

Leadership Question Answer

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala addresses the challenges of Bible translation and the importance of unity within the church amidst divisive spirits.

Duration: 1:02:48

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5

Topics: "Sermon Preparation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of studying and learning the word of God. They encourage listeners to engage with sermons and teachings, whether through attending conferences or reading books. The speaker also addresses the issue of time constraints in church services, questioning why people have no problem spending hours on other activities but struggle with longer sermons. They suggest that pastors should focus on leading their congregations into a relationship with Jesus rather than just religious practices. Additionally, the speaker highlights the power of prayer and the impact it can have on individuals and the church community.

Transcript

A person is constantly beat up by King James Only-ists because I use the NIV Bible. They tell me the NIV is not the true word of God. I need your encouragement as I'm getting weary.

I just would like to say this to you. There is a book out by the same man, Greek scholar Gordon Fee. He wrote a famous book that's used in Dallas Theological Seminary and other places called How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth.

Gordon Fee, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth. Any of you ever hear of it, just lift your hand if you've ever heard of it. Oh, most of you.

Well, his most recent book of that ilk, written with a partner, is called How to Choose a Bible Translation for All Its Worth. It's only 190 pages long. I think it's a masterpiece.

He doesn't recommend any one translation. He doesn't bash any. He tells you the strengths, weaknesses, and the approaches, the approach to biblical translation because he's a translator so that people say, no, I just want a literal translation.

I want the New American Standard or the King James because they're more literal. There are no literal translations. All translation involves interpretation and judgment calls.

For example, he points out that in the New American Standard Bible, one Greek word, one Greek word is translated by 17 different English words. Well, what does that Greek word mean? Just make it the same every place. No, the laws of translation are by context and the way it's used, you know, the translation changes.

Well, who has a right to say it? Just make it literal. Well, there's no such a thing. All translation involves interpretation and making judgment calls.

But it gives you a great, if you know that book and digest that book, nobody will ever bother you again. By the way, I was approached, maybe nobody, hardly anyone bothers me about that except we put out one person from the church. It was a King James only person, a very odd, I felt bad for him, but he was causing too much trouble.

He came up to me 10, 12 years ago and said, why are you cheating the people by not preaching, giving them the true word of God? I said, what are you talking about? He said, it's the King James or hit the road or something like that. A businessman looked intelligent and all of that. So I said to him, look, go home and show me one teaching that you can make.

If there's a conspiracy to water down the word of God with the NIV or whatever, go home and find one doctrine that you can teach from the King James that I can't teach from the NIV. Just go home and tell me. Then I'm open that there's a conspiracy to do away with the deity of Christ or this or that or this.

And of course, manuscripts, older ones, newer ones, how translation is done is covered in that book I mentioned. So what he did was, he never came back to me with anything because there is no teaching that you can't teach. So, but he had a fighting spirit.

He had a party spirit. You know, a party spirit is listed in the Bible with adultery and murder and a lot of other terrible things. And a party spirit doesn't mean you wear a party hat and blow one of those things out.

It means a sectarian party spirit. It means a Baptist spirit where the only thing you think is worthwhile is Baptist, that you have a little bit more than everyone else. Or assembly of God or charismatic.

They're the only ones who are in the flow. Nobody else is doing anything for God. Or Calvinist or Arminian or it can be local church, a horrible, abominable Brooklyn Tabernacle cult spirit that the only church that really is doing it right is the Brooklyn.

These party spirit, this little grouping spirit divides the body of Christ in a horrible way. He had a King James cult spirit on him or something. But he kept coming to the church.

So I kept seeing him and his worship. And then he wrote me a letter, the meetings mean so much and all of that. So I saw him one day and I said, listen, my friend, I see you in church all the time, but I remember what you said to me.

And you wrote one letter about how all translations are perversion and all of that, as if the apostle Paul was reading from the King James. So I said, look, I'm happy if the meetings mean something to you. Fine.

But why don't you go somewhere where they preach from the King James? Wouldn't that make more sense if the King James is where it's at? Go to a church with the King James. Don't come here. You know, never hold on to anyone in your church for their tithes or their attendance who's going to cause a problem.

All in favor say aye, because they will bite you. They will bite you. And that shows no faith in God.

So he said, no, I just I meet God every time I come here. I said, even though the preaching is a perversion, I said, OK, but listen, you can stay. But behave yourself, because if we find out that you're causing trouble by talking to people in the church, this nonsense, King James nonsense, we will come after you.

OK, we will come after you. Because anyone who causes division, we don't fool around. Mark those that cause division among them.

Warn them once, twice, then have nothing to do with them. That's the Bible, right? Don't you know that two years went by and the guy became friends with my mother? Not friends like that. My mother's 40 years older than him, 30 years older.

But he became a friend of my mother and drove her up to see a friend of mine, the son of Sam, serial killer David Berkowitz, who's a very godly Christian, wonderful servant of the Lord in prison, took her up there, had pictures with my mother and all that and got close to her. And he kind of like admired me. It was a love hate kind of thing.

Well, don't you know that I find out someone comes to me and says, You know, I've been invited by this man to a special house meeting. House meetings are very dangerous when they're not authorized by the church. He has a house meeting because he's going to tell us the inside scoop about, you know, translations and all that.

I couldn't believe it. Then another person came and warned me and said, I went to this meeting. You would not be happy with it.

He was really pounding people who were not present. OK, so I then went to him. We called him in and I had a pastor do that who had warned him.

Don't don't talk that that smack anymore here. So he he. So then it came to me, says I couldn't.

I have to stand for the truth. I said, fine, stand for the truth, but don't stand for it here. Stand for it wherever you want to go.

But don't don't come in and cause division. That's like those people. The Bible says they creep in unawares.

Right. They don't make their own converts. Most of these troublemakers, these hypo hyper Calvinists and all these people causing division and all that.

