cheap. She will not buy a shirt. Man, can't get a shirt from that girl.

God is awesome, isn't he? Well, anyway, but let's just remember this now. Let's see what this is about. Don't anybody here ever be afraid when Satan manifests himself? Probably as we go on in time, there'll be more and more manifestations like that.

And especially if revival comes to your church and God begins to do things, there will be satanic manifestations because every time Charles Finney had a revival in upstate New York, he wrote, it seemed like the local insane asylum was emptied out. There would be all kinds of attacks and weird

manifestations, Satan imitating the Holy Spirit or just outright attacks like that. We never back up.

We never back up. We're ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he gave us authority over evil spirits.

Now, let's just look at these first two. The calling was, first of all, that they might be with him. That's where a lot of us fail, isn't it? We're not with him.

We're with football games. We're with basketball games. And because of the lack of fellowship that we have with the Lord, we fail to preach like we should, be led like we should, have authority like we should.

You know, people who spend time with God, just things happen. My late friend David Wilkerson, he spent a lot of time with God. He was an imperfect individual.

He made mistakes, but he preached a lot of great messages from this pulpit and the other building and in this building. But Nicky Cruz did get saved. Drug addicts were set free.

Teen challenges all over the world. And it wasn't because he never made a mistake. He told me about plenty of mistakes.

He told me about plenty of mistakes he made, but he spent time with God. In fact, if you study church history, you'll find all the men and women that God has used, they're not all Arminians, they're not all Calvinists. The same time God was using John Wesley and Charles Wesley to shake England, some people think to save England, and the Methodist movement began.

The same time he was doing that, their friend George Whitfield, strong five-point Calvinist, was being used in the Great Awakening here in America. So which side does God favor? Maybe both are wrong. Maybe the Calvinists are wrong and the Arminians are wrong.

Maybe there's a way of looking at this that we can't comprehend, because the Bible does say we know in part. So obviously we don't have all the answers. First Corinthians 13 says we know in part.

So we don't know everything. But what distinguishes all these people is they spent time with the Lord. And not just talking.

You know, that's a problem with prayer. We've made prayer too much talking. But there's a word in the Greek language, there's one word for petitions, there's another word for intercessions, there's another word for bringing requests to the Lord, but there's one general word in the Greek language that covers all intercourse between your soul and God.

It's just contact with God, just to sit in God's presence. And not talk so much, because listen, does he already know what we need before we say it? Is that correct? So what do you think would be more important? To talk to God, which we must, you have not because you, not because God decreed you shouldn't have it, it's just we didn't ask. So there's a time to ask.

But boy, you would think it'd be better to listen than to talk. Wait, my soul, upon the Lord. Wait.

You don't think Jesus was on those mountains at night and all the time he spent in prayer, he got up before dawn? You don't think he was talking all that time? I'm sure he spoke to the Father, but I bet he was listening, because remember, he didn't know where to go, he didn't know what to do, he was helpless.

Remember he said, the things I say, things I do, I only do what the Father shows me. Where did the Father show him that? When he was alone? I believe possibly whole days were mapped out for him.

He knew what dead person to raise up, he knew what people to heal, and he knew what not to do, where not to go. But he could only get that leading, and remember he also said, the words I say, I don't, you think I make these things up? Even though he was the Son of God, he said, I only speak what I hear the Father say. Where did he hear all of that? Alone with the Father.

Do you notice that when Paul got converted, the Lord blinded him? That self-righteous Pharisee persecuting the church, that learned man in doctrine of the Old Testament, do you notice that he blinded him? When he knocked him off the mount on the road to Damascus, and then for three days, he cut him off from the physical world, no food, and he was blind. What do you think was going on those three days? All this revelation was coming to him, all these things. You know Andrew Murray said, your whole world is your heart.

Everything that God is gonna do, the kingdom of God is within you. It all has to happen in your heart before anything can be acted out or worked. And that's why Satan will distract us, discourage us, and keep us from being just with Jesus.

You know, you know how much I love my grandson Levi. He was in my house a few weeks ago, and I babysat him, and he sat on my lap, almost two years old, from Ethiopia, cutest little guy. And he sat on my lap, and I put my arms around his chest, and just holding him made me so happy that you couldn't believe.

