

# Beware of the Leaven of Sin

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon emphasizes the dangers of sin and false doctrine, urging believers to confront and eradicate them before they corrupt the whole body of Christ.*

**Duration:** 51:53

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:10, Lamentations 3:40, Matthew 16:6, Romans 6:16, James 5:20

**Topics:** "Sin And Repentance", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being vigilant against the leaven of sin, drawing parallels between leaven as false doctrine and sin in the Bible. It highlights the need to address sin in the church, home, and individually, stressing the significance of repentance and returning to the Lord to cleanse and renew one's relationship with God. The speaker encourages a proactive approach to spiritual growth through prayer, worship, and repentance to prevent the growth of sin in one's life.

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## Transcript

We are at part two. If you remember last week, I talked about leaven. And let me just read it again, Matthew 16.6. If you have your Bibles, Matthew 16.6. Jesus said to them, and he's talking to his disciples, take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, is it because we have taken no bread? How is it, and I'm skipping now to verse 11, how is it that you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread, but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees? Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of the bread, natural leaven, but of doctrine, of the doctrine of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. So Jesus is warning the disciples, listen, be very careful and not receive what these false teachers are giving you. And if you weren't here last week, make sure you get a CD on your way out.

I talked about a lot of differences between Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Jehovah Witness, and historical biblical Christianity, what those differences are. And this would be a great tool to give out to maybe friends that you know, or the next time you have somebody knocking at your door, you just say, okay, I'll read your literature if you listen to this, a little handoff there. And we talked about beware of bringing in the false leaven, the false doctrine.

Because if you think about it, how is the enemy going to influence? With false truth, subtleties, he draws us away through false truth. So that was last week, and it was really, the whole sermon was on leaven. And leaven in the Bible is false doctrine, leaven in the Bible is also sin.

Throughout the New Testament, Paul would make mention in First Corinthians and even in the Old Testament, leaven, it's a little bit of, leaven's like a little substance that gets into bread or dough. And once it gets in there, you're not getting it out. It affects the whole piece of bread there, actually the whole loaf of bread, it affects everything.

So Jesus was saying false doctrine, and also we can look at leaven as sin. And I didn't get to that part of the sermon last week because it just kept going, going, going. So this is really part two of last week, and I titled it Beware of the Leaven.

Beware of the leaven of sin. And a little sin, like a little bad doctrine, what we talked about last week, grows and can destroy the whole body, individually and corporately. And if you've been coming here any length of time, this is no secret, this is a topic I obviously touch on quite often and how it affects us.

But I wanted to just talk about it being leaven, how it affects the body. What I mean by individually and corporately is a little sin in our lives affects us. We know that it grows, and it grows, and it grows.

It doesn't lay dormant very long, and if it does at all. Sin is either growing or it's withering, depending on whether we're feeding or starving it. There's not really a middle ground.

And when it comes to this area of leaven and sin, growing individually, it also can grow in the church, corporately. And Paul talked about an issue in 1 Corinthians where there was actually a man dating his father's wife. And Paul said, how in the world are you allowing this? The church said, oh yeah, it's no big deal.

And then Paul says, don't you know that a little leaven leaveneth, the King James, the whole lump, the whole group of people. And what happens, the dynamic is this. When a church allows, and I'm actually not gonna talk a lot about this tonight because I'm two chapters away from Matthew 18.

If you're familiar with Matthew 18, that's where how do you confront a brother who's sinning, or sister who's sinning? How do you confront them, and how do you bring two witnesses, and then what's the church involvement? And we're actually working on some type of policy for the church, and how does it look, what's it look like? The whole goal of Matthew 18, believe it or not, is restoration. It's to restore somebody who's caught in sin. And you go to them, then you bring a few others.

And it's like, listen, you've gotta take some necessary steps. And by involving more people, sometimes that awakens them. And it's not to just shun them, it's to really challenge them and to show that they're not going in a healthy direction.

And what happens in a church, and we can all fall prey to this, is if there's an issue going on and we don't address it, we just look the other way, it's not gonna go away. It's gonna grow and affect more people. And in my opinion, it can dramatically affect the anointing on that church.

Because there's a lot of churches, I can name a few in this valley, who are fairly large churches, but they don't wanna do anything about sin. They're not gonna confront the homosexual couple there that's just living together and loving each other, and they're not gonna say anything. They're not gonna say anything

about the couple living together, that doesn't wanna get married.

And they're not gonna say anything about this person, this wife, who's now seeing some other guy. And we're just, man, Shane, we're not gonna address any of that. Well, the problem is, they know not that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from that church.

Because that doesn't honor God. Now, on the flip side, we don't wanna go around with a big sledgehammer, smashing somebody every time they make a mistake. And you go around like a Pharisee, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah.

Well, as you're pointing a finger, there's four pointing back at you. And not using humility in this area in grace, and not rushing judgment. So I'm gonna get to that when I get to Matthew 18.

