

# A Wicked Generation Seeks After a Sign

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God for the right reasons, rather than seeking after signs or material wealth, and warns against the dangers of a wicked and adulterous generation.*

**Duration:** 51:39

**Scripture:** Matthew 12:39-40, Matthew 16:1-4, Luke 13:24, John 14:6, Romans 1:20

**Topics:** "Signs And Wonders", "Heart Surrender"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the signs of a wicked and adulterous heart, focusing on the Pharisees and Sadducees seeking a sign from Jesus. It delves into the wrong attitudes, seeking after signs demandingly, and the need for genuine seeking of God. The message highlights the significance of surrendering to God, confronting evil hearts, and the pivotal role of the resurrection in validating Christ's claims and providing access to the Father.

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## Transcript

Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing him, asked him if he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, When it is evening, you say, Ah, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.

You hypocrites, you know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. And he left them and departed.

And I had actually a lot more in Matthew 16 I was reading and putting together, but I just felt the need to stop on this one topic where Jesus said a wicked generation seeks after a sign. And I kind of want to just talk about that one topic tonight. And it's interesting, the context is they are coming to test Jesus.

That's not a good idea, is it? Coming to test Jesus. So we see from the get-go they had the wrong heart. And it's interesting because they apparently saw signs and wonders throughout the course of Jesus' ministry early on before this time.

Healings, deliverance. No man ever spoke like this man. They saw so much already, but they came testing him.

So they came with the wrong attitude. That's indicator number one. They came with the wrong attitude.

And a wicked and adulterous generation, you might wonder why he used two terms. Well, number one, wicked is what is evil in the sight of God. It has to do with our heart and our actions.

And adulterous is spiritual adultery. And many people don't believe that that can happen, but it can. Cheating on God.

You say, wow. But he talks about adultery, spiritual adultery throughout the Old Testament primarily and into the New Testament. Because when you have a relationship with someone other than God, you put something there in idle.

You're worshipping, you're giving your attention to something else. It becomes spiritual adultery. The attention, the affection we should be giving to God is given to another.

And that's what he's saying here in this wicked generation. These Pharisees, they were the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They were seeking after a sign.

Really what they were doing, and I'm going to get into it a little bit more obviously, is they were seeking, saying, give us a sign. We want to see for sure if you're God. And he said, okay, hold on.

Just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man will be three days in the earth. You will see a sign, but not the way you wanted it. And I'm going to get to that in a minute.

But this word here, a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. And it's a little bit tricky in the Hebrew language in the Old Testament and the Greek language in the New Testament. It's hard to find words that relate to our words here in English.

There's not a real good comparison many times. For example, love is a wonderful example. In the Greek language, you can have phileo, love, agape love.

You can show different aspects of that love. But we just say, I love my wife, and I love a cheeseburger. Is there a difference there? I love sports, and I love my children.

Big difference. It also has to do with this word. Well, I hope so.

Some of you are going to be in trouble if not. But it's just what this word seek. Because Jesus said in the Old Testament too, seek God with all your heart.

But here seek is a bad thing. Well, it really has to do again with the language. In the Greek language, I'm going to try to pronounce it, apizito, apizito, E-P-I-Z-E-T-O, apizito.

What it means is to demand something. They were coming demanding something on God. Demanding.

Where other aspects of the word seek, like if you seek God with all your heart, it's seeking with the intent to find something. I have to seek God with all my heart. I have to seek Him until I find Him.

But this is not that type of seeking. This is the demanding. Almost an arrogant challenge, if you would.

They're saying, do it right now. Right now. Jesus, show us who you are right now.

And it hasn't changed because many angrily and sarcastically say, if you're God, do this. There's a lot of atheists, believe it or not, they'll say, well, if there's a God out there, you do this. If there's a God out there,

you do this.

Or you show me, God. If there's a God out there, why did I lose my father at a young age? Or if there's a God out there, how could a God let this happen? How could a good, loving God let this happen? And you see the tragedy that's been in the news lately with the Duggards family. I think I pronounced that right.

With the 19 and counting and everything that came out in his past. And people are saying, if there's a God, how could they allow this? And you see God being used in different ways all over the news. In secular society, in the media.

If there's a God, how? And they don't really want to know that there's a God. They're challenging God. So that's the attitude they're coming with.

Because you can just read over this and say, Jesus, come on, you're being a little tough on these guys. Hey, show us who you are. They're not saying that.

They're coming with an arrogant, condescending, sarcastic attitude. And they're saying, you show us, you prove. What do you think I've been doing the last, I don't want to say three years, because it's not quite the end of his life.

And we don't know exactly where this was in the Gospels. Jesus' recorded Gospels are only about three years long. But somewhere in there, after Matthew 16, we're pretty far into his ministry.