They never make their own converts. They couldn't win a soul. Most of them, if their life depended on it, they go where their Christians already are there and they proselytize.

I learned that a long time ago. I tell people sometimes, if you know so much, start your own church. Show me how it's done.

I'll learn from you. Not one has ever taken me up on that. Not one.

So, but that book will help you. Sorry to go off on that tangent here. I'm venting a little bit.

I need therapy. I haven't gotten over that one yet. So, no, but we try to handle things.

Carol just asked, what was it a year ago, Carol? Carol asked somebody out of the choir. Why? Talking. Do they sing good? Maybe.

I don't know. She can judge that. If you're talking, cause division, you can't stay there.

You can't stay in the choir. Because Carol prays and asks God to bless that ministry, which he has greatly blessed. So what are you going to do? While you're singing, you're saying, come Holy Spirit, I need thee.

And because of the divisive spirit, you're saying, get out, Holy Spirit. We don't want you. So what are you going to do? That's why a lot of churches are on this.

You know what you work out on? It's called the, what kind of mill? A treadmill. Are you moving? Yes. Are you going anywhere? No.

That's why a lot of churches are because of division and talking and putting up with nonsense. They're praying, preaching, singing, but they're not going to go much anywhere because Jesus laid down as the first spiritual principle. Please remember this.

I wanted to talk about this today, but it didn't work out that way. But just you think, ponder it. Any house divided against itself cannot stand.

No kingdom divided itself. No choir, no church. No, but I love Jesus.

You still won't stand because anything divided against itself is coming down. First, it's weakened. It's dissipated.

Do you think crack cocaine or an alcohol or stealing money or meeting someone in a motel? Do you think that's what holds most churches back? Of course not. They slay their thousands. What slayed their tens of thousands is this division.

King James bustling among the people and all of that. So we try to be vigilant. Look, we're not running a Paris Island Marine Corps here.

You got to be gentle and kind to people. But once you warn them, as the Bible says, mark those that cause division. You know, somebody here needs to hear this because you need to get the courage from God to face what you're facing.

It is what it is. Mark those that cause division among you. Warn them once.

Warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. So we told this guy, you're not welcome here because you cause division.

You're not building up people. You're pulling the thing apart. That's not right.

If you feel that strongly, didn't I tell you four years before? If you felt that strongly, find a church that would make you happy. Tell anyone who's criticizing, criticizing. Hey, praise God.

You don't like it here. No, your choir is too loud. And they're always lifting their hands.

That's not something I think that's important. Then fine. Go to a church where they don't lift their hands.

You can find them. Find a quiet church. If that's your thing, go wherever you feel like.

But don't go anywhere where you're going to criticize. And then leave. And you're always venting.

And you're always feeling bad. Listen, don't you think we have our own personality here? You were here Sunday. Don't we have our own personality here? Did anyone say to you? Have we ever said to you during this conference? This is the way to do church.

Go home and copy us. Did you hear that ever said here? I don't care what you do where you're there. I just want God to bless you in your church.

Whatever your personality is, go for it. But remember the common goal. Soul saved.

People disciple. The love of God. Spirit of worship and praise.

People loving Jesus. How you get there is your business. God has to lead you.

But divisive spirit, you have to deal with that. Or trouble. Just divisive people.

By the way, somebody also had a question that I'd like to handle. What do I do? It's a lay person here or someone in leadership. I go to my church and I'm so discouraged.

And I go and I go and I pray and nothing's happening. And I leave the church every week discouraged. I just want to tell you my feelings on that.

This is not thus sayeth the Lord. I don't have a verse for you. Although I would have one verse that I would apply.

Because I try to think biblically. The Bible says, let everything be done to edification. If you're not being edified, maybe God is sending you a letter.

Leave. But I cannot see any place in the Bible where you should go to church. If you have any other choice to go someplace else.

Well, no, that's a church I grew up in with my family and my friends go there and all that. Look, you do what you feel. But what I tell people, go to the pastor and leadership.

This is what I think is being done unbiblically. If there is anything unbiblically. Maybe it's just a cold spirit like Pastor Claude.

Wasn't he the bomb today? But Pastor Claude was so good. Let's thank God again for Pastor Claude. So good.

Like that church that he was in that was like a refrigerator. Some churches are like that. Okay.

Or some churches are not, don't welcome visitors. Especially if they're people who are other. I was talking with a precious couple during lunch today.

And a lot of people who pound the Bible. And are all fundamentalist when it comes to scripture. They have no love for a black person.

They have no love for Latino. They have no love. They have no love.

They don't want those people in their church. And if the neighbor changes, they're moving. They will move.

Talk about white flight in terms of housing. Churches have white flight. Old denominations.

They were like that during the civil war, pro-slavery. And although they say they're not that way. Jesus said, you know a tree by its fruit.

Don't go by what people say. Go by how they act. Okay.

My wife had a different background. But my background was the church my mom and dad dragged me to. Was extreme holiness oriented, fundamentalist kind of Pentecostal church.

Baptism in Jesus name or you weren't even a Christian. No makeup. No cutting of hair.

No wearing of red shoes. No, I'm telling you the truth. That was considered worldly.

The men weren't allowed in certain parts of that denomination. Weren't allowed to wear wedding rings. Now to us, if a guy doesn't wear a wedding band here.

We figure he's cruising. We want to talk to him and say. How come you're married and you won't wear a wedding band? Right.

But it was a kind of reverse thing. Now you see with all that fundamentalism and all of that. No, no, no.

The women would have hair down to their bottom of their calves. Never cut it once. Black person come to their church.

Never. Never. So what are you going to do with that theologically? I'm stuck with this verse.

If anyone says he loves God and doesn't love his brother. He's a liar and the truth is not in him. You can have all the holiness standards and doctrinal purity that you claim to have.