So I was kinda gonna go that direction tonight, but there's just too much there. Because there's a lot to consider when a church sins, and a church can sin. What I mean by that is, we know of people that they're in blatant sin.

And as the leadership in the church, if they say, well, it's really none of our business, we're just here to preach the word. Then I believe that that's not right. The Bible's clear on that.

And Paul said, hey, you shouldn't allow this. This shouldn't excite you. You shouldn't turn the other way, as if it's gonna go away.

Because it doesn't go away. A lot of the churches I mentioned that I'm aware of, they've got problems everywhere because they didn't nip it in the bud. It affects this group, and this group, and then they've got this group, and now the youth leader, and now this, and it's just everywhere, it's just rampant.

I knew of actually a worship leader here locally, it's a few years back. He told me that he just couldn't work there anymore because he would, people would be at schooner Saturday night getting drunk and then helping with worship on Sunday. And the leadership was like, well, at least they're here, and maybe the message will hit them, and it just doesn't make sense.

You gotta be very careful in this area. So that's what we're gonna get into when we get to Matthew 18. But back to this issue of sin as leaven and growing.

James 1.15, if you paraphrase James 1.15, it says something like this. Like cancer, when a sinful desire is born, basically when it's acted on, it's like leaven that grows and grows and grows until it consumes and overcomes. That's a goal of sin, as leaven.

If we have a sinful desire and it's acted upon and not repented, and then because it's acted upon, more it's acted upon, and you just keep acting upon it, and then you begin to excuse it with lies and manipulation, it just keeps growing with the ultimate goal of destroying. If you look at any broken marriage, any broken family, any broken relationship with God, it started with this. The sin that grew and grew and grew.

And I'm actually gonna, I think it's okay, mention something that happened this week with someone I know. I'm not gonna mention names or dates or places or anything like that. But a friend of mine, we built a relationship over the last few years.

He was actually incarcerated about three or four years, five years ago or so. I don't know the exact time. Actually got out, was doing great.

I mean, this guy was on the fast track to maybe pastoring someday or being an elder or leadership or overseeing a ministry. But about two years ago, it took a turn, and it started dating somebody that was not a healthy relationship. And some of us pointed that out.

And that turned into premarital sex, no big deal. And then that turned into, well, let's enjoy some alcohol again. And now it gets more and more, walking farther and farther away from God.

Eventually ended up back doing heroin, homeless, living on the streets in Lancaster. Eventually led to theft and just now got ten more years back in prison this week. How does that happen? Now, we can't look at this with a judgmental spirit because that's in us.

That's in us, that ability to sin and to allow it. But over a two-year period, over a two-year period, that happened. And right with this, the little leaven just comes in that little, it'll just grow and grow.

And then if you don't, and we knew there's an issue when I would go talk to him, a few others would talk to him, and it was nothing but excuses. Well, you're just being judgmental, you're pretty prideful and arrogant. And I'm like, what's that have to do with anything? You're falling in these areas.

This is not a healthy relationship. And one progression led to another and led to another. So let me just say up front that you have to, what we said a few weeks ago, you have to, we have to, I have to nip sin in the bud.

If there's something in our life that is not healthy, I do this too. I would bring it to the elders or the board here and say, listen, help me in this area. I don't wanna become envious.

I don't wanna become proud. I don't wanna become harsh. Can you help me in this area? And you nip it in the bud, you bring it to the light and the surface and say, I'm struggling in this area versus excuses.

Because the enemy loves excuses. This is a real practical sermon tonight. I'm just gonna bring it to you straight and I'm hoping it's gonna help a lot of people.

But he loves when we lie and manipulate and make excuses to continue in what we know to be destructive. It's not your friend. It will eventually, eventually lead to worse and worse things.

It's a slow progression down. And the reason is this, you can't control it. It controls you.

Once you submit to it, you become its slave. Once I see as a believer, as a child of God, we have the ability to say no. We have the Holy Spirit residing in us.

I'm not gonna submit to you. I'm submitting to God. I'm submitting the Holy Spirit.

But if there's a sin and we begin to submit to that sin, and we submit to it, and it now controls us, it's like a slave. Let me read what Paul wrote in Romans 6.16. This is a commentary. Paul said, do you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

Whatever you choose to obey becomes your master. So once a person succumbs, and that's what the big issue, for example, what's in the news right now, Bruce Jenner, this began years ago. Years ago, and everybody's emailing me, what's your comment? Well, what do you think my comment is? I mean, it's sad.

This is not right. I mean, this is somebody giving in, probably he's an unbeliever. I'm assuming, I don't know his heart, but you're giving in to something.

And sin perverts. Something, okay, it's no big deal now, people say, well, then it begins to pervert, and gets more perverted, more corrupt. That's why the culture is becoming more perverted, and all these things.

And it's an epidemic, we're seeing all this rise to the surface. Things I can't even talk about that I didn't even know existed. I mean, where does this perversion come from? The little sin that began to grow many years ago, and you have to bring it to the surface, and it hurts.

