

Loosing What You Love

by Michael Durham

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living in the spiritual realm and not relying solely on human reasoning and natural processes, highlighting the dangers of misinterpreting God's favor and the need for divine guidance.

Scripture: Genesis 17:18, Genesis 21:9, Galatians 4:22, Galatians 4:28

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Michael Durham preaches on the importance of living in the spiritual realm while navigating the material realm, emphasizing the need to operate by faith rather than sight. He uses the story of Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac to illustrate the struggle between the natural and spiritual realms, highlighting the necessity of letting go of our 'Ishmaels' - things we hold onto in the natural realm that hinder God's supernatural work in our lives. Durham explains how big mistakes often follow big spiritual moments due to pride and the misconception of God's favor, urging believers to trust in God's supernatural activity and release control to Him.

Transcript

Genesis 17:18-19

And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him."

In addition to living in a material realm, Christians are called upon to also live in a spiritual realm. And this spiritual realm works a little different from the material; the truth is a lot different. They are almost polar opposites in many ways. For example, in the material realm it doesn't pay to walk around or drive with your eyes closed because the realm requires sight. Without it you're handicapped in the material realm. However, in the spiritual realm you must not, you cannot operate by sight. You do not see in the spiritual realm with the physical eyes, you see (metaphorically speaking) with the eyes of faith.

In the material realm, you live by laws of nature or physics, but in the spiritual realm you live by a different set of laws, the laws of faith and love. The physical realm requires codified law, a written law, to know the behavior expected, while that isn't necessary in the spiritual realm. In the spiritual realm you live by obedience to the Holy Spirit's leadership, for example, in Galatians 4 the representative of the natural

realm is Hagar and her son Ishmael; Sarah and her son Isaac represent the spiritual dominion.

A great deal of the Christian's problem is that he or she must live in both worlds but has not yet learned how the two realms overlap. We have not yet worked out how these two realms overlap. We either want to be an all out mystic and spiritualize everything or we live like everyone else in the material realm with the exceptions of Sundays and Wednesday evenings, where we try to enter the spiritual realm and feel a connection to it.

Our text shows us that this was the dilemma of Abraham. He wanted the proverbial cake and to eat it too. He desired that the material realm with his effort and work be highly valued by God. He wanted God to look at what he had done for Him and to prize that and at the same time have the spiritual blessings of God. He was unwilling at times to reject the natural realm and believe God for a miracle from the supernatural realm. I think we will discover that is not only Abraham's dilemma but ours also. We want the blessing of God on our lives but we're afraid to turn loose of walking by sight, by the senses. It's much easier, it's how we've been trained, it's natural to want to walk by sight--which encompasses all the senses including reasoning (which is not a sense but an addition)--rather than walk by the Spirit in the spiritual realm and discover how the two realms touch and come together.

I. Abraham's Ishmael

What is an Ishmael? How am I using Ishmael in this message? He represents the works of Abraham's flesh in the attempt to do God's will. He represents what Abraham did to attempt to bring about the will of God in Abraham's life. He also represents something from the natural realm that you don't want to live without. Abraham did not want to live without his Ishmael. What is Ishmael representing? Something we do by the power of our own mind and activities to try to bring to pass the will of God or something in the natural realm we're unwilling to turn loose of. Or in many cases it's both.

What is significant in the life of Abraham is that his Ishmael followed a significant spiritual experience. From this I have noticed something in my own life and the lives of others.

A. Ishmaels Often Follow Spiritual High Points.

In chapter 15 of Genesis is the record of an encounter Abraham had with God. At the age of 75 God made a covenant with Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. Of course he and Sarah had no children. Sarah was barren and gaining age, coming to the point that is perhaps beyond child-bearing. Ten years later the Lord renews and expands that covenant he had made with Abraham years earlier. That is what chapter 15 is about. God promises that from Abraham's body would come an heir, the person of promise that would carry on the Messianic lineage. This is a most remarkable encounter. God visibly manifested Himself and instructs Abram, as he was called at the time, to take five different kinds of animals, an ox, a ram, a goat, a pigeon, and a turtle, and he was to split the three animals--the ox, ram, and goat--and as darkness fell upon the earth, God showed up in a smoking furnace and a burning torch and passed through the divided carcasses, sealing that covenant with Abraham.

