

Conduct Worthy of the Gospel

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of upholding absolute truth and moral responsibility in a declining culture to guide the next generation.

Duration: 51:37

Scripture: Isaiah 1:18, Jeremiah 29:11, Ezekiel 36:26, Daniel 10:12, Joel 2:28, Amos 5:24, Jonah 2:9, Micah 6:8, Nahum 1:7, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Zephaniah 3:17, Haggai 2:9, Zechariah 4:6, Malachi 3:10

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

The video tells the story of a boy who falls multiple times while running a race. Each time he falls, he feels embarrassed and wants to give up. However, his father's encouraging look motivates him to keep getting up and trying again. Despite the boy's setbacks, he eventually finds the determination to keep going and tries his best to catch up to the other runners. The video emphasizes the importance of perseverance and not giving up, even when faced with failure or difficult circumstances.

Transcript

When Pastor Mike asked me to speak about a week ago, I began to think of dedicating our children, and they're so young, and what would I say to our children if I just had one opportunity? In 45 minutes, what would I say to our children? What would I want them to glean from my walk with the Lord, from my wife's walk with the Lord? And that's what this message really came from, is out of that desire to share with them, to share to the next generation, to share with you. If I just had 50 minutes left to talk with my kids and impart wisdom to them, what would it be? And that's really what I started to focus on. I also just turned 40, which to young adults, they say, God, you're so old.

And my mom says, son, you're just beginning. So it's like, what is it? Am I old or is it just beginning? Yeah, just beginning. So I started to think of these things.

What would I leave my children? Because whether we realize it or not, there's a crisis in our nation. There's a crisis of character in our nation. That's what the text is today.

It's Philippians 1.27. Let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel. I mean, if I could sum it up, that's what I would say. Let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel.

And after I finished my last book, One Nation Above God, what we're trying to do in this nation, many radio interviewers and different press releases, they would always ask, Shane, how did our nation get into the

situation it's in today? Why are we on such a decline morally? And they'd say, I know the answer's complicated. I know there's many different reasons. And I'd say, you know what? Not really.

Not really. It's actually very simple. It comes down to this.

Men have forsaken their God-given role as spiritual leaders of their homes. Period. For as the family goes, so goes the nation.

And we have got to stop blaming other things and other people and start seeing as men take the burden of responsibility on our shoulders and say, not on my watch. I can't help to restore and rebuild the family. That's what's wrong with our nation.

Look within. Look in the mirror. And again, I'm not here pointing fingers.

This message is just as relevant to me as to anyone in the room. And I began to think of that. What would I tell my children? If I could just sum it up, if I could sum it up for you, what would I tell them? And the very first thing, the very first thing, the foundation on which our lives are built, the very first point I would make without question, without doubt, without second-guessing it, is that absolute truth, absolute truth is a hill on which to die.

And it's a military term, is it not? There are certain things in battle that are hills on which to die. We must take that mountain, they would say. We must hold this ground or we will lose.

This is a hill on which to die. Many things in church are not a hill on which to die which we love to argue about. Why are they standing? Why aren't they standing? Why are they raising their hands? Why aren't they raising their hands? Why are the services so charismatic? Why aren't they more charismatic? Why are we singing the old hymns? Why aren't we singing the old hymns? Why do they dress up? Why don't they dress up? And it goes on and on and on.

Those are not hills on which to die. This, sir, is a hill on which to die. I don't say that arrogantly.

I say it with humility and brokenness. We are living in a post-modern culture. Do you know what that is? Modernism came first.

It says there's a right, there's a wrong, there's a good, there's an evil. But post-modernism says we can't really know the truth, can we? Can we really know the truth? That is so arrogant to claim you know the truth. We can't claim that we know the truth.

It depends on your situation, on your circumstances. That's where the term situational ethics comes from. Depending on the situation, I can lie, I can cheat, I can manipulate.