He can't talk yet, he's learning a lot of words. He can't communicate with me. I can't say things he could understand.

He doesn't even understand probably, I love you. But just holding him made me so happy. If I'm a wicked man, and I love to hold my grandson, what does God feel when he holds us? Just holds us.

You just make priority, I'm gonna be with him. I'm gonna be with him. Did you ever notice in 1 John, John says, I write you all these things, we saw him, we heard him, we touched him, and all those things.

We write all these things, not that you would have relationship with him. They were writing to Christians. Christians already had relationship with him.

You know, everybody's stressing that Christianity is not going to church or trying to do good works. Christianity is about relationship. Am I correct? That's true.

But we're missing the other part. John says, we write you these things that you might have fellowship with us, not relationship. Well, you already have relationship, you're believers.

But I'm writing this, that you might have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. And that word fellowship, as you know, means mutual sharing and communion and the most intimate kind of intercourse between our souls and God. Paul says, John says, that's what I'm writing you for, that you have fellowship.

Don't you think the biggest lack, and why there's not much prayer meetings in churches and pastors can become insipid and mechanical and not cut to the chase, is because there's so little fellowship with God. Because when you spend time in God's presence, when you come out, there's a bite to your words in the

good sense of the word, not condemnatory, but there's a cuttingness, there's a wisdom, there's a radiance, there's a glory. I mean, isn't it amazing that Moses had that little tent, and he would go outside the camp and he would go into the tent, what was the tent called, anyone remember? The tent of meeting, and what did he do in there? He just talked to God and listened.

And Joshua knew what was up, he had the right priorities, Joshua would hang out, and when Moses left, he would just be in there, and I can assure you, he wasn't talking much. He was just saying like, oh wow, this is heavy, in God's presence. Just be in God's presence.

Open up this book, read from it, let God talk to you, just in God's presence. One of the things that helps you do, which I think is so important, is by spending time with God, we learn where we're at. I would like to encourage all you pastors that the most important thing facing you as you leave, I want you to think about this, is, remember we said yesterday that the doctor does not prescribe anything until he knows what the problem is, if there's any.

He gives a physical, blood pressure, cholesterol, all of that, why? Because based on the condition, only then can you know what the medicine is. Am I correct? Now, the same is true spiritually. Jesus wrote seven letters to seven churches in Revelation.

Every letter is different. Why? Because every church is different. That's why when you hear people say the pseudo-prophetic, this is what the Lord is saying to the church, the Lord is saying 10,000 things to the church depending what church you're in.

If you're preaching legalism, he's trying to get Galatians and Romans into you. If you have no love for black people and people or others, he's trying to give you a message of love. If you're permitting false teachers in the church, he's trying to say something else to you.

If the church is prayerless, he's trying to say something else to you. The doctor doesn't prescribe a general prescription for everybody, no. You gotta know the problem.

And if you were the leadership in Laodicea, you didn't get the message to Ephesus that you lost your first love. You got something a little bit more between the eyes. You're neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, I'm gonna vomit you out of mouth.

Now, Jesus was saying that, but he wasn't saying that to Thyatira. He wasn't saying that to Pergamum or Sardis or Philadelphia. Depending on the church, that's the message.

So I would suggest to you, how in the world can I pastor the Brooklyn Tabernacle well? Unless I spend time with God and get his evaluation of my church. Not what people think. You all come, you say complimentary things.

That's fine, I thank God, but I know a little bit better, and so do the leaders here. We got a lot of problems. We got a lot of things God has to do and change us, starting with me.

So I gotta get alone with God. How else am I gonna hear it? I gotta get alone with God and have the Lord show me our strengths. Remember the strengths in some of the churches? Ephesus, I know your work and your labor and your endurance, and you don't permit people talking nonsense, preaching false teaching.

I know that, I commend you for that. So there are commendations we can get from the Lord, but then he probes, like Paul would always start with compliments and then go to the problems in his letter. So it is with Jesus.

The commendation and then the problem. So how does Jesus, as I wrap this up, how does Jesus look at your church? Wouldn't that determine what you preach on? I, for the life of me, can't get my arms around the idea, and I've talked to some men I trust who have written great books and commentators. I can't get the idea of what's the big thing about laying out what you're gonna preach for the next two years and know exactly what you're gonna do.