There's a process there of getting rid of it. And I've got a good book I've been referencing quite a bit throughout my sermons, I think Brian, you recommended, Brian, one of the ushers, recommended a book, Define Gravity, how to survive the storms of pastoral ministry. And what he does is he relays piloting with sin and bad choices.

And he said something interesting about crashing, planes crash, obviously. Many who crash are in a pattern, but now he's talking about people in church that crash, their lives eventually crash. Many who crash are in a pattern of self-deception, flying entirely without that objective sense of how close they actually are to the ground.

And the point of the book was a lot of times, look at the instrument panels. Don't trust your feelings, because right could be left, and left could be right, and up could be down. And you're gonna hit the ground.

You have to trust your instrument panels, trust the word of God, trust godly counsel, trust the truth. Because your feelings will lead you in the wrong direction. Have you ever thought about this? Well, if I just trust my feelings, well, it feels good to sin.

Well, if you're trusting your feelings, it feels good to sin. When we're going to sin, it's not like, man, it feels like I'm at a dentist having a root canal done. And now it feels like I'm walking on sharp glass with my shoes off.

That's not how it feels. If it felt that way, nobody would do it. So it just feels right, because sin, that's how it's attractive.

So when we trust our feelings, we're trusting the very thing that is leading us in the wrong direction. And back to this young man I mentioned, he actually is my age. I told him about, hey, this relationship, look where it's leading you.

Yeah, but the feelings, and it's God ordained, and God brought us together. Yeah, but look, don't trust those feelings. Remove the feelings for a minute.

And this is very destructive and very dangerous. Don't you see it? Why don't you see it? Because we're blinded by feelings and self-deception and pride. And so be very careful in this area, myself included.

Our GPS, you know what the GPS in your car is, correct? This book talks about three elements. GPS, God has given us a GPS. The word of God, others, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

When all three of those are operating correctly, it can keep you away from destroying your life. It can keep you away from walking down the wrong path. It can get you back on track.

Because my GPS is, what does the word of God say? What does counsel of others say? And what is the conviction of my own heart? Because we all know, you know that this, right, the little boy's gonna take the cookie out of the cookie jar. He knows from the minute he's walking in that kitchen, this is not feeling right. What is that? It's the internal alarm clock.

Thank God for it. And we all know, we feel it. Oh, here comes that umpire within.

Here comes that, shh, shh, holding, blowing the whistle. I'm just gonna ignore it. And I'm gonna ignore it.

And shh, conviction, that's what conviction does. It's a wonderful gift from God. If people would just listen to conviction, this doesn't feel right.

I'm not doing it. You would avoid so many troubles. But what we say, I know this doesn't feel right, but I deserve it.

I'm frustrated. I'm discouraged. You don't know what they did to me.

And that's, you ask most people, the enemy comes at opportune times. David, when you should be out to war, laziness. He loves idle hands.

Oh, he loves idle hands. Not doing much at all. That's why I wanna stay busy.

I would love to stay busy because that idleness, that contentment, that he loves to just work in that environment. One of the author, one of the commercial pilots that they interviewed in this book, he said this, our feelings, our feelings indulged without examination will kill us. And he was saying that to pilots.

Your feelings, if they're indulged without examining them, they will kill you. And our feelings like to sin. So keep that in mind.

Because we make, don't we make judgments on how I feel? I feel how I feel. I feel like doing this. Exactly.

If you didn't feel like doing it, you wouldn't do it. So feelings are not friends in this area. Excuses allow us to walk further into the enemy's camp and pride prevents us from seeing the danger.

Pride prevents us from seeing the danger. You can always tell a prideful person when they try to defend everything. Instead of saying, you know what? I was wrong.

I was wrong. Can you help me work on that? Then God says, oh, good. I can work in this guy's heart.

That leaven, that sin now is going to be crucified. The sin is gonna be killed. Because the good thing, not a good thing about sin, but the good thing about the situation is sin grows, but you can starve it.

You can cut it off with the cross. You can put it, you can just eradicate it. You don't have to pay penance, what we talked about.

You don't have to do all these things and wait months and months. You can eradicate it from your life tonight. It's that easy.

And here's where I don't wanna skip over this, even though we've talked about it before. It starts with the wrong thoughts, right? Media and ungodly views, ungodly influences, lies, excuses. So once it starts with the thoughts, then what's interesting, it comes out in our attitude.

Again, not to mention this man I was talking to earlier, but this is what happened. The attitude started to change. There was bitterness, there was anger, there was pride, there was judgmentalism.

And these are all sins, because you might be thinking, oh, here he's talking about pornography or he's talking about drugs. No, they're sins of the heart. Do you know what happens with envy if you allow it to grow? What they used to call it, the green giant or something, the green monster? The green monster within? There's little VeggieTales stories for kids on this.

You gotta know. Envy, if it grows, turns, it becomes very wicked. Because you're envying something, you start to put them down, they become a target.

And your whole attitude changed. Judgmentalism. We can become very judgmental, very prideful.