And they saw things that no man ever did before. They saw amazing miracles. So to me, I just read this and laugh.

They're going to come and say, okay, come on, really show us who you are. What do you think has been going on? Do you want a lightning bolt in heaven that says, this is my son? And they would say, oh, come on, that's just somebody messing with us. Or would God literally speak from heaven thunder and say, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased? Oh, that was just thunder.

No matter, if you don't want there to be a God, you can think of every excuse in the book for there not to be a God. You just look around, and you have to say, as I often say, that creation screams creator. Why do I say that? Because it does.

Everywhere. There's little things, bacteria and all these little things. We can't even, there's a whole nether world you can't even see.

Where did all these little things get here? And they're just designed just right to do. Just all just happened. It's impossible.

And I mentioned that recently, and I think it is good to mention again. But if you think it through, and people say, well, I don't know, two planets hit. Or there was something happened, I'm not sure.

And where did the first human come from? I mean, was it just a little embryo that grew in darkness and just became a child? And then if so, was it a man or was it a woman? And then where did the other sex come from at the right time? I mean, you just check your brains at the door to believe that there's not a God. And if there was a human from premortal ooze and two planets hitting, and it was, say, a man in his 30s. Where did the woman come from? Where did the reproductive system come from? Where did the three-pound thing we call brain come from that is more complex than any computer that was ever

designed? Where did all that just come from? It can't just come from anything.

You can't take order from chaos. You can't take creation from nothing. But yet we say, well, you show us, God.

And that's why I love Romans 1. His invisible attributes are clearly seen. I mean, if you've ever witnessed the birth of a child, you say, oh, creator. Creator.

I'm a creation, you're the creator. But in our human pride and arrogance, we can come in and we can deny the existence of God, mainly so we can continue in destructive lifestyles. These guys did not want to repent.

They did not want to acknowledge John the Baptist's ministry. They did not want to acknowledge Christ. They did not want to acknowledge the message of the gospel.

And I think this is one good excuse to get out of it. Well, show us who you are. And they come with that attitude.

But I do want to clarify, this is a lot different than me or you saying, Lord, show me. Confirm your will for me. If you've been a Christian for any length of time, I guarantee you've prayed that prayer many times over.

Lord, if this is you, confirm it. Show me. Lord, I have to know if this is your will.

Would you please show me? That's a prayer that God loves. He honors that prayer because you're coming from the right attitude. Actually, here's why I do it.

When I do this, I'm not testing God. I'm testing me. Is it my heart? Are my motives pure? Is it right? Lord, is the flesh in the way here? Because I need you to show me.

I don't trust me, not you. So it's very healthy to say that and pray that. I hope you do.

Lord, show me. Confirm that this is you. Because you don't want to step out if God's not in it.

And there's a fine line, probably as fine as a two-pound fishing line. That fine line between being presumptuous and having faith. Very fine line there.

You can assume something that God's not in it. And that's not faith. It's presuming.

So I think it's good to seek God in this area and say, Lord, show me. Confirm your will. I'm seeking you.

Show me a sign. Lord, show me a sign. I prayed that many times before when I felt compelled.

My wife and I had to plant this church back in the early part of 2010. I prayed that a lot. Lord, you have to show me.

This is ridiculous if you're not in it. I'm not even going to take another step until you're in it. And it was amazing the amount of confirmation that came within a week or two.

I don't have time to go into it now. Maybe sometime I will. But just confirmation that would never happen on its own.

And I think that's the Lord showing us in my frailty, in my weakness, in my ability not to trust him 100% and fully unconditionally. Lord, like a little child, Daddy, would you show me? Show me you're in this because I don't trust what's in here. And you need to come through, and that's very healthy to do that.

But it's interesting, too. I think I want to note this. Jesus called them hypocrites.

That's where we get the word from a lot of times when people in the church say, Oh, there's just a bunch of hypocrites. There's just a bunch of hypocrites in the church. Have you ever heard that? Well, I hate to burst your bubble, but it's true, but it's not.

There's not as many hypocrites in the church as what we think. There's a lot of people struggling with sin. Huge difference.

And I've explained this before, but of course it fits here. A hypocrite is somebody like an actor or actress. They're putting on a mask.

So who I am on Sunday is I know who I'm not on Monday. And I'm a hypocrite. I'm deceiving you.

I have these great morals and principles that I talk about, but it's deception. I don't live that way. Now, that's a lot different than people coming to church saying, Man, I'm struggling.

I'm falling sometimes. This sin has got me bound. Would you help me? And we say, Oh, you're a hypocrite.