We're living in a post-modern culture which denies truth. What's true for you might not be true for me. And what's happening is our culture, as always, in every time of church history, and that's why you've got to stand on absolute truth, the culture eventually permeates into the church.

And the church wants to be liked. The church wants to be loved by everybody. The church doesn't want to upset anybody.

We don't want to offend anybody. Well, excuse me, but the message of Jesus Christ hurts and it offends. It hurts until it offends, as Oswald Chambers said, until there is nothing left to hurt and to offend.

It pierces the soul. It divides. Even Joynton Morrow is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of man.

We live in a post-modern culture. It's in the church. It's coming in the church.

What's happening now in our culture is something called the emergent church movement. And I want to be careful here, because I do not like when people are divisive and they attack and they're just critical of everything. But we must not confuse attacking with contending.

When this movement as a whole departs from absolute truth, they are departing, not us, and we call them back. We contend for the truth. We say, you cannot leave this truth.

I'm not attacking. I'm contending for the faith. Right before that verse in Philippians 1.27 where Paul said that we let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel, he says, I have been appointed for the defense of the Gospel.

But in our church in the post-modern with young adults, we say, we can't really know truth. That's so arrogant. No, sir, it's arrogant to challenge God.

That's arrogance. And my life was literally turned upside down. I don't know if my wife will remember, but a few years ago, I had a meeting, a lunch with an emergent church pastor.

Large church. He was an associate pastor. And again, I want to be delicate here, because Paul often would point out certain individuals.

I'm not naming names. I'm not naming churches. I'm not attacking.

I'm contending for the truth. When they depart from it, they open themselves up for constructive criticism. We said at lunch, and it was one of the most disheartening conversations I've ever had with a Christian leader.

The first thing he told me which blew my mind. He said, you know Shane, we can learn a lot from other religions. I said, well, I'm sure I didn't hear him right.

I mean, what? You mean that the spiritual disciplines of other religions should motivate us more, right? No, that's not what I mean. He said we can learn how to pray from Hindu and different groups, Muslim. We can learn how to meditate from the Buddhists.

We can learn from these groups. What's wrong here? The Old Testament says, do not bow down before their gods or follow after them. Do not follow after their practices.

The Assyrians, the Philistines, the Egyptians, the Hittites, the Persians, all the different ites, all the different religions of the Old Testament drew the children of Israel away from God. Not closer to Him. How can I learn to relate to God from a religion that does not know the true and living God? Now again, we're to befriend, to be nice, to understand, to seek, to respect, to love.

But we are not under any circumstances to compromise or divide this truth. A.W. Tozer said God blesses the peacemaker, but He abhors the religious negotiator. We don't negotiate God's Word.

We live it. We preach it. We breathe it.

We love it. We're called to proclaim it. We're called to guard it.

And I couldn't believe what I was hearing. And then he went on to say we also shouldn't mention sin. No, Shane, listen.

And I had to go home and jot this stuff down because it was just mind-boggling. He said we shouldn't mention sin. People already feel bad enough about themselves.

They don't need us pointing out those things. Now there's a little truth in that. We don't need to be sin-sniffers, pointy-fingers, condemning Bible-thumpers.

I understand that. But you don't go all the way the other direction and say we should never mention sin. People already feel bad enough.

They already know they're sin or shame. I said, you know what, I've got to disagree with you. Eighty-five percent of our nation thinks that they are on the narrow road to heaven.

They think they're good people. They think they're going to get to God and say, look at all these good things I did. Eighty-five percent of our nation think they're good people and they're right with God when they deny His Word.

The need to address this issue, I believe, has never been greater. How do we talk about a Savior, but not sin? How do we talk about relationship, but not repentance? How do we talk about heaven, but not hell? We can't avoid the controversial things just because they'll upset people. I mean, the good news.

The good news can only be appreciated with the bad news as the backdrop. God's love and His mercy and His grace. Well, if you don't discuss hell and righteousness and holiness and God's judgment, those things mean nothing.