If you don't love people who Christ died for. Were we not talking about that today, brother? How in the world Christ died for someone you don't want him in your church. Let me get this right.

Christ shed his blood for a human being and you don't want him in your church. But you want the blessing of the Holy Spirit. You have a problem.

I have a problem. If that's in me. Go to all the leadership conferences you can.

You can work up any kind of sound you want in the worship. God is a God who looks at the heart. Amen.

You mentioned prayer stations. Yesterday and and in the. About and the prayer band.

What about prayer walking? Do you practice that also? We don't do prayer walks here. Main reason is anyone wants to do a prayer walk. Praise God.

Walk and pray. But I don't find them in the Bible. I don't see him in the New Testament.

I'm not a believer in prayer towers or anything like that. I don't believe we need to go in the basement. I don't believe we need to go up high.

I don't believe in anything else. But what I see in the New Testament, when God's people pray, he's going to do something. Can we all put our hands together for that? He's going to do something.

You want to walk. You want to walk. I saw a group 20 years ago in the city from a para church ministry, and the instruction was be given.

They were using our church, in fact. And there are all these young kids from different parts of the country. Now, when you walk in Manhattan and you pray every place you put your foot, just remember now you possess that for God, because Joshua, you know, and they quoted Joshua.

That's that's not rightly dividing the word of God. If it was that simple, Paul would walk just all through Ephesus and claim the whole thing. Never would have been thrown in prison and all of that.

The mysteries of prayer are only learned by praying and you don't have to walk. I took a long walk the other day because I needed to pray. And sometimes I get tired and sleepy if I go in another position.

So I walk so you can walk and pray. But prayer walks as the answer, pulling down strongholds of certain territories and all of that. I do not see that in the New Testament as a practice.

I don't see it in Jesus's life. I don't doesn't matter if it's an evangelical or charismatic teaching. I want to judge everything by the word of God.

But if someone says, no, we did prayer walks and God blessed it. Praise God. Keep walking.

Keep praying. Do whatever whatever works for you. Right.

But never argue for something that's not found in Scripture. All in favor say aye. Will there be a conference leaders conference in 2011? Yes.

God willing. And I've asked Ravi Zacharias to be here, along with Francis Chan, who's a friend who's preached here. And I want to get some other speakers like that ilk who will really bless us.

And as soon as we know the dates, we've actually pulled some dates together. We'll get that word out to you. We'll let you know first.

Can we get the words to the praise songs? If yes, how? I don't know what song you were thinking about. But again, unless we've recorded a song, I would look at what song has praise and worship on it. Definitely.

I'll say yes has some songs like I adore you. But this last album has some up praise songs and I surrender on it. But otherwise, we don't have sheet music for any of the songs were.

Unless Carol records it, there's no book made. So we really can't help you. I want to study the Bible systematically.

Can you give me some tips also to study it so I can get a systematic approach to the Bible? That book that I mentioned on Sunday to the congregation, did you see me hold up that workbook there? That's excellent. There is a book, a bigger book, a more challenging book called How to Explore the Book by J. Sidlow Baxter. It's older, but it's very good.

There's some excellent study Bibles. The best study Bible I've gotten hold of, this is a TNIV study Bible that Zondervan gave me as a present. They're coming out, by the way, with a new NIV.

The new NIV 2011 is coming out, I think they said in March. But I read sometimes, especially in the Old Testament, from the New Living Translation, and my friend Warren Worsley has come out. I'd agree with every approach he takes on every note.

We're all bound by, or limited, or whatever, by, all of us, by the tradition we grow up in, and other people don't see it that way. But he has a Bible called the Transformation Bible. It's available in there.

That is the best study Bible I've ever seen. Because even this Bible here, sometimes it gives me too much information on the bottom, and it distracts me from the text. What they have done with my friend, Brother Worsley, is they have put his nuggets from his B-series and his commentaries.

Anyone ever read anything by Warren Worsley could just hold up your hand. Good, most everyone. So they put those nuggets on the bottom, and it just opens up certain verses, great introductions to the book, so you know where the books are.

My approach to that is this. You have to find some instrument for yourself or for someone else so that you know the Bible systematically from Genesis to Revelation. You know the history of the Bible, and every book, you know where it fits in the big picture.

That's what you need to know first. And that workbook and some other things can help you. Of course, if you went to Bible school or seminary, you got that, I'm sure.

Although, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, that little book, and then How to Read the Books of the Bible for All Their Worth, another one by Gordon Fee. They're excellent, foundational. How to Approach Scripture.

Can you just apply an Old Testament verse to the New Testament because it's in the Bible? Can you just do that to our situation today? You know, you feel a lot of the false faith teachers and some of the extremes in the charismatic movement, a lot of the error there is formed. They have a lot of truth there in some of the things they say, but one of the errors is taking Old Testament verses said to Israel while they were in the land and applying to us today, and forgetting about the cross and the different covenant that we live under. You know, I'll make you the head and not the tail.

Then what in the world was Paul getting beat in prison if he's the head and not the tail? I know what it is to be thrown in the open sea. I know what it is to have a lot. I know what it is to have a little.

No, you're not going to ever have a little in the Old Testament. The Old Testament covenant is if you obey God and you're there, you always have victory in every battle and all of that. There's no getting thrown in

prison and all of that.

Now, David is a prophetic figure, and you can see in his life the foreshadowing of the new covenant where we have this mystical thing called the cross. If we suffer for him, we will also reign with him, right? So they're very good at that in that book, *How to Read the Bible for its Worth*, because they clearly show that if you're just going to take any Old Testament verse and apply them indiscriminately to the New Testament, you know, I'll make your barns filled and all of this, well, go to Biafra and tell the Christians in Biafra that. Go to Ethiopia where my grandson comes from and just tell or how about all the churches being burnt in Pakistan now? So anyway, you have to my position is this.