No, he's struggling. He's struggling with sin. He's not coming intentionally to deceive people.

But that's how a lot of people get out of going to church. Oh, there's just a bunch of hypocrites there. There are a few, granted.

But the majority of people who we're calling hypocrites are not hypocrites. For example, I just mentioned that story in the news. Is that gentleman a hypocrite? Or was it something he's repented of 15 years ago or 12 years ago? And I'm not trying to take either side because I know a big controversy.

But is that being a hypocrite? Or is that someone struggling in that sin? Not minimizing the victims whatsoever. They need as much support and encouragement as anybody else. But be very careful when you use the word hypocrite.

Because what I found, a lot of people aren't trying to deceive anybody. They're coming to church. They love God.

But they started this old pattern again, and they need help breaking through. That's not a hypocrite. That's the majority of Christians struggling.

So be very careful in that. Because the actual definition of a hypocrite is this. A person who pretends to have virtues, morals, and principles that they do not actually possess.

They are pretending. They're not really who they say they are. And that doesn't fit a lot of people in the church.

Some it does. Don't get me wrong. Please don't understand.

But I think we throw everybody under that umbrella. You blew it, you're a hypocrite. No.

I'm struggling. Versus somebody who, ah, comes out later. Yeah, I was deceiving.

I was a wolf in sheep's clothing. I could care less about God. I was playing church.

I was going through the motions. I was actually trying to draw some people away to me. And I was trying to destroy your church.

That's a hypocrite. You see the difference? It's a huge difference. Let's get back to this.

Back to a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. Seeks after a sign. And I want to bring in some practical application here because I've seen many Christians, including pastors, get all caught up in false manifestations.

False things about God. And it never turns out well. Here's the reason why.

God says seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and everything else will fall into place. Now, some churches don't have to deal with this. Other churches do.

Different things. But, and I've talked about before, the signs and wonders gospel is not the gospel. The signs, because they're seeking these things.

They're not seeking God necessarily. They're seeking weirdness. They're seeking things that are bizarre.

They're not seeking God. So we have to be careful. Where do we seek? That's not the gospel.

And the prosperity gospel is not the gospel. God might prosper you and God brings signs and wonders. God can do miraculous things.

Just talk to people on the mission field. But you don't seek those things. You see the difference? It looks like this.

If I'm coming to, I'm just using an example. If I'm going to a conference or something and I just am going to seek some bizarre experience. Or I'm going to seek this, you fill in the blank.

You know, whatever that is. You've seen the Holy Spirit be abused before many times. Some of you.

If they're going to seek that and I've got to get all worked up. And I'm there to just get this electricity. And I'm there to get this power.

And they're seeking the wrong thing. That's why an evil adulterous generation seeks after a wrong thing. They seek after an experience.

Or they come to church. Do you know there's a lot of people, it doesn't happen here that I'm really aware of. But bigger churches too a lot of times.

People actually go there seeking a down line. It's in the rule book number one of marketing. If you're a real estate agent, do you want to go to a little church or a big huge church? If you're in marketing or sales, down line.

Do you want to go to a little church or a big church? Come on guys. Numbers, numbers, numbers. It's all about numbers.

Talk to as many people as you can. It's sales, it's marketing. They're coming to church for the wrong reasons.

They're seeking God for the wrong reasons. They're coming in saying all the right things. But I see ten house listings out there.

Or I see ten new clients to pick up on this new weight loss pill that's coming out. Do you know that there's been weight loss pills since the 1900s? Now just wear this belt. Just wear this belt.

Just wear this belt. Now just take this product. Just take this product.

And it's just, come on folks. Close this and move more. That's the key.

Eat less, eat good, take care of the good thing, and move more. Move like God created us. That's the secret.

That's the secret. But everybody wants that little bullet, that little pill. And usually that little pill has a lot of bad stuff in it that resembles crystal meth or cocaine very closely.

Ephedra, high levels of caffeine. I'm not hungry. No wonder you're not hungry.

You're about ready to snap. But that's why I'm way off track. But the people go to, they're seeking God for the wrong reasons.

Here we go. How many people come to, because I did this. How many people come to church to find a mate? Confession.

2,000. 15 years ago I was going to a young adult study, and my motives, you know, the word of God. But Lord, I finally said, Lord, I'm coming here to meet somebody, and this is not right.

I need to come here to seek you. Now I met my wife there six weeks later. Praise God.

But my motives were not good. Because you go to church, you go, am I attracting anybody here? Nope, I won't be here next Sunday, next church. And isn't that how that works, though? So if you look at the practical application of this verse, it is enormous.

Because what do we go to church seeking? Many people go to church seeking just a good feeling. Actually, a lot of people come to church seeking conviction. Because if I can go to church, I feel convicted.