He said we shouldn't mention sin that upsets people. And I could not believe it. Jesus said, I came to seek and to save that which was lost.

I did not come to call the righteous to repentance. I came to call sinners to repentance. So what's happening in our church, we're not talking about the foundation of doctrines of the Christian faith.

We're not talking about sin, repentance, the blood of Christ. As a result, the church is a mile wide, but an inch deep. We have people coming to tickle my ears.

Tell me what I want to hear. Don't tell me what I need to hear. And when you start talking about these things, people get upset.

Why? Because the light of the Gospel is being shined into the darkness. That's why people do not like the truth of God's Word. That's why our nation wants to remove Him from our schools, remove Him from our public buildings.

Don't talk about Him at city council prayers. Don't mention His name anywhere, because it's the light of the Gospel shining on the darkness, shining in on the sin. They want to get rid of it.

In the last statement, he said, it blew my mind, he said we also should not mention the fear of the Lord. It makes people feel uncomfortable. I mean, can you believe this? There's pastors across our nation saying this.

Now I understand they're trying to get away from the rigid, fundamental, pointing fingers, there's no love, nothing. They're rebelling against that, but they go the polar opposite. Instead of meeting in the middle and saying yes, we do need more love in our church.

We need to be more welcoming and accepting and loving place of worship. But we cannot compromise the Gospel. We shouldn't talk about the fear of the Lord because it makes people feel uncomfortable.

Just saying that, may I be honest with you, makes me feel uncomfortable. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of understanding. He said teach your children to fear. Raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Admonition, it's a Greek word, nothesia. It means to plant into the mind the fear of the Lord and the things of God. To plant those things into our children's minds.

That's how you train them in the fear of the Lord. It's great to read Jonah in the Bible studies, but me, a man of character, plant the things of God into their lives. Have a healthy respect and reverence for God.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of understanding. Jesus said don't fear Him who can kill the body, but fear Him who can kill both body and soul in hell. Jesus said to fear the Lord.

But we're not supposed to talk about those things. That's why many, many people in the church today are not truly converted. Because the white light of the Gospel has never penetrated their heart.

They've never seen their need for a Savior and they've never turned to Him. That's just the truth. I left that meeting so discouraged.

And I thought, why can't we be united? No wonder why we all just can't get along. I mean, I can be friends with you. I can go to lunch.

We can do things, but I can't fellowship with you. You're on the wrong page according to God's Word. And as I begin to get home and study unity, unity, you hear that in the Bible, be peaceful, be united, have unity.

But do you know what unity in the Bible is? Never unity with man. It's unity with God. Unity with the Spirit.

Unity with the Word. And then from that, we are united with fellow believers who have united the same cause of like-mindedness. That's what unity is.

See, and I was confusing. I was like, I've got to be united. Lord, what's wrong with me? I mean, what am I missing here? And He's departing from truth.

So I can't fellowship in that. I can't be a part of that. And again, this movement as a whole.

I'm not talking about lighting and ambiance and mood and candles and the praise and worship type. I'm talking about doctrine, the fundamentals of the Christian faith. When you depart from that, you grieve and you quench the Spirit of God.

And like Samson, he wished not that the Spirit had departed from him. He knew not that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him. Remember in Revelations, Jesus saying, I stand at the door and knock.

I come quickly, repent. Do the first works, repent. Repent, or I will remove your lampstand.

And repent. And every time I think of this issue of church, I'm reminded of a story I heard probably 20 years ago now. I'm sure some of you have heard, but it bears repeating because it brings us home perfectly.

It's that story about where there's this large battleship on the coast of Alaska. It was midnight. They were doing deep water exercises.

It was in dense fog. But the captain was out on the bow of the ship and he saw way in the distance, way in the distance, a light. He said, there's another vessel fast approaching.

Wake up the signal man. Wake him up. The signal man got up and they signaled to that vessel, change your course 10 degrees.

