

3 Cautions From Acts 11

by Shane Idleman

We must stay encouraged in the Lord to avoid falling into sin and to live a life pleasing to God.

Duration: 1:00:32

Scripture: Matthew 11:28, Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Heart Worship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of awakening our spiritual lives from slumber, returning to our first love for God, and rekindling a heart of worship. It challenges listeners to pray for a soul awakening and to seek a deeper relationship with God. The sermon also highlights the need for genuine compassion, giving from the heart, and serving others as a reflection of God's love.

Transcript

You know, that's a dangerous worship song, if we really mean it. Come and awake us from our spiritual slumber. Awake us from our sleep.

I think many people might be shocked if that really happened. Because everything would change. You'd love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

The Word would come alive. Worship would feel like it's descending from the portals of heaven. Prayer would not be something that's rushed.

When God awakens your soul, you are radically changed. And I would encourage you this morning to pray that prayer. God, awaken my soul.

Return. I want to return to that first love. Some of you, do you remember what it felt like when God was everything? We couldn't get enough of God.

We would go to church three or four times a week. We would worship. We would pray.

And then somewhere along the way, we've left that first love. That's why Jesus said, come back. Come back to me, church, in Revelation.

Come back to me. You've left your first love. Return to that heart of worship.

Awaken. It's a dangerous song, if you mean it. Blow through the caverns.

You know what caverns are? Empty. Just empty. Like, think of a gold mine.

It's just empty. Sometimes in our soul, we get empty and dry and dead and lethargic. And we pray that.

We better mean it. God, come and fill those empty caverns again. Come and refill me with that joy and that peace.

Let the joy of my salvation return. Three cautions from the book of Acts. Three cautions from Acts 11.

What a caution is, you know what a caution is, right? You see the caution lights or the caution signs. And there are cautions throughout the entire Bible. Cautions.

Don't do this. Do this. And God warns and God instructs and God leads, ultimately, sometimes through cautions.

See, we love grace and we love mercy, but grace and mercy without the cautions is dangerous. Because we need to know when the road is ending. We need to know when the bridge is out.

And there's three we can pull from Acts 11, chapter 11, verse 22. Now, to put this in context, if you haven't been here, you can go back and listen to the messages prior. But the Holy Spirit was moving in the church.

And in case you are unaware, we are not afraid to mention the Holy Spirit here. We're not into weirdness, but we are into power. We're not into bizarre things, but we are into unction and anointing.

God moving among His people. We see the Holy Spirit moving throughout the entire area of Judea and Antioch and up through Jerusalem. And in this whole area, we see that God's Spirit was continuing to move out west and east and pushing.

And that's how it eventually encompassed the whole globe. That's why there's not an Acts 29, as we are Acts 29. The book of Acts continues.

God moving among His people, moving in the church. So what happened is the Holy Spirit was leading the church in many different areas. People were being set free.

They were being healed. They were being delivered. And then we pick up in verse 22.

Then the news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem. And they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. So he's going up from Jerusalem.

He's going up toward Antioch. When he came and he had seen the grace of God, he was glad. And encouraged them.

This is what Barnabas did. He saw the Christians in Antioch. He encouraged them with a purpose of heart that they should continue with the Lord.

Now I can only speculate here, but when the Bible says he encouraged them, I have a feeling that some of them were discouraged. Have you ever been there? Come on, let's be honest. Discouragement comes in to all of our lives.

Even you, Shane? Oh, you have no idea. Because new levels bring new devils. Have you ever heard of that? As soon as the church wants to start doing more, here comes the discouragement.

And God wants to do more, here comes the discouragement. And what discouragement is, when you're encouraged, you're walking a certain direction, aren't you? You're going forward. You're encouraged in the way of the Lord.

You're strengthened in the way of the Lord. And as you're being encouraged and walking in what God wants you to do, discouragement is meant to sidetrack you and go out the exit. And then we go out the exit and we get discouraged.

And we fall. And we fail. There's shame, there's guilt, there's condemnation.

And we can never seem to get back up on track, some people. And they fall again. That's why you'll notice a lot of times in addiction recovery, the word relapse means that people who were very encouraged became very discouraged.

And they relapsed. They fell back away from that encouragement. So He is encouraging the church, which tells me that we need encouragement.

It's not all about just wonderful things all the time. Sometimes people are dealing with a lot of different things in the church. Failed marriages, kids are going south when they should be going north.

And these problems at work and losing jobs that we should have held the rest of our lives and retirement's not working out and our kids are sick and maybe we are going through health challenges and we get discouraged. And it's funny here, He says, with purpose of heart, be encouraged that purpose of heart you should continue with the Lord. This is one of the best things you should learn when it comes to your walk with God.

Is no matter what comes, that you stay encouraged. Because it's very easy to stay encouraged when things are going well, isn't it? Everything's going well, I'm very encouraged. But when things go the wrong direction, we get discouraged.

So He says, be encouraged, purpose of heart, continue with the Lord no matter if you're going through the valley or up on the mountaintop. No matter if you have a good doctor's report or a bad doctor's report. Stay encouraged in the Lord.

Because discouragement is where the enemy gets a foothold. Remember we talked about what a foothold is. You open the door and the enemy puts his foot right there.

You ever do that with your kids? No, you can't close the door. Sorry, there's a foothold, you gave me a foothold, you can't close this door. And the enemy looks for that foothold of discouragement and then he begins to walk in.

Have you failed God before and fell back into sin? It's usually when there's a foothold, right? There's an opening, there's a discouragement there. I often comment to people, and it's the truth, we can leave here Sunday afternoon, we are just so full of the Holy Spirit. Things are going great.

Enemy, you have no, no, you have no, you can't even move me today. I'm so encouraged, I'm strengthened. Then come Monday afternoon, or Tuesday, or Wednesday, it's like, what happened to all

that encouragement? I am discouraged.