If that begins to grow, it's not gonna be pretty. That type of person will just judge everything. Pride and judgmentalism.

So you have to watch your wrong attitudes as well. And then those, the wrong thoughts, the wrong attitudes, the wrong actions, then that's what eventually happens. I talked about this earlier.

Laziness, theft, compromise, mood-altering drugs, food, whatever it is, those actions, if we know these sinful actions, if we know this isn't right, and we don't stop it, it keeps progressing. Have you ever done that and not nipped something in the bud? I made the mistake of going to Krispy Kremes last week. The new, now guess what I want every morning? What did I, I never, I would never drive to that place in my life.

But you start, so you can ask me next week if I had a, and I'll say no. I'm not gonna, hold me accountable. But if you start that process of, and I'm convinced, I know this isn't good for me.

I know the partial hydrogenated oils and the sodium nitrates, and you want me to give you a quick lecture on what's in that? Not good. And I, well now you're probably still gonna go there. But that's what, that's what even, I just wanna show you the little things, how they lock in and grow.

Whatever your struggle is, the enemy will hone in on that and just feed it and feed it and feed it. For one person it's this, for another person it's that. And if we don't, if we don't stop this leaven, it just grows and grows and grows.

And again, I wanna throw this in here. Lying and manipulating are contributors because sin grows in darkness. The reason people lie and manipulate, and oh no, I didn't do that, and we always present our sin is not that bad.

Have you noticed that? When you open up to somebody, it's never as bad as what it really is. And then to hide it, sometimes we lie, we manipulate because sin loves to grow in darkness. But if you expose it, it loses its power.

That leaven just dies, it fades from exposing it. And like cancer, leaven cannot be ignored or negotiated with. You can't negotiate it and you can't ignore it.

And it's interesting about cancer, I don't know how many of you studied that, but it starts out as just, you know, cells that kind of go crazy in the body. And they begin to grow and begin to grow. And they only get so big before they need blood supply.

And they'll call out to that, the arteries or the blood vessels. And the blood will begin to connect to that cancer. And the cancer now is in the bloodstream.

It can't be negotiated with. It can't be, you know, let's just ignore it, it'll go away. What do we have to do with it? We have to eradicate it.

If it's something you can remove, if it's the chemotherapy or nutrition, whatever it is to remove that stuff, sin acts the same way. It just grows and grows and grows. So let's talk about the three areas.

Church, home, individually. The first example I alluded to earlier is church. It's an example, you can find this, it's very interesting if you wanna read 1 Corinthians 5 this evening.

A man is living with his father's wife and the church is fine with this. Paul uses the Greek word used in Galatians 5.9, a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Therefore remove this man from your midst and remove this wickedness from among yourselves.

So not only are you removing the man, you're removing the leaven that's hurting, harming the church. So again, I'm gonna do more on this when I get to Matthew 18. But one thing we can learn from this is avoidance.

Saying nothing is saying something. Think about that. When we avoid it, saying nothing is saying something.

Like how many Christians never go out and vote, but they wanna complain. We never can vote about anything. And we're just gonna avoid it.

But avoiding saying nothing is saying something. We can't simply look the other way in this area. But again, I really wish I had a lot on this, but I decided to hold it till we get to Matthew 18 because it doesn't really apply with going to somebody, witnesses.

But let me say this, many rules and very little grace is not the way to go. And too much grace and no rules is not the way to go either. Trying to find that balance when we're handling this issue with sin.

And I'm gonna get to that later. So let's, enough with that. 2 Thessalonians 3.14-15 sheds additional light on this topic in the church.

If anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him that he may be ashamed. But Paul continues, yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. Now John Wesley commenting on this passage said this, we are to have no company with them, no intimacy, no familiarity, no needless correspondence.

Tell him lovingly of the reason why you shun them. There's a word we don't use very often anymore, right? Tell them why you shun them. Now, this doesn't mean that we put our nose in the air and arrogantly walk past them, but it does mean that we should conduct ourselves in a way that supports their decision, a way that does not support their decision to remain in the sin.

So what Paul's saying is what happens when somebody's sinning, caught in that sin, if we act and say, it's no big deal, I'm not gonna do anything, not gonna say anything, and there's no ramifications that Paul says, withdraw yourself from such a person. Actually, this happened in my life too, about a year ago. A friend of mine, he's in leadership at a church, and he actually decided to just separate from his wife.

And there's some other things there with this, and I went to him, a couple other pastors, we talked to him, there was just no change. Nothing's gonna happen. Now, I still see him around town, and it's not gonna, oh, there he is, I can't believe this guy, and walk past him.

You know, I'm cordial, I say hello, but it's not time to go get lunch, let's go golfing as if nothing happened. That's not the time to do that. Now, if you wanna say, hey, let's get lunch, can we talk about this and give me some advice? Sure.

So it's not that you just avoid them, but you say, hey, listen, I can't act as if nothing is happening right now. And that's the whole point. The whole point is this is the pain a person sees.