You know, you can really cheat in preaching. The hard part of preaching is not getting three points and a conclusion together. You think Ravi Zacharias and Francis Chan with their minds, if you put them in the corner with a Bible and gave them a passage, within seven minutes, they will have three points and a conclusion, and it'll be good.

But is it what Jesus would speak to the church? In other words, if Jesus were gonna speak this coming Sunday, what would he say to the Brooklyn Tabernacle? Shouldn't I have some pursuit of that in my life? Doesn't he know what the devil is cooking up and where the devil might attack so I can cut Satan off before he even manifests himself? Because the Holy Spirit knows all things. And can I dress myself to the weaknesses, the discouragements in people? There's two great ways to really know what to preach on and not go by this cutting-edge business. I just wanna say this about the new school, old school.

Is that the most ridiculous discussion? Are you new school or are you old school? Oh, they sing those songs, they're like dinosaurs. Oh no, they're cutting-edge. We only sing a song if it's been written within the last 48 hours or whatever, you know.

Is that what this is about? We only do lights and all of this, because what, you just have a regular meeting? I mean, that's a little weird to me. Jesus was born in a manger. They were in an upper room when the church was born.

He died on a cross, and I have to have a light show or I can't build a church. But here's my point, here's my point. I don't care new school, old school.

If people get converted and they love the Word of God and they love to pray and they love people of all races, hey, I'm for you. I'd like to sit and learn how I could do it better. But if that's not happening, what does it matter if you're new school or old school or shouting when you preach? Or quiet with a tear in your voice or whatever? It's not style.

Christianity is not style. Christianity is Jesus Christ. It's, come on, let's put our hands together.

It's the Word of God. It's the Holy Spirit. Checking style points is such a waste of time to me.

I know people who have gone down this new road, that new road, 40 days of purpose-driven, then they're gonna copy this church and this church and that church. And my friend Rick Warren preached here once on a Tuesday night, and I told him, I would say this if he were here, I told him up in my office, we were chatting right in this building. And I said, you know, Rick, you mentioned tonight that you met God, you had a fresh meeting with God.

And you came to a crisis in your life and you met God, and then God changed the ministry and now here's what you've done in how he led you in that church. But brother, I can assure you, I'm traveling around the country, I'm telling you as a friend, people miss the point about meeting God in a new way. They're just following what you do in your church and they try it for two years and it doesn't work and they wanna take a gun to their head and leave the ministry.

So then they try some other formula. Is this what Christianity is gonna come to? Following paradigms, I hate that. I can't stand that.

You mean God's not big enough to tell you what you should do in your church? You have to copy me or Francis Chan? Come on, can we say amen to that? God's gonna give you the leading. Because some of you, you're gonna start laying hands on buildings and handing out food and buying meat and all the rest, you hear that? Listen, wake up, wake up, listen, look at me. That's what God told him to do.

You think for 2,000 years in Christianity that's what everyone's been doing? You think that's what Spurgeon did? No, everybody, different strokes for different folks. Who said that, Muhammad Ali, right? Different strokes for different folks. But we have to be led by God and the only way we're gonna be led by God is we spend time with God.

How are you gonna be led by God without listening and being with him? Hey, listen, I preach sermons without spending time with God and I'm a third of the way through them and I wanna just commit Harry Carrey, just end it. I just like, oh, this is horrible. And you know why it's horrible? It's not horrible because I'm preaching false doctrine, because I'm empty, I'm hollow.

You ever preach a hollow sermon, Pastor? No one said amen, but. Father, forgive them, they're lying right in the house of the Lord. We've all preached hollow stuff, come on, haven't we? That same thing about with the choir, they need to spend time with God or their singing is gonna be just music.

Music's gonna change a crack addict. Somebody hooked on Oxycontin, they're gonna get changed by a chord or cleverness from me. Where would you find that in the book? No, he called them first that they might be with him, just have fellowship with him.

Then that he might send them out. So from fellowship comes direction. Where would they send them out? He tells you that.

When would he send them out? That was up to him. The Israelites were led for 40 years. The cloud never followed them.

Anybody here contemplating a building program or doing anything involving with money, I wanna reiterate this to you. God is not paying for your whim or your fancy. There's not a verse in the world, you can quote all you want.