So keeping focused on the Lord. That's why you have to, when you stay in His Word, you get re-encouraged. That's why God says, though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you will fear no evil because I am with you.

Though the storm will come, Jesus said, the storm comes to the man who built his house on the rock and the man who built his house on the sand. And when the rain came and the wind blew and it beat upon that house, it did not fall because it was founded upon the rock. I feel like preaching a little bit this morning, so you might want to back up.

If you're in these front rows, you might want to back up. Or let me move this back a little bit. Because this is so important.

The enemy will start to sidetrack through discouragement. He will lead kids away through discouragement. When the waters come upon you, throughout the Old Testament, when the waters come upon you, that was a sign of, uh-oh, that's not good.

God said, I will be with you. When you walk through the fire, the flame will not scorch you. I will be with you.

I will uphold you with my hand. Though you fall, you will not be utterly cast down because the Lord upholds Him and you with His right hand. He doesn't have a right hand.

It's a sign of strength and encouragement. The right hand of God is a place of authority and power. And you have to stay encouraged.

I think that's why most of us are here today, right? Did any of you say, I'm going to come to church today and be very discouraged? No, nobody did. We want to be encouraged. What does encouragement mean? It's a persuasion to do or to continue something.

I'm persuaded to continue to do something. So the first caution that we can get from Acts through this is we must stay encouraged. Stay encouraged.

The most powerful thing you possess is right here. You have to strengthen yourself in the Lord. Sometimes, you know what, let me just shoot you straight.

Sometimes, you've got to encourage yourself. Your friend's not going to encourage you. Your spouse isn't going to encourage you.

Your family, your husband, your wife. Those things that sometimes we rely on might not encourage you. Sometimes, they might discourage you.

There's just three things on this area of discouragement I want to impart to you this morning. When you're feeling discouraged and when you're trying to get back on track, many times we look to the wrong voice. Always look to what does God say? What does God say? And get encouraged and strengthened back again.

The best thing you can do is stop listening to secular advice for your children. The Bible says train up a child in the way they will go and when they are old, they will not depart from it. There is hope for the

prodigal son.

There is hope for the wayward daughter. Through prayer and fasting and petitioning God and relying on His promises. Lord, your word says, I take God to task all the time.

It says right here, if I seek you with all of my heart, I will find you. It says right here, if I draw close to you, you will draw to me. I don't feel like it, but I'm going to hold you to your word.

I'm going to encourage myself through your word. What does God say? What does God say? And encourage yourself. Think about how many times have you watched dead, dying, violent, gross movies? And you go, I am so discouraged.

I'm more down than when I watch this thing. I'm more down when I listen to the wrong person or watch the wrong thing. And we discourage ourselves.

So God says, encourage yourself by looking to my word. What does my word say about your situation? Just prayed for a lady at the first service. Just found out she lost her job.

What does God say? I've got you. I've got you. Just wait on me.

Just wait. What does the world say? Take him to court. You go show him.

You throw your weight around there. You get out applications. I know you shouldn't work there, but you do, you do, you do.

Get it. Go, go, go. And God says, just wait.

Just wait. Now, He might lead you to put out applications. He might lead.

But wait on God, and you will renew your strength. Because when a person says, Lord, I don't know why this happened, but guess what? I'm trusting in you. You're going to show me.

God's not going to go, nope, I'm throwing you a curveball. You're toast now. You're going to lose your house.

You're done. Well, I won't use that word, stupid, right? Can't say it from the pulpit. But He's going to say, okay, that's a person I can guide.

That's a person, the humble, I teach my ways. I can lead that person because they're listening to me. Not listening to the voice of secular reasoning.

Just be careful who you're listening to. This drives me crazy in the area of people are looking for advice, and they go to friends who aren't even Christians. Don't ever go to friends who aren't Christians for marriage advice.

Because here's what they say. You should take him for all he's worth. Or she shouldn't treat you like that.

But you should take her to court and get full custody. That's what you should do. Yeah, and we leave there all empowered by the world.

And there's no fulfillment. What does God say about you and your situation? Stay encouraged. Stay encouraged.

I just got this report from the doctor. What did they say? Stay encouraged. It's funny, I forget the king's name.

I think it was, I don't want to say the wrong one. Maybe not Manasseh, Jehoshaphat. I was reading 2 Chronicles this week a lot.

And the Bible says that he sought physicians instead of the Lord. And he died of that infirmity. Now, I'm not putting down physicians, obviously.

I think people should get their blood work, blood tests, and know what's going on to some degree. But who do we trust in? What does God say? What does God say in His Word? Who's encouraging you? You know, because this might upset some people too, but the world cannot encourage you. If we're looking to the world and ungodly things, they can't encourage you.

They might tell you something temporary that encourages you temporarily. Ultimately, though, we have to look to what God says in His Word. Also, here's another way to stay encouraged.

What do spirit-filled believers say? What do spirit-filled believers say about a situation? If you're feeling discouraged, what are those who are filled with the Spirit of God, what do they say about it? Are you seeking godly counsel? Are you getting direction? Because we only see one side of the equation, don't we? They can look in and see all angles of something and speak into our lives and encourage us and help possibly get us back on track. And the final thing here on staying encouraged, I can't say this enough, but prayer encourages and strengthens. You see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Just even this morning, not wanting to be here, I didn't want to get here early and didn't want to pray, but after 5-10 minutes, uh-oh, watch out, because now we're encouraged. Now we're strengthening. Now we're calling down heaven.

Now we're casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against God. Here's why. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

So you don't even fight with this. I wish we did sometimes, right? That'd be a little, I can knock that guy out, but I can't knock him out spiritually. I have to pull down strongholds.