Man, I've done something that's wrong. And so it's hard for me, it's hard for them. He sees the pain he's caused, and hopefully, God will use that, like to bring the prodigal son home.

So that's the whole point of, what happens is if somebody's caught in sin, and we say, hey, it's no big deal, let's go get a burger and this, and go to the movies and golfing, you just ignore it. They continue it because they have your support. You're encouraging it by saying nothing.

So that's the whole point of things like this, is to show them the seriousness of what they're doing, and hopefully win them back. And God often uses this type of pain to remove the leaven, and eventually bring that prodigal home. But we can't rush the process, but nor should we try to avoid it.

So that's a church example that I'm gonna expound upon a few months probably, by the time we get to Matthew 18, it might be a little while. Or a couple weeks, I don't know. So you just have to come and find out.

The second example is in our home, where a little, do you know in the home, a little leaven can definitely, a little sin can make a huge difference in the home? If a father's doing certain things, it can affect the children. If a child's doing things, it can affect the family, the mother. It affects, it grows in the home.

And I like what Paul said in Ephesians 6, for fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up in the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord. And if we had time, I would take you to another example in the Old Testament of Eli.

He was rebuked by God for not reprimanding his sons and allowing them to do things that they shouldn't be doing. So addressing sin in the home, too. And that's why I often say fathers, mothers, whatever, what are you allowing into your homes? Through the media, through social media, what are we, are we encouraging our home to be a breeding ground for Satan? Or a holy sanctuary that puts God first? Nobody can do this perfectly.

I've never mastered it. I don't know anybody that has. But we can try.

Our hearts are set on honoring God. So what are we allowing into our homes? Because what we allow into our homes influences the family. Men, women, children, it influences the whole family.

If a person has, for example, a pornography problem, you don't think that's gonna have ramifications on the family? How they treat their spouse, they influence their other kids. There's a stronghold now. You've opened the door for the enemy to come in and begin working.

So sin in the home is what, actually, that's what's happening in our nation. The nation is simply a reflection of what's going on in the home. And people ask me a lot, too, what's going on with all this bullying now? And I mean, that wasn't, when I was growing up, we rarely heard of, I mean, maybe one bully per school.

Well, what's happening is the kids are not being taught at home. They don't have parents teaching them. So the bully gets to school, he acts out, or what, he's not being taught at home.

If he would've had a dad saying, you're not gonna treat people that way. I mean, my son knows he better not bully anybody. Or he's gonna have a bully.

But they're not being instructed at home. They're not being, fathers aren't saying, or mothers, listen, you're not gonna treat kids that way. They're usually, they're probably giving them high fives.

Good, next week, knock them out. Let me teach you karate. It's in the home, folks.

Don't you see the home? As the home goes, so goes the nation. As the home goes, so goes the church. As the home goes, so goes the children.

All this chaos we're seeing on TV, young adults and all these different things, it's because the home is fractured and falling apart. And the transgender debate isn't gonna help things. The direction we're going is not gonna help anything.

What you're actually doing is throwing gasoline on the fire. You're just throwing gasoline on the fire because we're not returning to God. And we're not aborting this stuff at the early stages.

Interesting though, I wanna talk about this. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. Provoke means to incite someone to do or feel something, especially by arousing anger in them.

And as fathers, we have the ability to provoke anger in our children. By the way we act, we can incite it, we can foster it, or can we encourage love and peace in the home. But here's the thing about the home.

Neither passivity nor aggression works. For every aggressive father that's provoking their children, I can list another one who's passively doing nothing. It's like Homer Simpson.

And neither is good. Because a passive father, they'll just walk all over. You're called to rule and guide and lead your family with the spirit of love and compassion.

But an aggressive father who provokes your children to anger and who's not leading in there is a very detrimental to the family as well. There's sin in the camp and aggression, and there's sin in the camp on being passive. You see how both of those are dangerous and we wanna gravitate towards one or the other.

Most men do. We'll gravitate towards aggressive and we'll rule our house with a rod of iron and we'll just, the louder I can yell, the more I'll get done. Or, I've been guilty of this side too.

It's like, I'm too tired. I don't wanna deal with the passive and just whatever. And that's not healthy.

That's allowing, because both sides will allow sin to grow, correct? Both, it's forcing that area. And this is why grace and love and forgiveness are so important because they help. If you're aggressive and you drop the hammer, that's why grace and love and forgiveness are so important because you have to do it with a spirit of gentleness and meekness.

So let me ask this question about the home. Do your words, do they calm the storm or do they increase it? The words you say at home, what you say at home, do you calm the storm? Or do you bring the crashing waves in on the family? Actions. Are your actions guided by love or by anger? Listen, this is how we kill that leaven, we kill that sin that's growing.

And this is why you'll often hear me talk about often a time of prayer and study and meditation, reflection on the Word of God. Why? Because that calms the storm. That calms the raging storm in our heart.

Those things, that's how you calm it. You don't calm it by this. You don't calm it by any other ways, except by the Word of God and prayer and study and meditation.