No verse from the Old Testament can be preached on unless there's confirmation of its truth in the New Testament. So you can't tell people today, don't eat pork and hold up the Bible and say, put that rib down, you backslider, you can't eat that because in the New Testament, Jesus proclaimed that all food is clean. Amen.

By the way, here's another thing. I'm having a little dialogue or was with a Seventh-day Adventist critiquer who is, you know, at one of those things again. I appreciate the church and the music, but you're just falsely leading the people.

You know, there are Seventh-day Adventist people fall into two groups. Some are like born again, and they understand that there's other people in the body of Christ. I've met them.

They're precious. Whitley Phipps, by the way, is one like that. He's Seventh-day Adventist, worships on Saturday, won't eat pork, but he obviously knows other people are Christians.

But then the hardliners in there, we're all going to hell. We all have the mark of the beast on us because we worship on Sunday. Did you ever notice that in the New Testament, under all the works of the flesh that are listed in several places, Sabbath-breaking is never mentioned? New things are brought in like party spirit, right? And stuff like that, not mentioned so much in the Old Testament.

So you have to understand the covenant. You have to understand the Bible. Then you start building.

And I started building a lot of years ago by reading commentaries or books by spiritual masters on the Holy Spirit, A.B. Simpson, the founder of the Missionary Alliance. Most of his books are out of print. If you can get anything by A.B. Simpson, just read it and be blessed.

Just read it and be blessed. Revival literature has been a blessing to me, commentaries on the book of the Bible so I can dig deeper and understand the Word of God better. But to all the pastors and people who want to teach or preach the Word of God, never stop studying.

The day that you think you know the Bible, you're doomed. How many are just still learning it today, like me? Come on, wave your hand at me. Just learning it now.

I mean, it has no bottom to it. It has such depth. We're all just learning it.

So keep studying and have someone speak in your life. One good thing about books is tapes. Some people are CD listeners, tape listeners, download sermons.

I'm not that kind of person so much, although I do listen and enjoy things. And I need to go to more conferences and hear people speak into my life. But I have a lot of reading that I do where sermons are

being preached, and I sit there as if I'm in the church, and now someone's ministering to me.

And I say, God, talk to me today. And those people I'll meet in heaven one day, most of them are dead. But boy, they have blessed me so much and spoken into my life.

Because when you're giving out, for six years I did four services every Sunday. Six years, four services every Sunday. Nine, 12, three, and six.

Two hours long at least, each service. And they would just put me in a body bag at the end of the day and send me, ship me home somewhere. And now these three services, and then going out and being here, there, and everywhere.

So the question is, if you're always giving out, what a joy to sit and hear Pastor Claude. Oh, my goodness. What a joy to hear Franklin yesterday.

You know, and so all I can recommend is find your way of learning the Bible. But this is what people on Fulton Street and Smith Street are longing for right now. Someone who will love them, who's full of the word of God, right? And is open to the Holy Spirit.

That's all people are looking for. Do you think anyone's out there going, if only someone would come with a PhD. God, send me someone with a PhD.

Or at least an MDiv, because I don't want to just talk to anybody. You think anyone's struggling with crack cocaine? You think anyone's out there thinking that? No. All you have to do is love them with the love of God, have a working knowledge of the Bible, and have faith to follow the Holy Spirit.

What do you think they need where Elsie is in Haiti? You think any of those kids are praying, oh God, send me somebody with a PhD? Just love, a working knowledge of the Bible. Do you ever think that that's why God chose fishermen instead of rabbis to be his 12 followers? Why would he chose fishermen and tax collectors, people who were not that literate in scripture? Because they would have to depend on the Holy Spirit. Which brings me to the final question, which we'll end up with.

How do you handle, by the way, disciple ministries? How long do we study before they become a member? How long is that class? Somebody help me. Seven weeks of classes you take before you become a member. So we, in an interview, to find out where they're coming from, what they know, or have been mistaught or whatever.

And then we have four times a year a ministry preparation class, three consecutive nights of teaching, six, seven, eight hours. On this last one was a class on Mormonism, a apologetic course on Genesis, and one on intimacy with God, knowing God better. And we don't have, then there's Be Transformed that people take.

That's kind of done under the radar and just blessing people left and right. And we have a class on Friday nights for, help me, for those who have been drugs, celebrate recovery. We have a chapter of that.

And a lot of these things only work as well as the people who are leading them. There are no secrets. There's no teaching that if you do it, it just solves everything.

It's God doesn't use systems, he uses people. My pastor's a good man, he's not feeding the people. I've prayed, but nothing's changed.

What should I do? And then it says, assistant pastor, no name. Well, now that's a hard one. Boy, you gotta really pray.

You gotta ask God what you should do. Obviously, talk to the pastor. If I was an assistant pastor and I felt that, go to the pastor gently, lovingly.

This is what I think God wants us to change. You might win him. God could use you or he might turn on you.

And if he turned on you, I see the bind there is if that's your salary, then that's problematic. But you gotta follow your heart to wherever God wants you to go. You gotta follow your heart.

Otherwise, you compromise, you get cynical. The main question that people asked here, which we'll cover this all just in 10 minutes, so that you can be ready for the prayer meeting is, what are your tips for corporate prayer? We want more prayer in our church. We're no model of anything.

You'll be in a prayer meeting tonight and we'll call on God and we'll do our best. But I think we have a lot of room for improvement. I don't think we're praying.

I'm praying and all of us are praying the way maybe we need to, to get secure more of God's blessing. But let's just talk about corporate prayer. The church was born in a corporate prayer meeting.

Is that agreed upon? Say amen. Acts chapter 2, no teaching, no worship, no instruments. They might have been singing, but the place where they were praying was shaken and the church was born.