That's what prayer does, and you get encouraged again. When the Bible says pulling down strongholds, a stronghold is something that comes in, have you ever had this? Where you just can't get rid of this thing. It's the tree in the backyard whose roots keep growing.

You ever pull out something? Like where did that come from? Now it's even stronger. And the enemy comes in, he's got a stronghold. And we pray for a few days and we give up.

And that stronghold remains. But he keeps fighting against that stronghold, fighting him piece by piece, layer by layer, it begins to unravel. Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against God.

What is an argument? You know what it is, it's the defense attorney within. We talked about last week. Do you know you have a defense attorney? He lives right in here.

Oh no, Shane, you can do that. He's our defense attorney. Every time God's convicting, defense attorney comes in, he says, your honor, but he's this and it's a hard day.

And he deserves this. And your defense attorney's defending. He's arguing for you to continue in that destructive pattern.

So when you pray, you cast down not only strongholds, arguments, your defense attorney is silent. You put that duct tape on his mouth. So the arguments are silenced.

Strongholds are beginning to evaporate, casting down every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Your thoughts are being brought into obedience to Christ. You are encouraging yourself through prayer.

Jesus said, my house shall be called the house of, come on, balcony, I didn't hear anybody up there. My house shall be called the house of prayer. Not preaching, not worship, not ministry, not feeding the homeless, not the kids' connection, not all this fellowship.

My house shall be called the house of prayer if my people pray and humble themselves. See, even preaching must bow at the foot of prayer. Even worship must bow at the foot of prayer.

Even ministry. What good is a worshiper if they don't pray? Because they can just worship and nothing changes. There's a lot of people worshipping, trust me, throughout our nation that are not truly broken before God.

And it's the worshipping, this sounds good, but prayer is the catalyst. If my people pray, my house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations. Because it starts with that.

Here's why, you have to take those thoughts captive and you begin to pray and you get the foundation right. That's how you encourage yourself. But, but, but, but, encouragement doesn't mean tell me what I want to hear.

Does it? Encouragement, sometimes we think, because people say, you know, church is pretty discouraging today. Because they didn't hear what they wanted to hear. So encouragement doesn't always mean tell me what I want to hear.

There's an interesting story in 2 Chronicles of Jehoshaphat. He was a good king. He would rely on God and then he would go back.

Then he would rely on God, then he would trust in armies. He's an interesting guy to watch. You can think of yourself in his story sometimes.

He'll say, Lord, you know, I trust you against the Egyptians. And he'll beat the Egyptians. And they'll say, oh, the Assyrians are coming.

I better get a big army and he won't trust God and be overcome with the Assyrians. And Ahab, do you know who wicked king Ahab is? Just think of Jezebel. Does that ring any bells? Do you know any kids named Jezebel? Or Ahab for that matter.

Any boys named Ahab? No, because he was a bad king. The only worst, I don't know if I can say worst king grammar-wise. Let's say the only king that didn't do well, that was worse than this man Ahab was

Manasseh.

And these guys were wicked. But Ahab had an alignment with Jehoshaphat through marriage. Now, whew, this could take a minute.

Let me just try, just the basics. You had the children of Israel. When they came out of Egypt, they were governed by judges.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, judges. They would judge the people for hundreds of years. And then the people said, give us a king.

Give us a king like all the other nations. And so they got Saul from Saul David from David Solomon. But then the kingdom of Israel was broken up into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom.

The southern kingdom did better. They didn't get judged for 150 years after Israel did. This wicked northern kingdom was bad news.

But this kingdom down here, the southern kingdom of Judah, had Jehoshaphat and other kings. Rehoboam, Jeroboam, all these kings. Asa, Ahaz, Ahaz.

You hear these kings. But it's interesting if you follow the storyline and see how it works. These kings aligned themselves.

Ahab and Jehoshaphat came together. And Ahab said, will you join me in battle? And Jehoshaphat said, well, is there a prophet among you that we can get advice from and seek the Lord? And he said, oh, there's a whole bunch. And they came in and gave all this wonderful advice.

Go, you're going to beat the Syrians. I have these horns. He had even this one guy had, I think they called him Sears.

S-E-E-R. They had these horns. He said, just like these horns, you're going to crush Syria.

And they got all dramatic. And Jehoshaphat said, wait a minute. Isn't there another prophet? And King Ahab said, yeah, but he hates me.

He doesn't tell me anything I want to hear. He doesn't like me. And this person's name is Micaiah.

And it reminded me of also Elisha. Remember, have you heard of Elisha? With the J, not the Elisha. That gets confusing, too.

But Elisha would go, and King Ahab hated this prophet. And he actually said, oh, you troubler of Israel. And all he's trying to do is get the people to turn back to God.

But see, they viewed this encouragement as discouragement because they didn't want to be challenged in their sin. So long story short, Micah, they go, okay, go find this prophet. Bring him back to King Ahab.

Offer advice on what we should do. Should we go to war? And so the guys who came and got Micaiah to prophesy, they told him this, please, please, please, only say encouraging things. All the other prophets have been saying encouraging things, encouraging things.

Please, only say encouraging things. And it's funny, at first he came back and said, go to war, you'll win. Like kind of sarcastic.

And the king said, no, how long will I tell you not to lie against me? What did the Lord say? And Micaiah said this, as the Lord lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak. See, that's true encouragement. Encouragement doesn't always mean telling people what they want to hear.

It also means telling people what they need to hear. This is one of the, you asked my wife about this, this is one of the funniest things we've ever seen at a church, and it's mainly at this church, for the last seven years. We're running to people, you know, because I live here, and this, I was so encouraged.

So I'm like, gosh, I'm on fire, my marriage is restored. Then you run to somebody else, like I've only been twice, I'm never coming back, that's so discouraging. Wait a minute, what's the difference? Let's be honest, what's the difference? Open heart.

Open heart. They were ready for open heart surgery. This person was not.