My God will supply all of our need. Yeah, your need according to how he's led you. But you cannot go and just build anything because you're one of the king's kids.

No, the Israelites for 40 years followed the cloud. The cloud didn't follow them. And if you would have gone up to them and said, yo, Joshua, how long are you gonna be here? Hey, we don't know.

Are you gonna be here like a month, a week, four years? What are you gonna do? Look, you see that up there? When that moves, we move. When it stays, we stay. What can I tell you? Come on, am I right? You're laughing, am I right? Say amen if I'm right.

When you went up to Peter, James, and John, and Capernaum and say, man, you've been here for like a week, 10 days, haven't you? How long will you be here? We don't know. When he walks, we follow. Where he goes down the road, we go.

We're his disciples, we follow him. The Lord doesn't need creative thought from any of us. He's God.

Why would he need my creative thought? My thimble brain, your thimble brain? He's almighty God, he knows everything. He's just looking for people who are sensitive to just follow where he leads, and it simplifies life. What is God's will? What is God saying? Do you have to figure it out? Just find it out, not figure it out.

Find it out by fellowship with God. And did you know what? Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. I've run into spiritual fatigue because you, I don't spend time with God, run out of gas.

You know, you do, you do, you do, you preach, you preach. And then, you just feel fatigued. People start to irritate you.

Instead of counseling them, it's like, get out of my face, I can't take anymore. You know, and that's, it's all a function of time with him. Listen to me, brothers and sisters.

The first calling on our lives is not to do a thing. It's to be with him. You know, about three years ago, I had a meeting with the Lord in the room which I want to conclude a story with, but I had a meeting, oh yeah, at the same, oh no, different time.

I had a meeting with the Lord, a profound meeting with the Lord. He visited me in this little room I have on the top floor of my house. And I got a baptism of peace.

Something happened in my soul and in that little room that I actually got frightened because it was like supernatural. It was, and I said to the Lord, as best as I'm telling you as I experienced it, like, what is this, Lord? He said, this is peace. Well, you don't think I know what peace is? I preach about peace, you preach about peace.

I had no idea what peace was. This thing went so deep inside of me just by being with the Lord. And he spoke to me and I felt him say to me, don't preach with notes from now on.

Well, I had preached with notes all my life. Something, you know, a skeleton, something so you get lost, you know, you can find out where you're at. But I felt the Lord speak to me, not anyone else.

I don't tell anybody else to do this because you have to get what you're supposed to do from God. We're not up here today to tell you how to do church. Oh, I can't stand that phrase.

How to do church, oh Lord, deliver us. So what happened to me was, so for three years I've never had notes. But here's how it's helped me.

First of all, I got to spend more time with God or else I'm lost. Because unless I spend time with him, I'm baked, cooked. Number two, what I was doing in my notes was I was getting secondary points from the

scriptures.

I grew up, because I didn't go to seminary, a vast library at home and hear Puritan writings in 1600, 1700, 1800, the Reformation, just all over, very eclectic. But the Puritans instilled in me, you make a point and then you bring other verses to back up that point. So when I would make a sermon, I would like, here's what I feel God wants me to bring out.

Now what should I reinforce that with? Oh yeah, there's that verse in Peter or there's this and that. Well what I was doing was I was saying verses in truth that wasn't in mi corazon, in my soul. They were just intellectually there like to thicken the message.

So now I have to fill myself with the word of God and then what I speak, I have to feel it or it won't come to me. So I'm making less points, but I feel them more. Now to you, with your expertise, I can make more points and ramble around, but to the average audience, it's like Lord, not only put it in my heart what you want me to say and it has to be simple, how much can my heart take? But I'm not gonna speak anything I don't feel.

I'm not doing that. I am not speaking anything. I did that for too many years.

Was it true? Yes, but there was no passion and it doesn't, listen, if you don't feel strong about it, how would the listeners feel strong about it? It could be a true point, but it's not gonna hit the mark. So the other thing is application is the hardest part of preaching. So now I'm totally dependent, as Brother Francis was saying in his life, I'm so dependent now, I tell the Lord, whatever the application or example is, you have to give it to me on the fly because you just have to help me.

I can't memorize all these things. I can't figure it all out. So here's how I wanna tell you about sitting in God's presence.