It's like therapy. Now I can go home. Man, like confession in the Roman Catholic Church.

It kind of serves that role. I came to church. Shane convicted me.

I feel better. Next week I'm feeling really bad. I come to church, I feel convicted.

Now I'm feeling really better. It serves as therapy. Or it's what good people do.

They come to church. Let me put something, \$20 in the offering box, and I'm feeling pretty good. I mean, good people go to church.

I've got to tell people I go to church. See, all these wrong reasons for going to church. The real reason is to come and worship God and to seek him.

You should come to church because I come to church every Saturday, even if, of course, I'm speaking. But I say, Lord, show me something. Minister to me.

Help me minister to others. Let this be a unique Saturday night. Lord, how can we touch the lives? Lord, move in this place.

We're here to seek you. It's your service. So that's the framework here.

That's why the signs and wonders gospel is not the real gospel, nor is the prosperity gospel the real gospel. Because you're seeking the wrong thing. And it's interesting.

Jesus referred to the fact that they saw natural signs, but not spiritual signs. They could read the weather pattern. They could see all these things.

But they could not read the spiritual signs. And it's happening today, too. The secular media now is using words like apocalyptic, Armageddon.

Man, the signs are clearly... The secular media even picks it up. They say, remember I mentioned a few weeks ago, some of California is going to fall off in the coast. Now they're measuring earthquakes and mammoth.

They say, well, I'm going to be fishing on that crater in August. I hope it waits. Because I'm not living my life in that fear.

But we see these signs. I mean, if I was an atheist, and I just happened to read, you know, Jesus's words, signs, earthquakes, famines, civil war, unrest. And you just see the connections there.

And you read elsewhere, in the last days they will become disobedient, blasphemers, proud, unteachable, arrogant, lovers of money. Lovers of pleasure, boastful. Are we going in that direction? Oh, we're already there.

And we laugh. But I remember when I was a kid, the things kids say now at eight or nine, I'm coaching a little league team. I would have got my mouth slapped at 12.

I mean, they're just disrespectful and belligerent. I mean, where did this happen? It's like a tidal wave of disobedience and disrespect. Because in the last days, as truth, here's what's happening.

As truth goes down, evil comes up. As you suppress truth, evil comes up. Probably many people, and they're asking me, I get emails at least once every week or two.

Why are so many people coming out of the closet? Why are so many people wanting to change their gender? Bruce Jenner now, he's idle. Why, why, why? Because Romans says they suppress the truth. When you suppress the truth and keep suppressing the truth, God gives you over to your own debased and corrupted mind.

So what we're seeing now is a tsunami of sin and filth because we've been suppressing the truth. You used to have the Ten Commandments monuments out in front of courthouses in the public schools 50

years ago. No, not now.

We start removing God from everything from government to schools to church life to our family life. You're suppressing the truth. As you suppress that truth, ungodliness and unrighteousness comes out.

This is not a popular sermon you're going to hear on TBN tomorrow, but it's the truth. That's why all this stuff is coming out. Truth is going under.

But there's a remnant. But God will bring revival, I believe. He will awaken his people.

God still sits on the throne. He told us this 2,000 years ago. So that's what's happening.

And you're also seeing good being called evil and evil being called good. Think about this. Hollywood loves what's going on with Bruce Jenner.

They would love nothing more than to hear in the news tomorrow that this pastor died of a heart attack. Let's just be true. Let's just be honest.

They hate what I'm saying. What I'm saying, what is good, they say is evil. And things that are evil and wrong, they're calling good.

So we're seeing that whole twist in a culture. That's why these things are coming up. I mean, aren't you just looking going, who's next? It's coming up.

Everybody's coming out of the closet. It's time for Christians to come out of the closet too and say, we will seek God with all of our heart, with all of our soul, with all of our strength. The majority is now becoming the minority.

And God says, good, Gideon's army. Now I can get you down to the faithful few who actually pray and fast and seek me with all of your heart. Do you know God doesn't need a big church? He just needs a faithful few.

That's all he's looking for. Because one plus God equals a majority. That's why I'm not really worried.

One plus God equals a majority. When God's in it, when he's in it, that is the majority. So you might be saying, what is the best way to seek God the right way? Now I've got everybody scared about seeking him the wrong way.

How do we seek him the right way? Very simple. I've talked about this often, but I have to talk about it again. Stay, pray, and obey.

It's a little thing I learned 15 years ago that has helped me greatly. Stay in his word, obey his principles, and pray for direction often. You cannot go wrong doing that.

Stay, pray, and obey. Stay in his word. Most people say, no, I don't want to do that one.