So what they took, what should have been encouragement through God's word, they were offended because they don't want to change their ways. And, you know, I do get emails about this, and I'm going to say it again. One of the reasons why I say, in these dire times that our nation is going through, Joe Osteen-type sermons aren't going to cut it, is because people can't always just be encouraged and not confronted with their sin.

That's not going to cut it. People, we need to be challenged. We need to be convicted.

That's where change takes place. So so many people say, I'm encouraged, I'm so encouraged. Other people say, I'm never coming back there again, I'm so discouraged.

The reason they're discouraged is because they were enjoying their sin, and their sin got challenged, brought to the light, now they're upset because they don't want to give it up. So be careful how you define encouragement. Also, important note, encouragement is found in obedience.

Encouragement is found in obedience. As you obey the word of God, that's another word we're not scared to talk about. You know all those words that churches don't want to talk about? Obedience, disciplines, judgment, righteousness, holiness.

Oh, goodness gracious. Well, this is another wonderful one, because encouragement is found in obedience. The more I obey the word of God, the more I obey the word of God, the more encouraged I become.

It kind of just comes out of you. I'm encouraged as I obey the word of God. 2 Chronicles, But you be strong, and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.

So God says, don't give up, look up. Be encouraged, be strengthened. Your hands will be rewarded.

Somehow God will see you through. But Shane, I've been waiting and waiting. Yes, it's a battle.

It's warfare. Whoever told us that microwave Christianity applies to us? It doesn't. One minute, one minute.

Okay, God, I'll give you two days. Right? And then I'm not going to be encouraged. And it's not really joking matters, even though it's ironic, but I've seen so many people get mad at God because he doesn't move quick enough.

There are people. I mean, I've been preaching now probably 17 years. The church is seven years.

But I see so many people just use the example marriage. Man, they're at the altar. They're praying.

They're crying out to God. They're waiting on Him. And then two months go by.

I'm not waiting anymore. Let me grab that six-pack and go to Plan B. Hit some clubs down in Vegas. I'm done waiting.

See, what was wrong there? See, that's conditional. And I often wonder if God makes us wait to get all out of us and let the genuine faith come through. Because as you're waiting, you will serve Him.

As you're waiting, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I'm going to wait upon you, God, until I breathe my last breath. I'm praying. I'm waiting on you.

Whether I see the fruition of some of my prayers or not, I'm waiting on you. Daniel set his heart to fast and to pray for 21 days. Have you ever tried to fast for 21 days? Wow.

Try one. Try one day. Bagels? Nope.

Cookies? Nope. Panera bread? Nope. Keep going.

Nope. In-N-Out burgers? Nope. Nope.

Charkies? Nope. Nope. Anything? Nope.

Just fast and watch. But Daniel said, I set my heart to pray and for 21 days. And the Bible says, Daniel, from the first day, from the first day you set your heart to pray, I release that anointing.

But he was held up by the prince of Persia. It's an interesting concept there. That there was a demonic influence.

The demonic realm was holding back the answer to that prayer. And as Daniel prayed and fasted and prayed and fasted and prayed and fasted, it finally came. What about if he says, this isn't working? When God tells us to do something, stand by it.

And he will see you through. So what steps can you take today to stay encouraged? What steps can you take today to stay encouraged? Everything I just talked about in 20 minutes. Pull something out of there and be encouraged.

Because I think God wants to encourage us. The whole reason you look to the Bible for hope. We look to the Bible for redemption.

We look to the Bible for purpose in life. For everything. There is tremendous encouragement if we look to the right source.

And then verse 25. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch.

Now we think like with cars and airplanes, you know, he found him the next day. If you had a map up here, you could show you. It's a long journey.

Weeks, if not longer. He found Saul. They went to Antioch.

They were in Antioch. They met believers in Antioch. So it was that for a whole year, they assembled with the church and taught.

And taught a great many people. See, that's what you do. You bring the word of God to people and you teach them.

The Old Testament, 2 Chronicles. So they taught in Judah and had the book of the law of the Lord with them. They went throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.

And the fear of the Lord fell upon the kingdoms and on the lands all around Judah. You see, when you bring the word of God, you teach the word of God. Fear will fall upon the people.

That's why they don't want to teach the word of God. That's why they want to remove it. They brought the word of God in.

So here's the second point. Three cautions. The Bible encourages us to stay grounded in the word.

Stay grounded. Always be teaching. That's one thing I love about the mind, but I also hate about the mind.

Is it's always going. And if I'm not fueling it with the things of God. If I'm not teaching it with the word of God.

Oh, a scripture comes to mind. Renew. Right? Renew your mind with the word of God.

If we're not doing this, it's renewing itself. And guess what it renews itself with? The things of God and the Holy Spirit and all this goodness and righteousness? No. Nope.

The Adamic nature takes over. And by default, it starts to get corrupted again. That's why you have to renew your mind.

We take a shower every day. But when it comes to reading the Bible, it's like, no. Some people take longer showers than they spend in the Bible.

And we need that spiritual cleansing to renew the mind. To renew it. That's why it says he taught them for a whole year.

And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. Okay, guess what? That's where the title started. You'll remember that now, right? Christians.

We were first called Christians in Jerusalem. Nope. Antioch.

It's above Jerusalem. Antioch. What were Christians? Christ followers.

The main difference at that point between Jews and the Jews who became Christians were the Christians acknowledged that Christ was the coming Messiah. Therefore, they were Christ followers, hence the word Christian. That's where it came from.

And they were first called Christians in Antioch. Now, I think this is important. I did this in the first service.

I think it's important to do here as well. The first Christians, 1st century, 2nd century, we were all pretty much on the same boat. We were all Christians following the same word.

And around the 4th century, 5th century, you hear names like Augustine. And you can even go back to 1st century, 2nd century, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Ignatius. All these guys that were church fathers.