And let me just offer, I don't think I've said this before that I can recall, but this will help a great deal with temptation. It works well with me. It's a biblical principle.

When you're being tempted with something, I mean, anything from anger. I mean, this week I had a family member that just went off on me, basically, if I can be honest with you. Doesn't live here, but just doesn't like what I stand for, doesn't, and to not email back or text was all it took.

I mean, it was, man, I was fuming for a day or two. And it was very difficult, very hard. So temptations like that, or temptations to click on the mouse, temptations to go back into drinking, or drugs, or whatever it is.

You know what it is, right? I don't have to sit here and name 53 things. We all know what the devil's coming after us with. But when that temptation comes with, now, I have a prayer list.

So as soon as that comes, okay, I'm praying for a church building. Lord, I know you can open the door. Strengthen my marriage.

Lord, support Morgan, encourage her. Lord, I'm praying for my kids. Lord, keep them healthy, keep them safe.

Let them know you at a young age. Lord, let the church be built up. Let the church, and I can list either five or six people in this church right now.

I'm praying for the situation with their family, with the court system. And I just go into prayer every time. That's a biblical principle.

Don't pray without ceasing. And so now it's like fasting. You know, you feel this hunger.

That's a time to pray. Well, you feel the temptation. That's a time to pray.

So now those are cues for prayer. When I feel that anger coming, now I'm gonna go to prayer. And I know that upsets the devil if he's planting some of those thoughts.

Okay, thanks for that thought. You just reminded me to pray for that person and that person. So praying for my marriage, praying for my kids, praying for the church five, six, seven times a day.

Shane, you're tempted that much? Oh, absolutely, and so are you. Krispy Kreme sounds good right now. It's everywhere.

Pride, envy, jealousy. Things that they rise up in us, and we can fill those temptations. So that has been a great help.

And try it sometime. Have a list of six, seven, eight things. When you feel that temptation, thank you.

You just reminded me to pray. Because you can't be seeking God and praying. And here's why temptation keeps growing.

Hmm, well, one more won't hurt. You know, it has been a hard day. I am pretty discouraged.

You know what, that's my excuse. And we just keep entertaining those thoughts. That's how temptation work.

It just keeps knocking on the door. I'm not gonna open the door. No, I'm not gonna open the door.

Well, maybe just once. I mean, what's at one time gonna hurt? I need to relax. I mean, I've talked, I've helped through that past year, your counsel, I wouldn't say help, but a lot of people who get hooked back onto pain meds, or Vicodin, or whatever it is.

And a lot of times, that door is, no, no, no, until my back's out. My root canal. Could you call in some? And the enemy uses these opportune times.

See, I closed that door, but now he's, and the temptation grows, and you start to think about it. You start, well, what about, you know, just a couple more. I need a good night's sleep.

I haven't had a good night's sleep. And that's how he gets in. Don't you see it? In most cases, it's those little subtleties.

Let me in, now I got a foothold. Now I'll take you down eventually. Give me six months, you'll be back addicted to me.

That's how he works. Open the door, let me in. So that's why you gotta nip the temptation in the bud right then.

It works wonders. I go right into my prayer list, right into the prayer list. So that's one thing I just wanna encourage you to do.

When you feel that coming, have a prayer list, six or seven things. Now, you might struggle a little bit, and like, oh, the temptation's still calling me. Yeah, but so is God.

And once we start to seek God, resist the devil, and he will flee. Seek God, and you will find him. And then joy comes, and peace comes, because of that temptation.

And then the temptation that used to be so strong is now minimized. Because you're, and here's a big debate, too. Is the devil planting thoughts in your mind? Is it the world? Is it the flesh? Is it the devil? All three are coming against us.

If the enemy's planting thoughts, he's gonna say, thank you for reminding me to pray. You think he's gonna keep doing that a lot? That's gonna, and then your flesh knows, okay, here comes that temptation. Oh, now you just encouraged me to pray.

So you're controlling those things instead of allowing them to control you. So they're wonderful cues to go into a time of prayer. That's what we should be doing.

Because here's what happens. Here's the honest truth about temptation. The door of temptation swings both ways.

You can enter or exit. If you keep entertaining it in your mind, it will eventually come to fruition. Eventually.

That's why I tell people, if they're on the computer, and they're struggling with pornography, get off. Just walk away. Go take a drive.

Go do something immediate. Don't even think about it. Should I open that email? Don't even, just delete.

Delete. Delete. Hi, I'm 24.

You wanna see pictures? Delete. That's all I need. That's it.

Delete. I don't care if it's, what was that about? Delete, delete, delete. That's how temptation works.

You've got to nip it in the bud. That quick. Because if you start to entertain him, he's got the hook.

Like you ever throw a lure past a fish? I can see, I can, when I go fly fishing sometimes, see me sitting, there's a fish bubbling up over there, and I just keep throwing that little mosquito. Eventually, he gets, okay, I'm gonna get that one. Got him.