This project, this was a rundown theater, although it's humongous. It's in total disrepair. When we first came to look at it, it was four theaters, big, huge leaks in the ceiling.

The owners didn't care about it. They thought they would demo it and build a huge skyscraper here. So first couple of times I came in there, I came in there with Tony Evans and a couple other people after we had purchased it.

My friend Dave Wilkerson came and looked at it. He gave me an affirmative word. In fact, God bless him, he whirled at me and out in that lobby, and this place was filthy, broken down, we had rats so big they carried attache cases in the New York Times.

They would just go to work with a little case and a newspaper. That's New York City rats. We don't play here.

And he whirled at me and said, I believe this is where you should move. If you have the faith to get a contract, I'll give you \$250,000. And Pat Robertson, right around that time, I appeared on the program and he committed, and he's not a close friend or anything like that, I was just on the program for second time or whatever.

He sent me out of nowhere without me asking a million dollars. So we were like, God is saying move ahead. A million dollars is like a confirmation, wouldn't you say? That's your basic confirmation.

So we're moving ahead, but nothing costs what they say it will cost. How many know that? Nothing. And then we got hooked up with the unions here in New York, which is like dealing with the Cosa Nostra.

And very, very bad things going on in here. I don't wanna go through that. That was a nightmare for years.

So we have to fix this building, huge job. We'd always have a deadline. And the liaison working on our staff, interior design person, working with the contractor and the unions would say, they're walking off the job unless you come up with \$700,000.

They're gonna walk off the job unless you come up with this. And this would go on like every three months. I can't tell you, it just beat down.

And I'm not a construction guy, hardhead guy. I would rarely come here. I'm trying to pastor a church and start other churches and do what God called me to do.

Because projects can siphon your energy away. Do I get an amen? You gotta be careful of that. God didn't call you to be a contractor.

God called you to be a man of God, woman of God. So my wife's mother gets sick with pancreatic cancer and she goes away for the longest period of time we'd ever been apart since we married, 17 weeks. She's down in Florida.

I visit her. She comes up once or twice. I go down more.

But she had to nurse her mother. It was a complicated situation. And she has a rheumatic heart.

So she's calling me and her mother is losing control of her functions and whatnot. A lot of messy stuff. So Carol's like, just on the phone, screaming, crying.

And I'm alone. And the pressure of this, ministry, just all the things Brother Francis mentioned. So traveling some.

I'm going into church on a, no, so tired. I'm gonna stay home one day and I get a call. You need \$1.2 million.

If you don't, we don't have it in five days. They're walking off the job. You're gonna have a church 85% done.

That's bad, right? Can't get a C of O, you can't have a church. My wife's away. Where are we gonna get that? I have no national pulpit.

We have no wealthy millionaires in our church. Here we go again. But I'm beat down.

So I say to the lady, the sister, okay, I'm coming. I'll come in. I'll get dressed and come in.

I wanna stay home today and rest. I'll come in. So I hang up, I'm getting dressed and the Lord, I believe, speaks to me and says, where are you going? Where am I going? I'm going to church.

No, like as in job, as in \$1.2 million that we need. Wouldn't it be good to be in church if you had that need? Don't do it. Just be with me.

I can't do that. No, just be with me. Don't go.

Just be with me. So I call into the church. I'm not coming.

House is empty. I go up to that top floor, same little room, chair that I pray in, sit in, kneel at. I sit down.

I remember the day like it was yesterday. Have a big, giant print NIV Bible. Put it on my lap.

It's about 20 to 10. And I say, God, if you don't speak to me, you don't help me, I can't make it. You ever been beat down? Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you a question.

You ever been beat down? Beat down by life, beat down by the ministry. I was hanging by a thread. And now \$1.2 million.

Who can I call? I don't know anybody. I just sit and I never left that room. Except to go to the bathroom, I never left that room till 20 to six at night.

Oh, it got good. He started to talk to me from his word. I poured out my soul to him.

That didn't take that long. He started just ministering to me. You ever have the Lord just minister to your heart? Like David found strength in the Lord his God.

I was there for Samuel 30. I can't tell you what transpired, but I was doing my first calling. For he called them by name, and he called them that they might be with him.