And then Constantine who became an emperor and made Christianity the formal religion. I think that was around the end of the 4th century. Don't quote me on any of this.

I didn't research it. I'm just going off memory. And then you have this one church.

Okay, guess what? It was called the Catholic Church. Uh-oh. Nobody's leaving yet.

That word just means, Catholic means universal. So it was a universal church. 400, 500, 600, 700.

There are some schisms and different things. But around 1050 A.D., 1050 A.D., it's called the Great Schism. The Western Church broke off and became the Roman Catholic Church.

Roman Catholicism. Married with Rome in the West. And then this side became the Eastern Church.

Have you ever heard of the Eastern Orthodox or the Greek Orthodox Church? 50, 60, 70 million Christians in Egypt. And a lot of them are here. And you'll see those churches around Coptic.

Coptic Christians. A lot of them are being beheaded by ISIS. That's the Eastern.

And they held to, it looked similar to the Roman Catholic Church. I actually met a Coptic priest at the park in Lancaster a few weeks ago. And he had his brown robe on and a cross.

And I had a good dialogue for a little while and asked him questions. But they wouldn't, they reject, say, Mary as immaculate conception. Or that she was free with sin and the virgin birth.

And all these things that are not in the Bible. They're heretical. And people get upset every time I say it, but I don't care.

There's a lot of heretical teachings in that form of what they would call Christianity. It's not biblical. We're not talking about this or that.

These are big deals. And they also don't believe in the primacy of the Pope. Mass is a little bit different.

So they're more, they look more to the Bible. But they're still like praying to the saints. I asked him why they pray to the saints.

And he quoted Hebrews 12. You can read that later. And I said, it doesn't really apply to praying to the saints.

We have one intercessor, Christ. We don't need to go to a priest. So there's different things.

But they came out of that a little bit. So you have the Eastern, the Western. And then right in the middle, you ever heard the word Protestant? That word means protest.

It means protesting and going back to the Word of God. Now, this group, which we're a part of, we're not perfect. We don't walk on water.

Right? There's mistakes. They elevate Mary too much. We don't elevate her at all.

They put too much emphasis in communion. We don't put much at all sometimes, the Protestant churches in general. But the Protestant Reformation means reforming.

That whole movement was 12, 13, 14, 1500, 1600, 1700. William Tyndale, John Hus. Have you ever heard of a Tyndale Bible? He developed the Bible.

Whitecliffe Bible Translation Society, John Whitecliffe. They all translate the Bible. They're persecuted by the Western church.

But they remain truthful to the Bible. So that's why you have basically three groups split up, Western, Eastern, Protestantism. And we go back to just soulless scripture, the inerrancy of scripture.

We look to the scripture authority, not to the papacy, not to the pope. We don't look to them as the final authority because they decree many things that are not biblical. They're just not.

All you have to do is research it. And you'll be amazed at the differences and distinctions. So that's the differences.

When they first called Christians, they were first called Christians in Antioch. They held tight for a while. And then also part of the Roman Catholicism is Rome, the power of Rome, the emperors bought the papacy with money.

And they bought the control. And that's where a lot of the corruption started to come in. And they would have like purgatory, which means you still need to be purged from your sins.

Can you imagine that concept? When I die, I still need to go to purgatory and be purged from my sins. I asked a priest about that recently in Santa Clarita. It was eight months ago now.

And they said, yeah, that shame and guilt we're dealing with, we have to be purged of it. No, we don't. What's the point of the cross? That's the point.

So you see, these are big differences. And I get scolded by people on this side. They need to stop scolding and stop looking to the word of God.

If you're following a heretical system, watch out. Watch out. Another big issue is on the mass.

This group, this group, this group. The mass that actually becomes the blood and body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. In the monstrance, that big gold thing that they look to and they bow to that.

And they would say that they're sacrificing Jesus again. It's an ongoing sacrifice. And they're worshiping and looking to this gold thing that has the real body and blood.

When we look at communion, what does the Bible say? Do this in remembrance of me. But they say, well, wait a minute. It says if you eat of my flesh or drink of my blood.

Yes, put that back into context. The bread of life. He is the bread of life.

If you partake and have fellowship with him, that has nothing to do with it becoming the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ. Looking to Scripture and Scripture alone, that is a heretical practice. And that's why people were killed at the stake for what I'm talking to you about right now.

That's a little alarming, is it not? You read the life of John Knox when he fought this system in Scotland. Mary, Queen of the Scots, was on this side and he was on this side. And they fought over this whole issue.

And people were killed throughout history because of the centrality of Scripture, the centrality of Christ. So look to Scripture and Scripture alone. We don't have it perfect.

We would never say we have it perfect. But we can look at all these different things and say that's not Scriptural. That has no Scriptural basis whatsoever.

To say that Mary was free of sin and that she was a perpetual virginity. She was always a virgin. And that we worship her and she's our interceder.

Be careful. That reminds me of Babylonian religion for Tammuz and all these things. You pray to the Mother of Heaven who's the wrong God.

See, these are big deals with big ramifications. And we need to stop being scared and timid. Yes, be loving.

But also know what the truth says. Stay grounded in the Word. Grounded in the Word of God.

See, when there's a caution, when you're walking a certain direction, Lord, I don't know what to do. What does the Word say? I don't know what does God's Word say. Stay grounded in that truth.

Because even me, even most of you, if we're not grounded in that truth, our feet are slipping, aren't they? We don't have a sure foundation by not doing anything. If I depart from the Word, I depart away from God and into the slippery sand of relativism. Because Jesus said, remember, I think it was a service, where I said that the rains descend, the floods came and beat upon the house, and it did not fall because it was founded upon the rock.

It was built on the foundation of God's Word. And then the third point is what I played that whole video for. You know what, though? Let me stay on this point for a minute.