Immediately following comes the events of chapter 16. No doubt Abraham shares with Sarah his encounter with God explaining that God was specific that he would have a child. It is here that Sarah states a possible solution, "'See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai" (Genesis 16:2).

This was a typical custom at the time. If a couple could not bear children, if they had someone that was agreeable, she could have a child by a surrogate and that child could be legally and in every sense of the word her offspring. This is the idea. Sarah says, "Let me give you my mistress Hagar and the child will be mine."

The question is how could Abraham have such an amazing manifestation of God and do something so fleshly, so carnal, so wrong? He's just seen God as this smoking furnace and this burning torch and immediately turns around and moves out of the spiritual and into the natural. How could he do that? Why do big mistakes often follow big moments? We could simply answer pride and that would be correct but it's too general an answer. We need to know how pride works.

What so often happens in the life of a believer is exactly what's happening here with Abraham. You have a spiritual experience with God. You meet with Him. You have a prayer answered or you just know the presence of God, there's a special infilling, you're revived or renewed, or you get saved. When someone gets saved they have an encounter with God and this big spiritual moment and so often those spiritual moments often lead to big mistakes. Why is that? It certainly is pride but we need to know how pride works.

Big mistakes often follow big moments because having the favor of God is misinterpreted as God's favor on all our decisions and actions. This is the temptation upon having an encounter with God, no matter how small or how great. In fact, the greater the encounter the more inclined you are to believe that God's favor acts like some shield that protects you from sin. You feel that what you decide to do for God will have His favor and blessing. We wrongly assume that if the decision isn't to sin, then God is in the decision and He will bless it, all because we believe we have God's favor. That's what happens so often we when walk away from these big spiritual moments, we assume that means God is with us in a very special way.

In fact, it's easy to think He is with you in the way that He's not with others. You've had this great experience and brothers and sisters around you have not had such an experience. They read the Bible but don't get near the insights that you do; they're in a dry spell right now, they're on spiritual decline, but you're on the uptake. Because no one else is having your spiritual experience, it's easy to believe that you have something with God that they do not have. "God is with me," ends up meaning, "I can do no wrong." That is certainly an incorrect statement.

Abraham goes the way of the natural instead of the way of the Spirit. He goes the way of human reasoning rather than divine reasoning.

Let me give you another example in the life of Abraham. How did Abraham and Sarah end up with Hagar? If you know the story, you'll know it's because, once again, Abraham decided the favor of God was on his life and that meant he could do just about anything he thought was wise and God would bless it. Abraham was commissioned and called by God to leave the Ur of Chaldeans and God sent him down south hundreds of miles, not knowing where he was going, and he walked by the Spirit through faith. Remarkable. God led him every step of the way as he walked not by sight but by faith in God and God directed him to the land of promise. There he was. But a drought had occurred and Abraham thought, "Well, there's a drought here and we're not going to be able to survive this drought. I'll go down to Egypt because there's no drought there." And that's what he did.

What else can we call this but by unbelief? He stopped living by faith in the spiritual realm and he put all of his eggs in the basket of the natural and human reasoning and he went down into a place where God had

not told him to go. Amazingly, God had directed him all these times and yet now he makes the decision by himself. Why would he do that? Because he's now under the assumption, taking it for granted, that God will always lead him and he can now have some input. So to Egypt he goes.

Because Sarah is so beautiful he thinks--he thinks--they'll kill him to get to her. "Sarah, just tell them you're my sister and that's all." Sure enough, Pharaoh spied out her beauty and desired her to be a part of his harem and he paid Abram livestock, male servants, and female servants. Hagar is an Egyptian female servant. Before the relationship between Pharaoh and Sarah could be consummated, God sent plagues and revealed to Pharaoh this was not Abraham's sister but that it was his wife, and Pharaoh drives them out of Egypt.