Sometimes it takes 10, 12, 15 tries. He's probably not hungry yet. 10 minutes go by, he's getting a little hungry.

Eventually, he takes that bait. So that's the thing you need to be careful with temptation. It will keep knocking at the door as long as you allow it to and sometimes we begin to blame God.

Why did you create me this way? Why do I have to deal with this? And we start to get into blame mode and the enemy loves that too because with blame comes, well, it's not my responsibility. Let me start tomorrow. Let me start next week.

And we get in this trap. So that was the church, the home example. And then if we get into the individual example, this is a no brainer.

We know this, we talk about this often. But James 5.20 is interesting. It says, remember this, whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover a multitude of sin.

Now, this is interesting. If you read different commentators, is it talking about turning a Christian back or an unbeliever away from their sin? Well, both are true. Both are true that we have to be on high alert in this area.

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way, it's interesting, the Bible throughout the New Testament will use the word saint for believers. If a person's a child, they're a saint. So a sinner is often

used as, it's not a person sinning, he's saying this is a sinner.

So whether it's a person caught in sin, see, one of the interesting things is, and that's why this person's family member was mad at me because I pointed out something they were caught in, trying to help them. And one of the things is we're actually called to help remove the plank, right? Jesus said, remove the plank. Now you can go to your brother or sister and tell them about the speck in their eye.

We're actually biblically called, mandated to go and help and warn and encourage others. Two problems. Number one, most people usually come with the wrong spirit.

They're coming as a Pharisee. They're coming with the word of God as a hammer and they hurt or we don't do anything. I'll just ignore it.

Now, parents, we have to be careful you can't just preach at our kids, right? You ever heard that? I believe there comes a point when we can say to our kids, listen, you know that lifestyle's not right. You know that choices aren't right. I'm not gonna support that in this house.

I love you, you're my son, you're my daughter, whatever it is, but that can't exist. That can't continue. I've warned you.

And you don't need to be a broken record every day pointing it out because they know you already did it. At some point, love comes in and grace and forgiveness, depending on the sin, of course, depending on where they're at. I'm not talking about allowing this and allowing that, but be using discernment, using wisdom, because we can't keep beating people up.

Once we made our point clear, then there comes a time where we say, okay, I'm just gonna love you as my son or my daughter, and you know where I stand, and then you take that position. So, of course, this area, we need three or four sermons to fully exhaust it, but you know what I'm saying is that at some point, in order to, whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover a multitude of sin. Well, how do you turn a sinner if you don't say anything? How do you turn a sinner from the error of their way if you don't say anything or do anything? You don't.

So there is a point, if this is dealing with primarily an unbeliever, then this would be a good mandate to tell them, hey, listen, you're on a wrong path. You don't know God. And I would even use that as an opportunity tonight.

Listen, if you're just going through the motions, if you're just going to church, you know, well, I'm checking God out. I'm kinda, you know, just a good person. Let me help.

Can I help turn you from darkness into light? If you've never confessed and repented of your sin, the Bible says you are lost without God, that you need to confess him. You need to, the Romans says if you confess that Jesus died for your sins and that God rose him from the dead, you will be saved if you repent and believe. Can I help turn you from the darkness to the truth? That's one way to do it, and I will encourage you.

I know there's people. There's probably people even in this service who are not in right relationship with God because a lot of people come in, they have religion, but they don't have a relationship. They've never embraced the son.

So that would be one way that the scripture applies. I'm turning, I'm trying to turn you, not better than you. We're all sinners, but we're considered as children of God if you repent it.

You've not considered a sinner anymore. You're considered a saint. You're in right relationship with God because of what Christ did on the cross, and a lot of times, as a word of encouragement, you can't just try harder.

I'll do better. I'll try harder. You can't.

You can't. You're a slave to sin, and unless you repent and confess Christ as Lord and be born again, you'll be headed in that wrong direction for the rest of your life. That's one way to turn the sinner.

The other way involves just a personal turning, and this is one I talk about often, so I don't have to spend a lot of time here, but at closing this topic about removing the leaven, let me quote Lamentations 340. Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the Lord. Do you realize, we hear from people every week who are examining their lives and turning back to the Lord all over the United States from the videos and different things, and to God, the glory, but there has to be a call to that.

There has to be a call to say, listen, you might be on the right path. Let's read Lamentations. Let us examine and probe our ways, and let us return to the Lord.

It's very healthy to do this every week. This is what I call a spiritual shower. We take one one a day, but we rarely take one spiritually, spiritually saying, Lord, examine me.

Is there anything in me that dishonors you, and you don't like about me, Lord, or am I walking in a way that's disobedient? Cleanse me tonight. Lord, I return to you. Remove these areas.

I don't know where this arrogance came in. I don't know where this pride, I don't know where this anger came in. Lord, would you cleanse me? I need to remove this idolatry from my life, this addiction that's taken over.

Lord, come and cleanse me tonight. Remove these things from me. Lord, I need a spiritual shower.