What steps can you take today to stay grounded? I don't want to remove myself from this area real quick. What steps can you take to stay grounded? If you're not grounded, get this in your heart now. Get it on your calendar.

Make it a daily discipline. Daily discipline. We'll just go click on Facebook for 30 minutes.

Why not this? It has to be on your calendar. It has to be a discipline to get grounded. Also, are you even grounded? Are you grounded? I mean, this many people here, I don't know a lot of you.

I don't know if you're grounded. Do you truly know Jesus Christ? Have you repented of your sin? Have you believed in the only name that saves? And are you grounded? Are you times of refreshing coming in? See, you can be encouraged and grounded by embracing Christ. Acts 3.19 says they repented and they believed.

And times of refreshing came from the presence of the Lord. They were saved. They were set free.

So it begs the question, are you grounded? Because see, if there are people here or not, and I waste an entire message and not get back to the pivotal point of our genuine relationship with Christ, I have failed. Because it should lead back to that. It begs hard examination.

And then we can look to number three. Stay compassionate. A giving heart is a godly heart.

Now, this one steps on toes, and that's okay. Because the devil's still got a checkbook in many cases, doesn't he? Oh, the nine o'clock service is a lot more honest. A giving heart is a godly heart.

We can't be close to God and not have a giving heart. It flows out of that. Now, if you're new here, guess what? We rarely talk about finances.

We don't pass a plate. We don't make it a big deal. God brings in revenue.

God covers. God does whatever He wants. We don't make that the focal point.

However, I would be doing you a disservice to not talk about this point. I truly believe it. That compassion says, oh, that's sad up there on the video.

But empathy says, I need to do something about that. And that leads us to Acts 11-27. And in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Then one of them named Agapa stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, see, each according to his ability. Now, you don't have to be forced.

You don't want \$1,000 to somebody, so \$5 to somebody else. Just each according to his ability determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

So on the first day of every week, which is a Sunday, they met together and they took a collection to send relief to the people. So it's very biblical. It's very biblical to have a giving heart.

But let me just talk about four points on giving, and then I will let you go. Fair enough? Now, concerning the collection for the saints, 1 Corinthians, I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay aside something, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

So there was a Sunday collection. Everybody was giving each according to their ability. So that's why you'll see some churches, they pass the plate.

I've never really liked that. We just allow people to give what God puts on their heart. But that's why they do it.

Because we come together, we give, and then we point it in the direction God wants it to be pointed and used, in the direction God wants it to be used. Also, it's not natural to give. Have you figured that out? It's not natural, is it? It doesn't come on its own.

It's a spiritual discipline. Here's what happens when my wife and I first decided to give when we got married, is we had to factor it in our bills. It had to become the number one bill.

And I don't know if it's a funny story. It's actually not a good story. But on this compassion, and we've sponsored kids for a long time, our lender almost talked us out of sponsoring.

Many years ago, four years ago actually, we were going to buy a house and they said, oh, you don't need to count that as bills. We can qualify you for more. See, giving to the church, giving to those kids, that's not bills.

You don't have to do that. That's like a car payment. So then you can buy this house.

Oh, if we just get rid of those, huh? But see, wrong advice. Wrong advice. And so setting that precedence early, it's not natural.

It's a discipline. But see, it's a discipline of reaping and sowing. That's why I'd be doing you a disservice.

Because money can become an idol in our hearts. It's idolatry. And when we begin to give it away, don't go live out on the street.

Don't give everything up and go live out in a tent. I'm not talking about that. But it's got a hold on us.

When we can spend like a drunken sailor in furlough in Hawaii, there's a problem. We just spend and spend and spend. So God says make it a discipline to reap and sow.

As you sow, you will reap. As you give, it will be given back to you. And also it says give cheerfully.

God loves a cheerful giver. So when we give, we should be giving cheerfully. And this is so important because there are so many people that come to church, but they don't give.

It's like this. It's Fort Knox. That's good when it holds gold, but bad when it holds our heart.

Fort Knox, we don't want to give. We don't want to give that much. That's really what it comes down to.

I always talk about myself. We don't trust God. Right? He's not going to see me through.

I've got to hold on to this myself. So throughout all of Scripture, if you not give, will God not open up the heavens and you'll receive? If you not give, that God will bless. God will reap.

You sow. God loves a cheerful giving heart. It's all biblical.

You'd be very hard pressed to find where this is not in the Bible. And then the fourth point. Serving is giving.

When I give of my time, when I serve at the hospital homes, when you do, serving is giving, but it does not replace monetary giving. If that was the case, then I shouldn't give, right? Right? Starting today, me and Morgan are no longer giving to the church. How would that go over? Not well.

But it's both. It's serving with our time and giving of our resources. Now, I don't teach on tithing, you know, using the word tithing much, because it means tithing from a tenth.

It's a ten percent. It was in the Old Testament. People say, we're not under the law, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

I've noticed personal preference or personal observation of those who like to argue this point are the non-givers. They just don't like to be challenged. They don't, look, it doesn't say ten percent, right? So that's why you give .1 percent? See, it's never the person who gives ten or a little bit more that has a problem with it.

It's always the people who don't give that don't like that portion. So when I talk about tithe, I just think it's a good number to start with. That's what we've always done in our walk.

You know, you make \$4,000 a month, you give \$400. You make \$5,000 a month, you give \$500. It's right off the top.

It hurts a little bit, doesn't it? That hurts a little bit. You've got to restructure some things. You might need to put the tziki first, the kingdom of God first to do that.

Now, let me ask you this question. If you're getting irritated about this portion, why are you? It's really not me. I'm just telling you what God's Word says.

And this might be an area that God is wanting to convict us in and have change occur in this area. So I never force. I don't tell people any, it's whatever.

God loves a cheerful giver. But if we're minimizing it and it doesn't hurt, come on. David said, will I give God that which costs me nothing? Some of you guys remember the story about the farmer who had two cows.