The whole idea of the joining of Abraham and Hagar to produce a child stems back to a man deciding he was led by God and God would favor him even in his own human reasoning.

There's another reason pride works into us and big mistakes often follow big moments and it's because we see ourselves more important to the plan of God than we really are. This is what we see here in our text. Abraham decided that Sarah was right and they should help the Lord. Abraham thinks, "You know, the Lord didn't mention you at all, Sarah. He said from my body the heir would come. It's interesting He left you out. Maybe this is the solution. You know, the more I think about it, the more I think you're right. Yes. Stroke of genius, wife. That's what we'll do. This is why He didn't mention you by name." And they decided God needed their wisdom and help in order to bring about His promise. The natural needed to help the supernatural in order to bring it to pass.

Dear friends, there are certain things in God's economy that He will not do unless His people obey. There are just some things that He's already decided He won't do unless His people pray and obey. But that does not mean that we can walk away and assume we are indispensable to God's plan. He is sovereign and He remains sovereign and in the final analysis He does not need me and He does not need you. We are totally dispensable to the plan of God. If God can cause a mule to speak, He can cause anything to speak and preach His Gospel. He doesn't need me to do that today. I guarantee it would be more humorous and people would be more attentive if a mule was up here talking than me. It would probably make The Paducah Sun. It would draw a big crowd. You want to talk about attractional evangelism, we could get them in here. Truthfully, in the end, it's not the instrument and for us to believe we are indispensable and that God's favor is so much on us that He needs us is absolutely false. We need Him! We always need Him.

II. God's Isaac

In chapter 17 the Lord appears to Abraham a third time and reestablishes His covenant with the 99-year-old man.

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her." 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him." (Genesis 17:15-19)

Do you see Abraham's struggle with the spiritual realm? He's thinking completely in the natural. "Here's Ishmael. Oh that Ishmael might be the one! Use him! He's a good boy. He's never given me a day's trouble, why not him?"

Just like Abraham, western Christians have a problem with the supernatural. As mentioned in the introduction, we make one of two mistakes, the first is full blown mysticism and charismatic behavior where everything is subjective and the Bible doesn't have much input. This approach is all about how we feel, impulses, what the Spirit is saying to us, what prophecies we're receiving and all of these kinds of subjective ways for determining guidance. We will either go there or we will go 180 degrees in the opposite direction and make the best decisions you can with accurate biblical interpretation. If we can't find a Scripture that says I can't do that then it's all up to me to make the decision. It doesn't matter to God so long as it doesn't somehow affect correct biblical interpretation then we can just do whatever we want to do. Both mistakes are just that, mistakes. They're wrong because the Bible comes somewhere in between.

Over and over again the Bible discusses what I call natural-supernatural. These two realms do connect and I would like to say--even though it's linear thinking, which is totally incorrect when you're trying to deal with the spiritual realm--it's from the spiritual realm that the natural realm comes. Therefore, what God wants to do is bring His spiritual realm (i.e., His kingdom) to bear upon the natural realm and have total leadership and rule. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." There it is. The spiritual realm is being made to bear on the natural realm so that the natural conforms to the spiritual. The way God often does that is through what I call the natural-supernatural. You see this in the text.

God does not give Abraham and Sarah a baby. He doesn't form out of the dust of the earth a baby and blows into its nostrils the breath of life and say, "Here's your child." No, He works through the natural, biological processes of human reproduction. Granted, even when Sarah was younger she couldn't have children and now she's 90 and way past childbearing years. Nonetheless, God still works a miracle--the supernatural in the realm of the natural. God often does this. Most miracles are exactly like that.