When the first persecution came on the church with Peter and John being arrested in Acts 4, Acts 3 and 4, they immediately went back to a prayer meeting where they all lifted their voices out loud, like our brother encouraged us, as I have since we've begun. They all lifted their voices together in Acts 4 and they all prayed that God would thwart this persecution. They didn't ask God to stop the persecution.

They just said, God, give us the boldness that we won't, as Franklin Graham said, back up. Jesus cleansed the temple and said it had become polluted and prostituted because he said, my house shall be called a house of what? Prayer. Okay.

I got a letter from a Baptist pastor email years ago who had his church split because he tried to start a prayer meeting. He read my book, Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, was convicted that his church was prayerless and went to the board of deacons and said, we're going to start a prayer meeting. They called it innovating and not being loyal to the tradition of whatever his group was.

And it split the church and 40% walked out because he was having a prayer meeting. Maybe Warren Wiersbe is right. Maybe half the people in our churches are in a lot of churches are not born again.

Because if you're born again, you know, I was holding Levi before. Levi is alive. He's a baby.

He has instincts. He wants to eat. He wants to move.

He breathes. Why? Because he's alive. There's vital signs and instincts you have if you're alive.

If you're not alive, those things are not present in you. It's always seemed strange to me. Again, I don't want to be legalistic about the whole thing.

But someone stopped me the other day and said, you know, your meetings go two hours long. And by the end, the choir sings this, that. And I used to go to a church an hour and 10 minutes or whatever an hour.

Now, there are other people who come and visit us and say to us, I would go to your church. But boy, where I came from, we had church, brother. Three hours and a half, four hours.

We would Jericho march around the church and whatever. So your church is too dead. Well, everyone has to find out where they're comfortable.

Everyone has to find. No, that's what the person said. And that's their view.

They have a right to their view. But it is strange to me this, that someone has trouble with a two-hour meeting. When they rent their movies or they watch an NFL game, do they usually last less than two hours? Isn't that strange? That's an instinct to me that I've been puzzled by.

Right? If we're interested in something, whether it's a movie or a hobby or sports or whatever, the time is not a factor. But then when it would come to things of God, time becomes a factor. And yet we're going to be in heaven one day with nothing but Jesus and his presence.

So that does some soul searching for pastors who face that. Have I brought my people into religion or into a relationship with Jesus Christ? Do they have fellowship with the Lord and do they know the beauty? I mean, Pastor Claude spoke for a good length and then we prayed for a long time after that. I wasn't tired.

Were you? Were you bored? Anyone bored here by anything that happened this morning? No. Why? Because we have an instinct. We love God.

We want to be in his presence. So a couple things here. Let me just say the practical things on the top and then just one foundational thing, which I don't want to be controversial, but I feel I should say this.

First of all, don't copy the prayer meeting you see tonight, because this is after a lot of years of meeting on Tuesday night. It wasn't always like that. I think the prayer meetings are better now than ever before.

Carol had a visitation of the Holy Spirit in the choir practice last Wednesday that I learned of from several people, where God blessed. But you have to realize God always meets us where we are, and all he gives us is the next step. Change does not come overnight.

No acorn becomes an oak tree in the space of a year or a half a year. There's growth in all of us. By the way, you don't learn to preach like Pastor Claude does overnight.

It takes time. You do it. You make mistakes.

You keep seeking God, okay? So wherever you are, that's a question, right? Where are you? Where are you with your church in England? Where are you in your next church? Where are you in your church? What's the spiritual temperature as God sees it? It would seem to me in South Carolina, you got to seek the Lord and say, God, how do you see the church? Not how my denomination sees it. Not how my peers see it. That can all be deceptive and flattery.

Compared to the New Testament, which is our goal, how is my church doing? How is my church doing? Where's our strengths? Where's our weakness? Where has God helped us? Where are we not doing so good? All the letters in Revelation that Jesus wrote. I know your work. I know your labor.

I know this. All the good things. But I have this against you.

You lost your first love. That's Ephesus. And then on and on and on.

One church, no commendation. Laodicea. You have a name.

To one church, you have a name that you live, but you're really dead. You wouldn't know that you were dead because you have a name that you live. But I'm telling you, Jesus, that you're dead.

Okay? So you got to find out where you are. Maybe you're in the first grade. Maybe you're in the fourth grade.

Maybe I'm in the seventh grade. Well, then how do I get to the eighth grade? I just want to go grace upon grace. Didn't God promise to move us from glory to what? To glory? Glory.

So more glory. And it never stops. You never come to a moment where you go, well, praise God.

We got this thing figured out. This is it. No, it's always flawed.

We're all flawed. And it's always the human element mixed in. And we want it to be pure and more of God.

So don't go home and start a prayer meeting unless God leads you. Because I've seen some pastors hurt by going home and trying to start a prayer meeting. And their church was of a spiritual condition where seven people showed up.

And the next week, four. And the next week, two. And there was no spirit of prayer.

And now the pastor feels doubly defeated because he started a prayer meeting and made this big thing about God answers prayer. And, ah, what a rude awakening. And now the church is buzzing about, did you hear about the prayer meeting? He stopped it after two months.

Just couldn't take it anymore. Right? So what I would suggest, you do as the Lord leads you. The Lord will lead you.

The Lord will lead you. Amen? The Lord will lead you. He'll lead us.

Maybe you need to change your Sunday service. Maybe you need to preach less and have an altar service. Someone wrote a question about that, about altar service.

And leave a time to pray. We only took five minutes to pray for our brother. But look at the testimony that has blessed these people.

Okay? So as you preach and you shorten your sermons, you know, if our sermons were going to do it by itself, we would have done it a long time ago. I would suggest we need something more than our sermons. All in favor, say aye.

So we preach. What is an altar service? Well, we don't do that in our denomination. Well, I'm not so interested in your denomination or my background.

I'd like to know what is an altar service? What do we do after Pastor Claude spoke? We had a mini prayer meeting. We had a prayer meeting. We had a prayer meeting.