His cow gave birth and two cows were right there. Oh, look at the Lord. The Lord gave us an extra calf.

We've got twins. So one calf is the Lord's and one calf is ours. We're going to thank God.

Thank God. And as a few years went by, the husband came in the house and she said, what is wrong? Well, let me back up a little bit. For the first two years, the wife was saying, which one's the Lord's and which one's ours? He goes, it doesn't matter.

Everything is God's and God's is everything. It doesn't matter which calf is ours, which calf is the Lord. It doesn't matter.

Okay, that's fine. And then he walked in sad and she goes, what happened? And he said, the Lord's calf died today. Some of you will get on the way home or just listen to the CD again.

The Lord's calf died, right? Not his. Oh, no, not his. And throughout the Old Testament, I highlight now, it's like, don't bring me the broken sacrifice.

Don't bring me the sacrifice that's blemished. That's why it had to be Christ, born of a virgin through the power of God, to be the sinless sacrifice that stood before us as the sinless, perfect sacrifice. Can you imagine God saying, give them my worst? No, God said, give them my best.

I will send not only a sacrifice, I will send my only Son without blemish, without spot, and He will make atonement for the sins of the people. A perfect sacrifice. And throughout the Old Testament, they would bring the cow that's dying anyway, the diseased lamb, because why? Because idolatry in the human heart.

We do the same thing. When was the last time you took your best things to the second-hand store? Come on, I do too. I told you the story.

Our washer was, well, we wanted a new washer. So let's give the old washer to somebody who needs it. God forbid the new one.

They're \$500. Right? So you can do that, but don't come down off your high horse and think you're giving. That's not giving.

Giving hurts a little bit. That's the point. I'm giving of myself, and it hurts a little bit.

But here's what happens. The more you give of yourself, you begin to dethrone that idol. The only way this idol can be dethroned is by giving it away.

If money is your idol, and I will tell you right now, most people in this room struggle with it. Most people struggle with it. It's in our culture everywhere.

Keeping up with the Joneses is cool. Right? Look what they got. That's what I got.

And it's this idolatry. The best thing to do is just give it away. Just give it away.

Here's what people make. Oh, Shane wants me. I don't care.

Sponsor kids. Give it to Grace Resources. Give it somewhere.

The church is not begging for money. God has opened incredible doors you don't even know about. We don't share it with you, but it's like, God, what happened here? He just pours in and pours in and pours in.

So give somewhere. Get rid of that heart and find a cause that needs it. Because we live on our abundance.

Everything is in abundance. Amos, for I know your transgressions are many and your sins are great. You who distress the righteous and accept bribes and turn aside the poor at the gate.

I was just convicted about this recently. You know, you see the guys on the freeway or in the parking lots and we have to be careful, obviously. But I began to realize that I formed an excuse.

They'll just spend it on alcohol or they'll just... And I just kept excusing it. Every need I'd see. Now, granted, I don't think you give people money.

I think you need to buy them something that they need and talk with them, build that relationship. But I'm learning I'd rather err on that side than a judgment and assuming that nobody really needs help and everything's a scam. Because that starts to create a hard heart.

Gosh, I went into a whole thing on the first service about how to be careful. Because you don't want to enable when you give. You want to look at the attitude of the person you're giving to.

You want to look at their character. You want to look at their work ethic. For example, if I'm going to help somebody out and I say, hey, I can do this.

Here's some... I found a little job for you to do. And they say, I don't want to do that job. Oh, really? Well, guess what else the Bible says? If you don't work, you don't eat.

See? See, you've got the flip side here. So you've got to be careful. And I think it's disheartening for me because I would come into contact with people.

Shane, I need my house payment made for the church. Okay, and you go to their house. They've got tons of things they can sell.

See, the church isn't your first resort. It's your last resort. And then when I mentioned this, I recall this one lady.

I told her, hey, we found a job at Home Depot. I think it was... where was it at? I just said the first service. Walmart? Oh, your most services.

Walmart. Is that what it was? And she goes, I'm not going to work there. Like, oh, so you want us to make your house payment, but you're not going to work here.

We have a job for you at \$10. What's the disconnection here? See, wrong heart. Wrong heart.

So I also believe that we don't just give and give and give. We test the spirits. We use wisdom.

We allow that as an opportunity. And as soon as I said, no, we're not going to do that, guess who we don't see at church anymore? Well, isn't that interesting? I mean, this is years ago, so I don't think you know this person, right? But see, it shows the heart. So I think we have a responsibility to not be enablers.

You don't just, here you go, here you go, here you go, here you go. You sit down and you listen. And I can tell within a few minutes if it's legitimate.

You know, there's another guy, I think it's Walmart. Boy, they go to Walmart. The parking lot, and he's like a vet.

You know, a vet, a Vietnam vet needs help. And I have a passion for those people as well. But the more you talk to them, where do you serve? Real vague, didn't know questions about the military.

Oh, really? And I got somebody involved who knows a lot, and they said, no, this guy, he's not legit at all. That's his thing. But the more I talk to him, then I can rebuke him.

That's wrong. You need to pray and repent, not be begging for money out here. So see, it's relationships that God can put us in.

And it's not always, here's the dollar. It's talking with them and praying with them. I've went and got shoes.

I've went and got formula for children, diapers. I've brought mattresses to people's houses. When you see it, you'll see it's a genuine concern.

Take the time out of your busy schedule. And don't be in a hurry. That's part of empathy and having compassion.

So what steps can you take today to encourage a giving heart? Because here's the sad thing. In our pride and our arrogance, we say, those poor third-world countries, God helped them. And often it's God helped us.