For example, the incarnation of our Lord. He does not come from the heavens on the clouds riding a white horse and entering this woeful world of sin. No, He comes through the womb of Mary through biological reproduction. Certainly she was a virgin, there was no male involved in this, nonetheless, He has her DNA as much as any child has their mother's DNA. He was fully man! It was the natural-supernatural activity of God. He works in the natural realm with the supernatural power.

Therefore, my dear friends, God does lead us. And He will lead us somewhere between these two extremes. On one side, this wild, unrestrained, subjective, egotism, and then on the other side there's egotism based on biblical interpretation. In both cases they are the same--human-driven--and God works somewhere in between. God will guide His children. The spiritual and supernatural invades the natural.

He does lead us. How does He do that? By His Word through correct biblical interpretation. He will lead you according to this Book, it's "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." He does not lead us through mere impressions and subjective feelings. If that's all you have to go on then stop. Don't take another step. You're about to fall off the edge. You don't know where the next step will lead. God leads based upon a correct interpretation of Scripture. But not just that. He also leads by the Spirit. "My words are spirit and they are life." The Spirit of God begins to work in your heart and He gives you a body of believers who are walking the same road with you who can confirm or not confirm and then He gives the

overwhelming peace of God that surpasses all understanding. He gives you providence and signs to indicate His direction. My friend, the Lord works in the natural by the supernatural spiritual realm that we dwell in.

A. Two Symbolic Sons.

These two sons and their respective mothers are very symbolic in God's economy. Paul is writing to Galatian Christians, to people who had been born by the Spirit into the spiritual realm, this unseen, invisible realm, as have all of us who have been saved. Because of false teachers they wanted to go back to the natural realm and live 100 percent by the natural instead of the spiritual. What does Paul do to argue against that? He goes to our story in Genesis.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar--25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children--26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. (Galatians 4:22-26)

Stop and listen. God gives this story to us for today. God allowed Abraham and Sarah and Ishmael and Isaac to go through this whole event to talk to you and me. That's how special you are. He would allow all of this suffering, all of this pain in these people's lives in order to make a point to you. The point is that you don't live by the natural; you live in the natural by the spiritual. Don't do what Abraham and Sarah did.

B. The Son of the Bondwoman Must Be Removed.

You have to turn loose of the natural even though you live in a natural realm. You have to live by sight, you can't get in your car and close your eyes. Don't get in the parking lot and say, "I'm going to live by the Spirit. I'm going to close my eyes and trust that God will get me out of this parking lot." You're going to have some major issues if you do that. That's, again, the wild abuse of the Scriptures and the spiritual realm. We do live in this natural realm. We have been blessed with human reasoning and God gave you human reasoning and He will lead and guide it but that human reasoning has to be sanctified. It's not you coming up with some solution because you see a problem. It's you using your mind to hear what the Bible says and what the Spirit confirms in your heart and then you obey.

That means total release of the natural. You're not trusting in your human reasoning and plan. God can change that plan at any moment and you know that. To walk by the Spirit is not to walk by a carefully laid plan. For those who are analytical, who are visionary, and can have a plan from A-Z and cover every point in between with a tidy explanation, you do not walk in the Spirit that way. That's the natural realm of walking, not the supernatural, and if you walk that way you will pull an Abraham. You will experience some big mistakes. You have to release the natural.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." (Galatians 4:28-30)

That was difficult to Abraham. It is always difficult to cast out the Ishmael. It was for Abraham and it is for us.

III. Letting Go of Your Ishmael to Receive God's Isaac

Let's go back to our text and read it one more time. How do you let go of your Ishmael? I don't know what your Ishmael is. The Spirit will make that application, no doubt He's already done that. It's something you are offering to God, believing He will accept it because you've offered it up to Him or just something in the natural realm that is not you're not willing to turn it loose. It may not be evil or necessarily bad, it may be morally neutral, or it may be very immoral, it does not matter. It is the fact that you can't bring yourself to release it.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" 19 Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. (Genesis 17:17-19)

And God in His mercy allowed the sound of a newborn baby to be in the camp one year later, their only child, Isaac. According to the customs of the day, you would nurse a child much longer than we do today, sometimes up to four or five years of age. Therefore, when the weaning took place it was a celebration. This was the normal customs of the day. It was a party to celebrate this occasion in the baby's life. At that celebration, Ishmael, who by now is an older teenager begins to tease, mock, and make fun of Isaac. In Genesis 21 beginning with verse nine we see where this leads.