Obey his principles. No, I don't want to do that one. And pray often.

Become men and women of prayer. When time allows, I can do that. You see why it's not working? Because that's foundational.

I want to say this about the Bible too. I've said it a lot and haven't really made this point too clear. We talk about principles to follow.

The Bible says do this. The Bible says do this. But something interesting I think we forget is this literally transforms your mind.

It renews your thinking. So it's not just follow this. But your mind actually changes.

So when you're in the word of God and not the media, you just change. Your heart changes. Things that used to upset you now don't.

Things that you used to be addicted to and you couldn't say no to, because now your whole heart and mind has changed. That's how powerful the word of God is. It's not just a good book with suggestions.

It reprograms the mind. Because Paul says don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So it actually changes an individual.

I said a few weeks ago that's why places like Teen Challenge and other rehab centers are so successful. Is it because they just do certain things that nobody else has thought of? No, they renew the mind. When you're in this two or three hours a day and your whole environment changes, now it's God-centered, you change.

You come out of there changed. I don't want to take that again. I don't want to drink that again.

I'm changed because I renewed my mind. But then what does the devil do? Is that a temptation? Is that a distraction? And then pulls us back in that direction. I was doing so good and then pulls us back.

I've got to get back in and renew my mind. So that's why we encourage people to stay in this consistently, because it renews your mind. There's a battle out there.

There's a battle raging. And we have to read. So that's the point I want to get across.

Because somebody said, read your Bible, read your Bible, read your Bible. Your mom said, read your Bible. The pastor says, read your Bible.

But there's not just reading your Bible. You change. Your mind literally changes.

A good example, I got off track recently with little kids and at night and getting too much done. I'm now trying to before an hour before I go to bed, I'm trying to get a lot of good reading. And I've got Andrew Murray's book.

I don't know if you know who that is. If you don't, pick up some of his book. Andrew Murray, Ian Bounds on prayer.

I go to bed. I can't wait to get up in the morning. Is it 2.30? Is it 4? I can't wait to get up because I've been hungry on that Word of God.

I've been hungry on prayer. He talks about getting into Word of God and feasting on it, letting it, not commentaries, but letting the Word of God change you and challenge you. And I'm like, I can't wait to do that tomorrow morning.

Why? Because I put that in at night. Now my whole attitude has changed towards that. Reading George Mueller about orphanages and seeking God in prayer and him fully surrendering life and how God has worked and how he became a man of prayer.

And these guys would spend two, three hours in prayer. That's boring. No, it's not boring.

They were filled with the right thing. So when I put that in, guess what I want in the morning? I can't wait to get into the prayer closet. That's how men and women of God should operate because they're renewing their mind.

The problem is we turn on ISIS updates and earthquakes and mammoth. People email me. They think like, Shane, don't you live right there? What are you going to do? What do you mean what I'm going to do? I'm going to go to church and preach and I'm not going to live a life of fear.

But so many people want to knock us off that pedestal of trusting in God because misery loves company. And it's the Christians who are nowadays putting so much misery out there and they're not focusing on the word of God. And we can identify nine times out of ten, you can identify when somebody is not focusing on the word of God.

Very simple. There's no fruit of the spirit. There's no love and peace and gentleness.

Think about this. Is this you? Love, joy, peace, gentleness, calmness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control. Or is there anger, anxiety, panic attacks, this, this.

We're just constantly bombarded. So be very careful in this area as well. The word of God literally renews your mind.

We have to keep our hearts pliable, humble, and broken before the Lord as we seek him and he will direct us. You have to have your heart in the right spot for him to direct you. And I want to say this to somebody too.

I hope it helps. Stay usable. Stay usable.

Many people aren't usable for God. If God would give them this ministry in this time slot on this day with this sort of income, then I'm usable. That's not usable.

We tell God what we want to do. I want to minister to the person who's got it all together and the family who's this, and I don't want to go talk to homeless. You're not usable.

It's hard to be usable though, isn't it? Because we do. Our flesh wants to pick the comfort path, the path of least resistance, the comfortable path. I'll give you an example.

About five hours ago I got a call that there's a 14-year-old girl dying of cancer. She's got about a week left and the family's requesting a pastor. Can I be there tonight after the service? What did I say? No, I'm too busy.

Of course. Useable. Did the flesh want that? It's hard.

It's difficult. Man, I don't like this when it deals with kids. But usable.

Look, wherever you want to use me, I have to be ready to go. So do you. And the good news about this is many people are convicted.

I am too about this area. God says good. That's why Shane brought this message, because now you need to get back into being usable again.

Because we do. We get too comfortable. We've got hospital homes.