That's very healthy. As a matter of fact, a person who doesn't do that is digressing in the wrong direction. They're not progressing, because you're either progressing in the Christian faith via repentance and maturity and humility, or you're digressing by pride and arrogance and not in thinking we got it all together.

As a word of encouragement, I know nobody in this room has it all together. No, not even me. I get insecure too.

Oh, people leave the church. I don't like this. I don't know.

Pastors' kids. I mean, you realize my kids live in a bubble? Little kids live in a bubble. And my two-year-old, the other couple of weeks my wife came home and said, I can't believe this.

My little two-year-old, what came out of her mouth would amaze you. She told the teacher, you shut your mouth. What? You shut your mouth.

Where'd you pick that up from? But that's what my older daughter tells her. So we had to address that. We're not gonna talk like this in our house.

But see, it comes out, and people are like, oh, did you hear that? Yeah, exactly. We're all in the same struggle here. Now, I'll take that struggle over bigger ones, of course, but you start nipping in the bud at two.

You say, you're not gonna say that ever again. Shut your mouth. I mean, it's cute at two, but at 12, it's gonna be very ugly.

Nip it in the bud, right? The little leaven leavens a whole lump. So it's very healthy. It's very healthy to do this.

I even told my wife, she's gonna, at the end of second service, meet me back there for prayer. Let's pray for our family. Let's pray for the marriage.

Let's do these things, because you have to do it weekly. You're either progressing or digressing. And guess what? You don't have to digress.

To digress, you don't have to do anything. How often have I said this? By default, you will drift away from God. Hear me loud and hear me clear.

Everyone in this room, by default, if you do nothing, you will drift away from God. As sure as the sun is coming up. If you do nothing, nothing, become passive in your Christianity, don't do anything, you will drift from God.

That's why they're called spiritual disciplines. That's why it's called warfare. That's why it's called battling.

You've gotta do these things. And it's very healthy, as God said here, turn, to turn back to him. What we do, here's what happens.

We see this isn't the right way. We see the error in choosing the wrong path. It's not leading us in a good direction, and we turn.

Really, what is the word? Return. If you ever return something, you're giving it back. That's what a lot of Christians need to do.

They need to return to God. They need to return back to him. Lord, these things have snuck in.

These things have compromised my character. I've been this way with my spouse as a young adult. Trust me, I would hate to live as a young adult.

Now, the things you're struggling with, the things you're seeing, the things you're going through, God just says, hey, listen, return to me. Just return back. Return.

And that's why I love the word repentance, because it actually kills the leaven of sin that's growing. Do you ever wonder why I stress repentance so much? Because that's the only hope. If a person leaves here unrepentant, that means they are continuing in the sin that is destroying them.

If they leave here repentant, here's how good this is. It reconnects, it renews, and it restores our relationship with God. We have to reconnect the relationship through confession and repentance.

We have to renew it with spiritual disciplines, getting back into the word of God, getting back into prayer. Then God restores us. He brings a joy and a peace.

Remember David, when he was caught in the sin, he said, Lord, return to me the joy of my salvation. But before that, he said, my bones are broken. My whole body aches.

Oh, that the bones you have broken may rejoice. Create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me.

Lord, I want that joy of my initial salvation. Lord, have that joy and that peace return. I want that back again.

God says, good, now get on your face. Be former and repentant. Seek me with all of your heart, with all of your strength.

That's the only solution. See why you get so worked up? That's why, that's why I get so worked up. I'm tired of seeing people destroy their lives because they're not doing these things.

They're not seeking God and returning and confessing and repenting. And that's not a healthy direction to be going. The leaven, beware of the leaven of sin.

It doesn't stop growing and you have to abort it. This type of abortion is very healthy. You have to abort sin.

That's why we designed a whole worship service over prayer and worship and a message. Prayer, worship, have you ever thought about that? There's not a lot of programs. There's not a lot, I'm just, I'm not saying other churches doing it are fine, but what God has called Westside to do is be a church to renew the heart, restore through prayer and worship in the word.

Prayer, worship in the word, that's what we're gonna do. I used to travel and I would go to different churches. I'm like, there's no prayer time.

There's, you're not, you just have one song, three announcements, two other songs, hurry up. We got a 40, 30 minute sermon to get to the next service. There's no, how's anybody moved? How's anybody challenged? They're not, it's cookie cutter Christianity with no change.

There's no resemblance to Jesus' sobering call to repentance. If you read the entire New Testament, it's clear. Repent, come back, repent, come back, repent, come back, come together, repent, come back, worship, pray, worship, pray, preach, worship, pray, preach, take communion, do the baptism.

That's it. And we have to get back to those elements because that's what results in the vibrant Christian life. When people get on fire for God, when you feel that jump up in your spirit, say, I want that joy to return.

I want that, I need that again, Shane. I'm going to the back and I'm praying, I'm worshiping. That's where change takes place.

That's why this is so important.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/y5bKV-pVV0s0.mp4>

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