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac."

This is what Paul quotes in Galatians.

11 And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son.

He loved Ishmael for 17, 18 or 19 years. He was older teenager by this time. He was 14 when Isaac was born and depending on when Isaac was weaned would determine how old Ishmael was. This has been Abraham's only son, this was the son of promise, as far as Abraham thought. This was the one who would carry on his godly line. This was the one into whom he had invested all his years and wisdom. And now someone is telling him to turn him loose?! "Very displeasing" doesn't really quite get it.

Just think about it. Turn loose of one of your children? Turn them loose? Turn them out? Send them out? He's called a boy here. A boy. The boy was to be driven away from the family and the household of faith. Very displeasing.

12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. (Genesis 21:9-14)

He listened to Sarah another time and it got him in trouble. He's not going to do that again, but God said he needed to listen. Ishmael had to go. The natural, the flesh, had to go so that what God had done by the

Spirit can live and multiply.

A. The Necessity of Releasing the Ishmaels.

If you want to have true intimacy with God, you have to release your Ishmael. If you want to walk with God, if you want God to talk to you, I'm not talking audibly, but if you want to know the presence of God with you constantly, if you want God to be your shield and your buckler, you must turn loose of what you love, your Ishmael. If you want real intimacy with God, then you're going to have to turn loose of the natural. You're going to have to get rid of your Ishmaels. You cannot walk in the spiritual realm where God abides in the way you think you should go.

I'm soon to be 55 and I've been in church all of my life. I wasn't truly converted until I was 26 but I was in the church, theologically trained, pastored churches, and preached for 11 years when I was converted. And now that I've been a Christian for 28 years I know less about walking with God than the day I was saved. I mean by that this, it feels that way. The truth is I know more but walking with God but it feels as though I know less. Why? Because God is always a step ahead of you. As He walks with you He's leading you. He doesn't need your help in guidance and leadership.

If you knew each step He would lead you and the direction you should go, then you wouldn't need the Good Shepherd. You cannot reduce God to a formula and that's what we want to do because we want to keep the natural along with the spiritual. You can't do that, if you're going to have intimacy with God. You have to turn loose of self and your human, un-sanctified, wisdom and reasoning, and you're going to have to let God lead. And do not be surprised if there are unexpected turns.

You should also release your Ishmael for the supernatural expression of God's activity. This is what God was saying to Abraham. The son of promise had to thrive and he couldn't thrive with the natural. So in order for God's supernatural activity to be seen and displayed you have to turn loose of your Ishmael. Abraham had to let go of Ishmael so Isaac could thrive and become the son of preeminence. You have to let the supernatural dictate the way you live. We're not talking about a mysticism that is unbiblical; we're talking about a relationship with God that is real. God works in the natural by impacting it with the supernatural. If you're going to see God's activity you're going to have to turn loose of these eyes and ears and do what He says to do. Yes, He will put you in predicaments where you do not know the way out. Please don't grab onto your Ishmael and try to find the way out. Let God display His activity. This is a time for God to act and He will.

If you understand that, then you'll understand releasing your Ishmael for the good of those around us. This is what's necessary. These young people need to see that God isn't just a Sunday school lesson. He's not just a creed we adhere to. He's the living God! There's none greater. He is all powerful. There is nothing impossible to Him. His way is always best. They need to see a daddy get a job God's way instead of his way. He needs to see a mother trust in God when the finances say, "There's no time or place for groceries this week," and see God feed them.

If you want to see a God that's supernatural you have to turn loose of your Ishmael.