Because one thing I've noticed, I've got friends in the underground church or works at the underground church in China and the third-world countries and the 1040 window. There is a difference in the American church than those churches. Many of them would rather take the poverty and knowing God as their all-sufficient Savior in all areas than the rich wealth of the American church who really doesn't know God.

Because that idol is such a prominent part in our lives. Now be thankful God has blessed us. Would you rather have your kids living what you saw or having a good roof over their heads? It's okay to want that.

Just make sure it doesn't have you. You can own things, but do those things own you? How do I know? Do you give away things often? Here's my nice jacket I've always wanted. Have you ever given away a car? Oh, man, that's a tough one, isn't it? We fight those things, but God wants that cheerful, giving heart.

So what steps can you take today to encourage a giving heart? What steps? I don't know. I'm going to let God show you. I'm not going to pass a plate.

We've got kids out there who you can sponsor. If you want to give to the church, we can get it in the right places. If you know of a ministry, if you know a family's been on your heart, or if you say, I would like to help a family in need, do you know of one? Yes, we can point you in the right direction.

Or just take it to the Lord and say, Lord, how can I have that heart? How about a heart of serving? We need more helpers in the hospital homes. We've got six homes now where we go and visit patients, and we don't have enough helpers. They wait for Sunday like a kid waiting for Christmas.

And sometimes we don't show up because we don't have enough helpers. And I can't go hit all six of them all the time. We need people to help in there.

What about children's ministry? We have to close classes because we don't have enough helpers. Shane, come on, you're convicting us. Yes, I am.

That's exactly right. This last minute is a promotion. I want to point you in the right direction, saying I need to start serving in children's ministry, even if it's once a month.

Investing in the children, investing in the kids, I need to serve in the hospital homes, even if it's once a month. It's the hardest thing you'll want. I'm sitting at home getting ready to go do a whole bunch of stuff and, like, go stop by that house.

There's two in East Palmdale, two in Lancaster, one's in Rancho Vista. I know right where they're at. It's like, oh, gosh, Lord.

But it's in those times of obedience that then you start to be filled with the Spirit. It's those times of disobedience I can feel the spiritual aspect of the day just kind of decreasing because I'm not listening to the voice of God, what He wants us to do. See, I don't know.

I'm going to end, don't worry. But I'm just a New Testament Christian. I believe that we can go into those places and pray for healing.

I believe that we can pray for tumors and cancer and depression and anxiety. I believe that this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. I believe there's a demonic realm.

Jesus said sometimes He would heal somebody. Think about this. He would heal them, and their body would be healed with an arm, different things.

But other times to heal them, He would cast out the demonic influence. He wouldn't heal their body. He would say, demon, be out.

Mute, deep, demon of mute and deafness, come out of that woman. Come out of her. So I believe that we can cast out.

You can say that's a demonic element taking place. We can pray for them, and we can call down heaven. I believe in New Testament Christianity.

I believe in Christians who waited upon the Lord. They are filled with the Spirit of God, and God would move upon them to touch a person and to save them and to set them free. I believe in New Testament Christianity.

Where did that go? That's it. But think about this. Because we think, oh, Paul and Barnabas and Peter and Simon.

Oh, man, we can never. They were younger Christians than most of us in this room. They were Christians for weeks or months, and the Spirit of God was working through them.

Because they were pure, holy vessels set apart by God. They were fasting. They were praying.

I believe this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. I believe we need to pull down heaven. I believe we need to seek righteousness and holiness.

You can see the old-time preachers. The old-time preachers were not scared to mention holiness and to mention righteousness and the fear of God and the trembling before God. People would come, and they would weep before God.

They would be transformed. Healing would take place. Hold on.

Healing would take place during worship. Did you know that? Healing can take place during worship and during prayer. We can be praying right there, and cancer can come off somebody.

I believe that because the Bible says that the same Jesus, yesterday, today, and forevermore, is the same Christ that spoke 2,000 years ago. See, the problem is not with God. It's with us.

I better stop, or it's going to turn into another sermon. But I truly believe. I truly believe.

And I get frustrated. I read. I talk to people.

Gospel for Asia, K.P. Yohanna, and I've reached out a few times. We talk on email. And he talks about in India, and you can see deaf ears open.

You can see blind eyes. People lame. They're walking.

Where is that power today? Brother, you're not fasting and praying. You don't want it bad enough. You don't want holiness bad enough.

When was the last time you waited all night and said, God, heal that person in the wheelchair. I'm going to fast and not give up until you answer that prayer. And we suck God with all of our heart and all of our strength.

Now we want God to fit on our schedule. If you can get here between 9.30 and 11, right there, if you can make that, I will be here. But other than that, I'm not giving much.

I'm not seeking holiness. I'm definitely not seeking righteousness and the fear of God. I'm caught in my own carnal Christianity.

And my concern is the Church of America is the Church of Latter Day Sea. When Jesus said, be hot or cold, but if you're lukewarm, I will vomit you out of my mouth. See, we need that old time preaching again to rekindle the fires.

We need to rekindle the fires. We need to wake up. That song, Fall Afresh on Me, needs to be sung from the rooftops.

You need to go home, unclick Netflix, remove Filthy Shades of Grey, and get off Facebook and start putting on worship so you can worship God. And it takes time. You're not just going to walk out of here and go, I'm going to pray for healing.

Unless the heart's right. And it's bathing. You'll see healing when you're bathed in prayer.

Because then you know how to pray. See, how we pray for healing now is God, I hope it's Your will. I don't know, I'm hungry.

Just, I don't know, set this person free. God's probably like, don't even pray for this person. I want you to pray for this person.

As you're praying, you're discerning there's a demonic stronghold there. That the enemy's got them bound in this area. I need you to pray directly and fast for this person.

And you can see those scales fall. That's where I want you to go. But see, if we're not being led according to God's will and by His Spirit, we're missing.

I wonder how many prayers are missed because you're on the wrong target. Wrong target.

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