We've got three hospital homes they want to open to six homes with terminally ill patients or patients that are very sick. And we don't have enough people to go visit these hospital homes. A church doesn't have enough people to go visit these people.

It just perplexes me. I mean, do we want the right environment next to our house with the air conditioning on before the game starts? I mean, folks, if you're going to get out and do anything for God, you've got to be usable. You've got to be flexible and pliable and say, Lord, wherever you want me to send me.

Because often it has to do with ministering to those you normally wouldn't go to on your own. That's why it's called ministry. If it's not called ministry, it's called a social gathering or a potluck.

That's easy. But ministry is difficult. And I came across this article that Joe McIver wrote on the Christian Post opinion page.

And he talks about a pastor named Bruce McIver. He was a longtime pastor of Dallas Wilshire Baptist Church. He used to tell a story of a man in his former church who was without any evidence of human giftedness.

This man could not stand before a group and say a word. His attempts in business would all come to nothing. His family life was in shambles.

And yet he was faithful in church attendance. That's what caught my eye. One day, Bruce and the man found themselves in a car alone traveling to a funeral.

That's when the man decided to open up to his pastor and ended up giving him a lesson he'd never forget. The man said, Pastor, I want to tell you something I've never shared with anybody before. You're going to find this hard to believe, but when I graduated from high school, I was named most likely to succeed.

At the commencement, I won the orator's medal. It means he was a good speaker. People used to come up on the street and say, You're going to make your mark in this world.

You're going to do great things. As a young adult, I got the definite impression that God wanted me to devote those gifts to Him. But I resisted that call.

I had other things to do, more important things, I thought. For 20 years, every time I set foot in the church, that beckoning appeared. It was constant, but I continued to deny it.

That was long ago, and you see what has happened. All my gift in this has wasted away from disuse. My business ventures have failed, and my family life is a grief.

It's falling apart. I'm telling you all this so that perhaps you can use it. Sometimes when you're speaking before a group, they have their lives before them, and I wish you could tell them about me and then say, It

may cost a lot to say yes to God, but it costs even more to say no.

And that is true. Disobedience, when God is calling us to do something, disobedience results in what I call spiritual death. See, it's impossible.

This is another point last night. Andrew Murray had a whole chapter on obedience to God, and I had to put the book down and say, Oh my God, it's everywhere. God says, I desire obedience, not sacrifice.

Those who are obedient obey my word. Those who love me keep my commandments, and it's throughout all of scripture, and disobedience leads to heartbreak. Now, let me put in a disclaimer.

We cannot serve God perfectly on this side of heaven, me included. There's many things that I fall short on in trying to obey him, but if there's areas in your life that you know God is saying, Do this, do this, do this, fighting that will not improve things. Hiding from God's call will not improve things.

Disobedience leads to disappointment. Disobedience leads to spiritual death. What I mean by that is people can die spiritually.

Have you ever been there? I have. The life of God is out of you. Not literally, but there's no passion for the things of God.

Church attendance is difficult. I think that's why church attendance is very difficult for most people. I just read a report that in the last 20 years, the most committed people in the church now are only coming three times a month.

They miss one week a month just from 20 years ago, and they're showing this lack of commitment. They're showing this apathy towards God is what it really is. There's not a desire and a hunger because the cares of the world have taken that away.

We can get bitter. We can get resentful. But let me encourage you that God can get you back on track.

He just needs a pliable vessel. You just need to say, Lord, I have been off track. I have delayed this, but I'm coming back home.

I'm coming back to being usable again. I don't want to have this misery and discomfort. I want to be usable and pliable.

Would you use me again? And that's a prayer and answer. He'll answer that prayer. And this is why so much of my focus is on the heart.

See, there's a lot of people who come into this church. They come, they stay for a while, or they come for one time. And there's a general theme of this church, without a shadow of a doubt.

I go after the heart for a reason because the heart affects everything. The heart affects everything you do. You can have sound doctrine, which is true.

You can have truth. The Pharisees did, but their heart wasn't right. You can do good things.

The Pharisees did, but their heart wasn't right. You can give money. The Pharisees did, but their heart wasn't right.

You see where this is going, right? You can think that you're a good person. The Pharisees did. You can come to church.

The Pharisees did, but the heart's not right. If the heart's not right, folks, everything else falls apart. The heart has to be right.

So God uses sermons like this to convict the heart. Draw the prodigal son home. Bring the wayward daughter back home.

Bring the man or woman who's been distant from God. Hasn't he been using their gifts? Hasn't been usable? They use it so it pierces, and the heart says, Yes, now I am open for you, God. That's the point of it.

The heart has to be right. And I'll get ready to wind down in a minute, but I want to talk about five indicators of an evil and wicked heart. You might say, Shane, I've had enough tonight.