What are you gonna speak that you don't first receive? What gift of the Spirit is gonna operate unless you first get it fine-tuned alone in God's presence? How you gonna hear his voice unless you're listening? How we gonna have authority when we preach unless we've been with the Lord? You know the commentators say there's that double meaning to Acts chapter three, and they took notice of Peter and John that they had been with Jesus, and there's like a double meaning. They were numbered with Jesus, but then we can take the spiritual application. They took knowledge of them.

These guys been with Jesus. Don't you want people to say, I find that that's the greatest strength for our authority as leaders, that people know we've been with Jesus. Do we make mistakes? Yeah, I make the most, but people, if you've been with Jesus, God will validate you and vindicate you.

Remember Moses, he would just spend time with God and got to be such a good friend of God that when his brother and sister started complaining because he married an Ethiopian woman, a Kushite woman, not knowing that the Kushites are some of the top people in the world, that's where baby Levi came from, but they had this racial thing or whatever thing, how dare you not marry a Hebrew or whatever, and Moses had spent so much time with God, was so sure of God that when they were saying that, he just bowed on his knees and didn't say a word. He fell on his face. When you attack someone and they don't answer back and fall on their face before God, you better get out of town.

You gotta get moving because something bad is gonna happen. Can we put our hands together for that? Something bad is gonna happen. So I left the house, I left the room at 20 to six, go out and have some dinner by myself.

Oh, by the way, round of five, 10 after five, about an hour and a half before I left, I got a call, I had my cell phone there. I got a call. During the day while I was waiting, God supplied \$1.2 million.

People called in, wait, people called in. Somehow it just came all together. And I didn't ask a soul.

I was just doing what I was called to do. Close your eyes real quick. Anybody here under tremendous financial pressure, come up out of your seat real quick, come on.

Every pastor, wife, whatever, personal or church, get out of your seat and come up here, stand here. Can't live with that pressure. You gotta give it to God.

Casting all of our cares upon him. Be anxious for nothing, 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 mind.

Peace, peace, wonderful peace. Come on, everybody. Under the gun, don't know how I'm gonna make it.

You're gonna make it. Come on, you're gonna make it. God's gonna help you.

God's gonna bring you through. But what we're gonna do today is just make a commitment to the Lord by his grace. Lord, my first priority is gonna be spending time with you.

If you aim for the money, you won't get the money, nor will you have a blessing in your ministry. But if you just aim at being with him, he'll take care of everything. What? Someone's gonna wanna be with God and spend time with him and then God's not gonna help them in the other horizontal areas of their life? Come on, that is impossibly.

It's impossible. Father God, I pray a prayer over my brothers and sisters. They're not gonna live in fear.

They're not gonna live, we're not gonna live anxiety ridden. We're not gonna bite our nails and lay awake at night because you give your beloved sleep. We're handing this to you because it's too big for us to carry.

God, you know how that day broke me, beat me down, how I went up to that room so defeated, so hanging by a sliver of a thread. But Lord, just spending time with you changes everything. Help us to believe that.

Give us the grace to do it. Get our priorities straight. You didn't call us to do first, you called us to be with you first.

Then when we go out, we'll do maybe even less, but accomplish more. Save us from just frantic activity that has no touch of God on it. Save us from all the distractions of the technological age.

We need to text less and listen more, email less and listen to your voice more. So now meet the needs of my brothers and sisters, but I'm not even concerned about that. I know you're gonna do it.

If we wanna be with you first, you'll supply all of our needs. Lord, we thank you for what you did this morning. Thank you for your word.

And he called them that they might be with him, then that he might send them out to preach. And he gave them authority over evil spirits. Thank you that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

Thank you that we can be a blessing through absorption. By being in your presence, we can come out with the Shekinah glory, as it were, shining out through us, Lord. Let that love radiate today and help us to

encourage each other even at lunchtime.

Lead us even as to how to have lunch and who to have it with, we pray it. We pray over the food now, Lord. Bless the food, no matter where everyone eats.

Bless the food. Edify our bodies, strengthen us so we can serve you. Bring everybody back at two o'clock, safe and sound.

We pray it in Jesus' name. And everybody said, amen. Let's give God one last hand clap.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24066.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jim-cymbala/general-session-2-w-pastor-cymbala/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net