B. The Difficulty.

This is difficult because we want God to like our favorites. "Lord, here's Ishmael. Let Ishmael live before You! He's a good boy. He's obedient. I've trained him." We want God to like our favorites. "There's nothing

wrong in me keeping this. I understand if it was sinful I should be repenting, but there's no sin in this."

That's our reasoning as it was Abraham's. But God says it's the flesh. It's natural. And it doesn't help the spiritual. That's how God views things. If it doesn't help the spiritual you don't need it, because if it doesn't help the spiritual it works against the spiritual.

Remember two weeks ago about the laws of opposing forces? If I put a log in the fire the heat will increase and the cold will decrease. If I don't put on the extra log the heat goes down and the cold goes up. If it doesn't help the spiritual it hurts the spiritual. What Ishmaels are in your life that are just extra baggage? It's not bad, it's not evil, it's not immoral, it's just baggage that's not allowing the Spirit to flow and move in your life.

Abraham would have loved to have a child with Sarah, but not at the expense of losing Ishmael. We want God's supernatural work in our lives but not at the expense of our Ishmaels. We want God's blessings, but we want them our way! And that's when the problems begin. "Oh God, I believe You've given me this plan, now bless it." Deadly. If I know God has given me a plan I don't have to pray that God would bless it. I'm already blessed to have His Word and will.

Abraham's request, "Oh, that Ishmael may live before You!" was a request about control. Control is all about doing things your way, having the blessings of God your way. God loves you too much to give you your way just like you love your little children too much to let them always have their way. Cookies and ice cream for breakfast is not good for them. Playing hooky from school is not good for them. So you don't let them have their way because you love them. God wants to develop you as a spiritual man and woman so therefore you cannot manipulate God.

Abraham's request, "Oh, that Ishmael may live before You!" was also a request about faith. He was having difficulty believing. He even laughed. From that I see that we can believe God for only that which we have experienced. We can believe God when we can see how He will do it. We have difficulty believing Him for the unseen and the unexperienced. However, if you're going to go on with God it's going to be unseen, uncalculated, and unexperienced. You're going to have to cling to Him. That's the way He always does it. Just the time you think you've learned the way He's working in your life, He's going to mix it up. For the very reason you must trust the Lord.

It's an Ishmael work if we believe the lie that God can't do what's needed without our help. If we believe that, we begin working hard to manipulate events and people. If you somehow believe you are a catalyst to make something happen, as if God has so much riding on you--you're His man, you're His woman--what are you going to do? You're going to feel that responsibility so much you're going to start manipulating people and events. Are we to do anything? Yes! The Spirit commands according to the Scriptures and we believe and therefore obey, knowing that we can't do what's needed without God's help.

So you say to me, "If God wants to bless me, then where are the blessings?" I have three words for you: trust and obey. If you trust God and leave the natural to let the spiritual override and impact the natural, and you obey God, you will receive His blessings. The Lord will lead you and guide you. The Spirit will do so. He will take your reasoning and He will sanctify it with the Word and He will direct your feet and your paths. You may not understand, in fact, you probably will only know one step at a time but He will give you providential circumstances, He will bring into your life people, brothers and sisters, who can confirm God's will, and He will always, always, always, give you the peace that surpasses all understanding. You will know God is with you. Do you know that or are you clinging to your Ishmael?

I wonder how much of our worship, church life, and personal testimony is of the flesh, that is, our own doing? God cannot bless us as a corporate body because we want God to do it in the natural in a way that makes sense. We're unwilling to turn loose of our Ishmaels.

I pray today that the thrust of this message was spoken to your heart that you're going to have to walk with God, I'm going to have to walk with God, and we will have success as we turn loose of the natural to embrace the spiritual in the material realm we live in. The kingdom of God is to be imposed here, it's been made to layer over this material realm like a transparency film so that the image of Christ in us might bear upon those around us. If you're willing to do what most people are not willing to do--live by faith only, you will prosper in the spiritual realm. Trust and obey. Amen.

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