Well, I've got to finish this sermon. But actually, to me, this is really good news because the reason it convicts is so that change takes place. The reason we revisit these types of things is so we can say, Ah, that's me.

That's me. And that's one of my problems, I'll just be honest with you, with a lot of churches, whether it's this valley. And I'm not saying we've mastered it.

We've got a lot of flaws ourselves. But if churches aren't challenging the heart, they're not changing the person. They're not.

So people come week after week and month after month, unchallenged, and as a result, unchanged. There's no change. Zero change.

And that's why this is so important to hit the heart. Here's five indicators of an evil and wicked heart. Number one, Jesus is talking about evil and wicked hearts, right, with these Pharisees.

Evil hearts are experts at creating confusion and contention. I actually pulled this from an article by Leslie Vernick this week. Evil hearts are experts at creating confusion and contention.

They twist the facts, mislead, they lie, and they avoid taking responsibility, and they make up stories, and they withhold information. Why? Because they're creating confusion and contention. They've got a wicked heart.

The second thing, evil hearts are experts at fooling others with their smooth speech and flattering words. But if you look at the fruit of their lives, you will find there's no real evidence of godly growth or change anywhere. It's all smoke and mirrors.

That's what these religious leaders had. The third indicator of an evil heart is they crave and they demand control. And their highest authority is their own self-reference.

You ever met those people? They are the highest authority. They reference themselves. There's an indication of a very hard heart.

They use Scripture to their own advantage, but ignore and reject passages that might require self-correction, self-analyzation, and repentance. Be very careful in this area. If you're avoiding certain Scriptures because they convict you, that's not a good spot to be.

That's the whole point of the conviction. And many times, back to what I said earlier, we don't want to talk about the difficult things. I can talk about God's love and grace and mercy, and I bet every one of you will come back next week.

But when I talk about these things, I don't like that guy. Until a few months go by, and then God starts continually working in your heart, and you realize that the heart's not right. Number four, with these religious leaders as well, evil hearts play on the sympathies of good-willed people, often trumping the grace card.

They demand mercy, but give none themselves. They demand warmth and forgiveness, but they themselves do not give it. And the fifth point, evil hearts have no conscience, no remorse.

They do not struggle against sin or evil. They delight in it, all the while masquerading as someone of noble character. So it goes back to the word I used at the beginning, hypocrite.

And it's interesting. It's often an actual hypocrite who will refer to other people as hypocrites. An actual hypocrite, when they're called under the carpet, when they're called out, they actually love to use the word hypocrite, or you're hypocrites in the church.

It's often the person who is an actual hypocrite that throws that term around loosely. It's a good way to, hey, you're a hypocrite, I'm not listening to you. They go through this checklist here.

And this lady continues, Leslie Vernick, who wrote the article, if you are working with someone who exhibits these characteristics, it's important that you confront them head on. You must name evil for what it is, the longer you try to reason with them or show mercy towards them, the more you, as the Christian counselor, will become a pawn in his or her game. And this article was actually taken from a Christian counseling website.

And she's saying something, she's absolutely correct, but many times we do the opposite. She says if we're working with somebody like this, we have to confront them head on. You have to say evil for what it is.

You have to confront and challenge. But most of us, well, let me show you mercy, and let me show you grace, and that's good initially, but when that becomes, when you become an enabler, that's the problem. These people, you know what an enabler is.

You allow somebody to continue a destructive lifestyle because you don't help them challenge it. You don't challenge that destructive lifestyle. So the evil heart has to be challenged.

It has to be confronted in this area. And that's why I'm bringing these statistics up or these quotes up, because believers can begin to slide in this direction. Did you know that? You can begin to slide in the direction of a hard heart.

Your heart can become cold and callous. You can start to create confusion and contention. You can start to smooth things out with your speech.

You can start to demand control of the situation. You start to play on the sympathies of good people and use them. Believers can.

So this is a call as well to repent from that and to come back from that. Listen, a hard heart will never lead you or me in the right direction. God needs a pliable, you know what that is? Flexible, bending, humble, cemented heart that he can guide.

And then the closing point, when Jesus said, the sign of Jonah. Nothing will be given to you except the sign of Jonah. He actually gave them the most powerful sign of all.

The resurrection. Here's what he's saying. I'll give you a sign, just like Jonah was three days, three nights in the belly of the great fish, I'm going to be three days in the belly, in the heart of the earth.

And I will rise again. Now that would either be a lunatic, a liar, or the Lord Jesus Christ. That's a great... If you can say, I'm going to die next week, and on Wednesday, I'll be back.

That's the greatest miracle that's ever happened. Why? Because he's the son of God. He's the son of God.