Now, prayer meetings can be long. Prayer meetings can be short. The staff can gather to pray.

But we gathered to pray. And maybe that will create an appetite in the people that, wow, we just spent time in God's presence and prayed. Maybe they are so carnal in their thinking that if you said, here's the night we're going to pray, Wednesday night we're going to pray, and that's it.

Spurgeon said it's the engine that drove his great church. Come on, everyone, we're going to pray. Maybe they're going to think, pray? Oh, no, I just want to go to church on Sunday.

Then catch them on Sunday. You got to catch the fish where they are. Or maybe do a series as God leads you.

How about a month of Sundays on promises for prayer? Or eight weeks on great prayers of the Bible. Or four weeks on deliverances backed up against the wall. And talk about prayer.

Because what you teach is what you get. If you teach dry unbelief, you will get dry unbelief. If you teach faith and prayer and you lead the people, and then find some godly people, spiritually minded people up in the front at the end so that when the people come forward, someone prays for them and guides them and helps them.

I just say that as a suggestion to you for some who want to see a change but don't know what to do. Because a lot of us, we know changes are needed, but the question is how to do it, Lord. But here's the more controversial but more foundational note.

And I say this with all love and all respect. But as traveling around the country and around the world, I have definitely seen where these verses are the ones that are most applicable to this question. The key to prayer in church is the same key to love in our life or hope or faith or anything else, which is the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

If we undervalue the Holy Spirit, they will not be praying. Oh, you can try to work it up. You can try to get people because they ought to.

But without the Holy Spirit, we're all too carnal to pray. You don't have to say amen. I'll say amen for all of you.

Lord, forgive us, amen. What's my scriptural proof for that? Romans 8, Paul says, for we, first person plural, he includes himself, for we don't know how we ought to pray. But who helps us? The Holy Spirit.

All the stories of revival have been God stirring up people to pray, and then revival comes, and more prayer comes when the revival comes because the Spirit pours out a spirit of grace and supplication. Wherever people are praying, really from their heart, God is working. Or God's going to even do more.

But to try to organize prayer, do it by books and all of that, impossible. Impossible. Books can challenge you.

Books can inspire you. You learn interesting principles. But the Holy Spirit is the spirit of prayer.

He's the one who creates faith. He's the one who gives you utterance. He's the one who gives you liberty.

Instead of praying from your head, you start praying from your heart. That only the Holy Spirit can do that. Otherwise, we're locked in.

We're self-conscious. The Holy Spirit is the key to everything because the only representative God has on planet Earth is the Holy Spirit. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He's not here on Earth except by the Holy Spirit. Where he says, where two or three are gathered, I'll be there, he's not there himself. In the mystery of the Trinity, it's the Holy Spirit who's called the Spirit of Christ.

Jesus is at the right hand of the Father. And when he comes, he comes. And we're going to end up this whole thing called planet Earth.

But right now, God's only representative is the Holy Spirit. And then you read books on preaching or you hear ministers preaching the word of God. I stand on the word.

I'm not one of these modernists. I stand on the word of God. And there's no mention of the Holy Spirit.

I have a friend who went a year and a half to a famous theological seminary, evangelical theological seminary that you all would know of. And in a year and a half, he heard two mentions of the Holy Spirit. Two mentions inspires the scriptures and convicts the world of sin.

End of story. Forget it. You read the book of Acts and tell me if that's the place the Holy Spirit had in the early church.

OK, so let's get down to where the rubber meets the road. Why are we like that? Because denominational traditions have squeezed out the Holy Spirit. Then on top of that, weird things have been done in the name of the Holy Spirit.

And there's excesses always. And the devil uses the excesses to get people to be afraid of the Holy Spirit. But can you tell me, please, who called Elsie to go to Haiti? That was the one country she said she would never go back to.

Am I right, Haiti? Am I right, Elsie? Haiti, she would never go back. So who made her go back? Are you looking at me? I never talked to her about Haiti in my life. Did we ever talk about it? No.

That was the Holy Spirit that put it on her heart. Who do you think gives her the strength to endure and the other missionaries? Who do you think gives her the strength to endure and go through all that? The Holy Spirit. I'm not there.

I'm here and having the need that I have of the Holy Spirit. Without, like Chadwick said, Christianity is hopeless without the Holy Ghost. You can have church.

You can have all this. Why do you think people don't want to be in church, but they'll watch a movie for three hours? Because they're not familiar with the communion of the Holy Spirit. They're not saying like the preacher said.

So that is true. Who follows me this far? Just lift your hand and say, Amen. I follow you so far.

Okay. Now, the excesses of the charismatic movement of time and some of the junk you see on TV, although there's good stuff mixed in there, people are very sincere. But those excesses, the devil's playing us.

He's playing us so that then there'll be no Holy Spirit. Just have a Bible study and go home. And what does it produce? Divorce rate the same as the country now, right? Not much love for people who are different.

See, the Holy Spirit is the only one who can make you love someone who's different than you. Otherwise, the blacks will be with the blacks and the whites will be with the whites. And we're going to talk about God is love.

When the Holy Spirit gets a hold of you, you start seeing people the way God sees them. Come on. This is good.

Come on. You got to say Amen. So we're hopeless without the Holy Spirit.

And that's why, as the minister said so well this morning, we need to be daily renewed by the Holy Spirit. Now, who has the Holy Spirit? Well, all Christians have the Holy Spirit. Remember, the Holy Spirit's a person.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the... Where does the Holy Spirit live? He lives inside of every believer. What's the proof of that? Romans 8. If anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he doesn't belong to Christ. You've been born again by the Spirit.

So every true born-again believer... And by the way, that'll make you challenge your thinking. You would think if someone's born again by the Holy Spirit, there'd be some vital signs that they're alive. Right? Not that they just joined the church.

Right? Their life would be changed. For if anyone is in Christ Jesus, they are a new creation. Why are they a new creation? Because the Holy Spirit lives inside of them.

God's not working with Jim Cymbala. I'm so rotten and ruined and wrecked and messed up that God's never gonna work with me. He only works through me by putting His Spirit inside of me.

God's not changing Jim Cymbala, my fleshly nature, who I am by my birth from Nicholas and Estelle Cymbala. He never works with me. He bypasses me.

I'm too ruined. But He says, I'll put a new Spirit in you. I'll give you a new heart.

And then the change comes as God lives out through us. That's why the Bible is so strong when it says, don't grieve the Holy Spirit and don't quench the Holy Spirit. Why? Because that's our life.

He's the one who communicates everything of Christ to my life is the Holy Spirit. So don't grieve Him. Notice, grieve Him.

He's a person. You can hurt His feelings. Don't quench Him.

Don't put out His fire as some translations have. Okay, so the Holy Spirit lives inside a very true born again believer, which makes you wonder now how that all works. Now, what's the difference between being a

Christian and being filled with the Holy Spirit? Now, there's a lot of positional teaching, which is basically held by much of the evangelical world that I would now just tell you my view of it.

And then you, I don't want to debate with anyone. You search the scriptures, find out what you believe. Everyone not only has the Holy Spirit living in them, but everyone is full of the Holy Spirit.

So don't talk about fullness of the Holy Spirit because then you're going to get into like, who's more spiritual and now you're getting judgmental. And because you allowed meetings, that means you think you're filled with the Holy Spirit and we're more sedate and we're not filled with the Holy Spirit. Okay, I'd like to suggest this to you.

The Holy Spirit is not a gas or a liquid. The Holy Spirit is a person. Am I right? So filled is a bad word.

Are you filled? Because filled makes me think of a glass of water. It's filled, overflowing. And that imagery and that metaphor is okay for some things.

But the Holy Spirit's a person. So when the Bible speaks about being filled with the Holy Spirit, Bonita Afriani, the Smiths in Guyana, Pastor Cristina and her daughter Millie in Dominican Republic who are here today, they need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the sense of being controlled by the Holy Spirit. When someone's full of the devil, what are they really? Controlled by the devil.

The devil's not omnipresent. He can't be inside of everyone. Demons can possess people and we've seen that happen here and overseas.

And seeing God set people free. But it's influence. It's control.

And I would like to suggest to you that not all churches are controlled and strongly influenced by the Holy Spirit even though they're Christians. I'd like to suggest to you that every believer and every pastor is not full of the Holy Spirit in the pulpit. If we were, how would we end up like we are? The Holy Spirit is God Almighty.

And I have paltry results in my own life and in my preaching and I'm gonna blame that on what? Secular humanism? No prayer in schools? That is a joke. That's such a joke. President Obama's the problem.

President Bush was the problem. That's such a joke. Nothing can stop the church if the church is operating under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Come on, can we say amen to that? So let me give you further biblical proof, okay? One of the qualifications of being a deacon, if you want to call that in Acts 6, when they chose the seven men so that the apostles could give themselves to the word and prayer. One of the qualifications is choose out seven men among you who are known to be full of the spirit and wisdom. The qualification was they had to be known to be full of the spirit.

They don't tell us, but I'd like to know how they know that. Now, if everyone was full of the Holy Spirit, why would they make that a qualification? That's like choose seven men that are breathing. Well, everyone's breathing.

No, choose seven men who are known. They have the reputation of being filled, controlled, influenced by the Holy Spirit. You ever noticed that on Paul's first missionary journey where his name was changed on the island of Multithink? And it says, and then Paul, who was called Saul, or Saul who was called Paul, full

of the Holy Spirit said to that Simon Bar-Jesus, you son of the devil.

And then he does a work of power because the Holy Spirit is on him. Why would it say full of the Holy Spirit there if everyone is at all times full of the Holy Spirit? I can tell you from my own testimony, I have not always been full of the Holy Spirit. Control of the Holy Spirit? No, no, no, no.

So that was a qualification to be a deacon. Imagine to be a deacon. Think of some of the positions we give to people.

Think of that. We give positions to people without even praying, without even asking spiritual questions. What most of us are into because of the church growth movement, are they sharp? Are they clever? Are they good on the computer? I found out that a lot of sharp people are so sharp, they can cut you.

They can cut you if they're not filled with the Holy Spirit. I'm all for sharp people, but the church will never be built by sharp people. Wall Street has sharp people.

The church is supposed to have spirit control. Come on, spirit-filled people. So one other verse.

I gave you the verse about the qualifications of the deacons, Acts 6. Ephesians 5 verse 23, I think it is. Don't be filled with wine where there's excess. By the way, when you get drunk, what is the wine doing to you? Controlling you.

On the day of Pentecost, when they were speaking in other tongues, which is found in the scriptures, by the way, and Paul boasted that he was glad he spoke in tongues more than everyone, what did they think they were, the crowd that gathered? These guys are drunk. Why? Because they were being controlled by an outside influence. Oh, I would love for all of our meetings to get drunk by the Holy Spirit.

Now, whether we're ready to pay that price of having the world laugh at us, but I'd rather have the world laugh at us and us have power in our ministry than the world fit in with us and say, oh, that's clever, that's nice, see? And then we're insipid and powerless. So Paul says in Ephesians 5, don't be filled with wine and awareness, excess, but be being filled, literal present tense. Literally in the Greek, it's the continuous present tense.

Be, which doesn't make sense, but it's what it means here, be being filled, keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, if all Christians are just by birthright as believers, always filled with the Holy Spirit, why would Paul say keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit? I have to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I'm just claiming that positionally.

I am filled with the Holy Spirit. No, to be controlled by the Holy Spirit comes by yielding ourselves, having faith and asking God, God, I want you to fill me with the Holy Spirit. And I know that's just the beginning.