The resurrection validates all of Christ's claim. Everything that Christ said in the Bible was validated in the resurrection. Everything.

Everything. If that body would have been found, and that tomb not empty, all of it falls apart. And at that point, we've talked about this before too, hell, death, and the grave were conquered in the resurrection.

Sin was atoned for in the resurrection. That's why we don't believe in purgatory. That's why we don't believe in paying penance, or paying things, or going to see a mediator.

Christ did all of that. It's all been paid for on the cross. The resurrection.

Because of the resurrection, the Bible says, walk boldly into the throne room of grace. You dare not try to approach God with dirty hands and dirty heart. It's because of what Christ did.

That's how powerful the resurrection is. And then the final thing, it provides access to the Father. Jesus said, I'm the way, the truth, and the life.

Nobody comes to the Father except through Christ. Not good works, not another church, not another denomination. You know, I regularly hear people, when I talk about this subject, they say, oh, I'm good, I'm Baptist.

You're good, you're Baptist? You know what that usually means? They're trusting in their denominational name, and they're not trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm Catholic. I hear that more than anything.

So you're trusting in the church? You're trusting in the papacy? That's going to be your entrance into heaven? What they're saying is, I go through rituals. I go to church. I'm a pretty good person.

That's my end. No, it's not your end. Christ is the only way, the only truth, the only life.

Nobody comes to the Father except through Him. That's the only way. And that's why the resurrection is so important.

He said, you want a sign? I'll give you a sign, just like Jonah. I'll be buried, I'll be rose again. And most of them rejected Him, even when they saw it.

Interesting thing, read the Bible. These men knew that Jesus' body was not there. The Roman soldiers were scared to death.

They ran back, and they said, here's what happened. You would have thought, you would have had a revival. Those Pharisees, those Sadducees should have hit the floor on their face and began praising Almighty God.

But what they said is, here's a large sum of money. When it comes to the governor's ears, we'll help you. Just tell them they stole the body.

And it's still that saying, it's still today, the Bible says. And it's true. He asked most Jewish people whether the body was stolen.

Think about that. The soldiers, Roman soldiers who were trained to kill said, here's what happened. Angel, light, big stone move.

He walked out, gone. We're in panic mode. And I can't believe the soldiers would take the money and then go lie.

They just saw a miracle. They just saw it. So at some point, every person that hears the message of the Gospel has to either embrace it or reject it.

Either Christ is the only way or He's not. You can't rely on going to church. You can't rely on being a Baptist or a Catholic or whatever it is.

You can't. You have to look, do I have a relationship with Christ? That's the bottom line. And it brings me to close with this Scripture from Luke.

Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many will seek to enter and will not be able. Jesus says, strive because many seek. That doesn't make any sense.

If they're seeking, why don't they find? Again, back to the context and the transliteration. This word strive is where we get our word agonized from. Agazinomia.

Don't have me pronounce that again. That's where we get our word agonized from. Have you ever agonized for something? Agonize.

It's agonizing. We get that word strive from. It means struggling, striving to contend as with an adversary.

So Jesus is saying, you've got to strive to enter in that narrow gate because there's an adversary who's hell bent on stopping you. And then he says, many will seek to enter. And that word there, seek, means to ponder.

It means to contemplate without coming to solid agreement. So you have to strive. You have to push against the adversary.

You have to say, that voice coming right now that says, you don't want to be a Christian. You don't want to be that weird guy up there. You want to have fun.

Drink, party until you die. That's what you don't want. Then you'll have to go to the mission field in Africa.

You'll have to be a Bible thumper. All your kids will be home schooled and all this weird stuff. You don't want to do any.

That's not what he's saying. You have to fight against the flesh to strive. I'm contending against the enemy because many people will seek and not enter the kingdom of heaven.

That is unbelievable. But it makes sense. Do you know how many people have considered God? Even atheists will consider God and they come to their opinion.

Jesus says, many people seek me, meaning they consider, they contemplate, they think about, but they never come to solid agreement about who Christ is. So I will leave you with that. If you've never come to solid agreement, all you've been doing is seeking then.

And that's not a bad thing necessarily, but you have to seek in order to find. You have to seek with all your heart, with all your strength, and at some point you have to say, okay, I'm done. I'm done seeking as in this term of the word.

I'm embracing the gospel. I'm embracing Christ. That's what you have to do.

Listen, kids, young adults, your parents will not be with you when you die. Do you understand that? Your parents will not be with you when you die. I know it's a wonderful feeling right now, but we will stand before Almighty God on our own and have to give an account for our actions.

And Jesus says, I paid the way. Just embrace me. Just repent of your sin and acknowledge that I am Lord and you will be saved.

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