That's just the entrance into the room. There's levels of being filled that go beyond the beyond. Maybe none of us in this room know what God could really do through any of us if we were totally controlled by the Holy Spirit.

You know, there's a girl walking around here. You've seen her. She's helping clean, and she's not even this tall.

And she was filled with the devil, literally evil spirits more than one many years ago and brought in to be prayed for in a prayer meeting. Somebody out there, see if Diana is around in the building, just happens to

be in this building. Just want you to see her for her size because of what she did.

And when she came forward, we're going to pray for her. They were brought her forward. I didn't know her mother was a brujita, a witch.

And I did not know. I just heard she was on drugs. And and they brought her to the front.

And suddenly she threw off the couple that had walked up with her. And she's voice started screaming at us. Leave her alone.

She's ours. Leave her alone. Get away from her.

You want to talk about a place turning into a prayer meeting that night, church prayer meeting. And she grabbed me, ripped the collar of a shirt just as a button down shirt. Back in the days when I wore suits on Tuesday.

And she ripped the collar of a dress shirt like it was tissue and grabbed me and threw me against the wall. I just next thing happened, her head would start spinning around like in the omen or one of those things you talk about. She has superhuman power.

She's around here. She'll just walk in. Don't we won't say what we just said about her.

She knows I give her testimony. But I mean, she just and I keep kidding her and saying, you never bought me a shirt all these years that you owe me a shirt. Size 1634.

She never got me a shirt. But anyway, she was controlled. And if she could do that control by Satan.

What do you think the potential is for us being filled by God? What kind of sermons do you think? Come on, what kind of word of wisdom? What kind of word of knowledge? What kind of insight into people? Okay, last one, Laodicea. I know that you're neither hot nor cold, but look warm. I'm going to vomit you out of my mouth.

Was that church a Christian church? Yes, it was. Check Revelation chapter one and two. Jesus is walking among the seven golden lampstands, which are the seven what churches? Are you going to try to tell me that Laodicea was filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you going to try to convince me that he's going to vomit? Out of his mouth, but they're filled with the Holy Spirit.

No, they're not. And a lot of our churches are not filled with the Holy Spirit. And a lot of us are get up in the pulpit.

Unfortunately, we're not controlled by the Holy Spirit. But I want to be God wants us to be. That's the secret to prayer being birth.

That's the secret to more powerful ministry. Sometimes if you believe this and you go outside the curve of your denomination, they might throw you out or they might think you're weird or you're going charismatic. I don't care what any of those people say.

Jesus said, you know, a tree by its fruit. With all the needs around. Come on up here, Diana.

Not going to do anything bad. Diana, I just was telling the people about how great things God can do when he fills us with his spirit. And I was telling them about how Satan can control us.

And I just gave them a little of your testimony. And told them that you're so cheap. You never bought me a shirt in all these years.

1634. But this is the girl. Come on, let's hear it for Diana Berrios.

Now, God had it that she was in this building. And now you saw it. How could she? How could she do that to me? Come on, look at me.

How could she do that to me? Look at me. Look at this. Look over there.

Like I wasn't even there. And I picked her up. And finally, in the name of the Lord, we threw her down on the floor.

And she was spitting and eyes rolling in her head. Just possessed, controlled. But I don't want to make a big thing about that.

I want to say, God, do it for us with your Holy Spirit. That's why demon possession is just the counterfeit of what God wants to do with us. You say, well, what manifestations will come? God won't do anything outside the Bible.

If anything happens that's not found in the Bible, don't do it. There wasn't God. Okay, you start crawling like a snake.

Someone in the church or doing something, you know, be sure it's not of the Holy Spirit. But if you're going to write off something that's in the Bible, that's between you and God. That's between you and God.

But just remember the warning. Anybody who adds one word to this or takes away one word. Let all the curses that are in this book be upon them.

Someone wrote me and said, are you a charismatic? Are you a Pentecostal? Pastor, write me back because the pastor says not to read your books because you believe in all kinds of weird things and all of this. And you're like those TBN people that are, you know, blowing on people and winking at the camera and all of that stuff and all of that. And I wrote back to her and said, I'm not a charismatic.

I'm not a Pentecostal. I'm not evangelical. I'm not a Baptist.

I am, as my father-in-law taught me, I want to be a New Testament Christian. If it exalts Christ, wait, if it exalts Christ, and if it's in the New Testament, I'm for it. If it's not in the New Testament, I'm against it.

But may God give all of us that grace. You know what's in the room now? We have a hunger here, don't we? Come on, just lift your hands right where you are. Come on, lift up your hands and let's just start to praise God out loud.

Can you do that? We praise you, Lord. We praise you, Lord. Oh God, we need you.

I need you, Lord. Come, Holy Spirit. We need you for prayer, for ministry, for everything, Lord.

Let something come suddenly from heaven in our churches, Lord. In our prayer meeting tonight, in our ministries, Lord. In our marriages with our children and our grandchildren, come, Holy Spirit.

We want the fullness of whatever you have for us. We don't want a counterfeit, but we want you, Holy Spirit. We want you, Holy Spirit.

And if other people mock us, and if other people say, no, you're getting fanatical, Lord, help us to just humbly hold to the truth, to your Word of God, the Word of God. Lord, as we go into the prayer meeting tonight, I just pray that this hunger will be carried over into that prayer meeting. And as we anoint these people with oil, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, that there will be an explosion coming in their lives and hearts, something from heaven.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all in one place in one accord, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven. What we want is something from heaven, not something worked up from ourselves, not something that we're conned into or pushed into by somebody else. We want something from heaven, Lord, something from heaven, something pure, something supernatural, something full of power, something that will glorify Christ, something that will produce prayer and holy living.

Thank you, Jesus.

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