We're on a collision course. The signal came back, collision inevitable, collision confirmed. But you change your course.

The captain said, what? Who does this guy think he is? Signal back, I'm the highest ranking officer in the United States Navy. See what he does with that one. Tell him to change his course.

The signal came back, Captain, with all due respect, I'm a seaman, first class, change your course. By now, he's furious. He throws down his coffee.

He said, give me that signal. You give me that signal. I'll signal to him.

I am a battleship. I am a battleship. If you do not move, I will blow you out of the water.

The final signal came back. The captain almost fell to his knees. He said, Captain, with all due respect, change your course.

I am a lighthouse. Hold it. That's our culture.

That's our culture. God's Word, get out of the way. Move.

You get out of the way. But it says I cannot move. I stand unmovable.

I cannot yield. I am a solid rock on which your life must be built. I cannot move.

It will not move. I have a message for the emergent church or liberalism or any other ism out there. God's Word cannot move.

It cannot move. If the whole world ignores it, it stands as a light. It stands as a light.

A guide house. But we say, you get out of the way. I don't want to change my opinions to fit the Bible.

Mr. Bible, you move. Absolute Truth, you move. It says I can't.

I am a lighthouse given to guide, given to direct. I am a point of contact. You will listen to me and move and avoid calamity.

But if you ignore me, you like the ship will run your vessel upon the rocks and be destroyed. It cannot, it will not move. And I'm tired of debating it.

I'm tired of people trying to twist it. I'm tired. Just take it for what it says.

It cannot move. Conform your opinions to the Bible, sir, because it cannot change. It will not change.

Absolute Truth is a hill on which to die. It is a hill on which to die. Of course, we must remember, we don't worship the Bible.

We worship the Lord Jesus Christ. But His truth is revealed. Absolute Truth.

And all this confusion. There's so much confusion in the church even with homosexuality and this and that. There's really not confusion.

This is what's confusing people. They don't want to take it for what it says. There's no confusion.

There's no confusion. I've had people support abortion with this book. God help us.

God help us. They support a lifestyle that they enjoy the flesh is pulling them to with this book. You better read it in its totality.

You better not pick and choose. That's dangerous. And what I'm finding is many people don't know what it says.

And these shepherds, the shepherds in the church, in the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ are leading people astray. It reminds me every time of Jeremiah 23. God says, I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.

I have not prophesied to them, yet they spoke. But had these people truly stood in My counsel, and had they truly caused them to hear My Word, they would have turned them from their evil ways. But they have perverted the words of the living God.

Is not My Word like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? Is not My Word like a fire that devours? But you have perverted the words of the living God. Why? By not warning, instructing, guiding, and leading. By leading people away from this, not closer to it.

And I would tell my kids with tears in my eyes, truth is a hill on which to die. I should be on my fourth marriage. I should be hung over this morning.

I should still be snorting crystal meth and crank and all the different things. But the truth has set me free. Jesus Christ said, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.

It is the truth that stands strong. It is the truth that will prevail. It is the truth that stands like a lighthouse.

It is the truth on which Jesus said, you will build your church. It is the truth on which Jesus said, the rains came, the wind blew, the floods came. But that house that was founded on the rock of God's Word of Jesus Christ did not fall.

As you can see, I feel pretty passionately about this. But that's why. Because I see how it's changed my life.

And a lot of times people will come and they'll say, I want to preach too. I want to do what you do. I say, okay, do you want to go through what I went through? It's that brokenness.

And God humbling you and breaking you and taking everything out of your life that you hold on to this. You hold on to the truth of God's Word. And you actually experience it.

You actually experience God's Word. It's not something to just be read, but experienced. I would tell them with tears in my eyes, this is a hill on which to die no matter what.

You don't debate it. You proclaim it. You don't remove things.

You have that be the plumb line, the set of plans. We would never build a house without a set of plans. But we'll build our lives without this.

It makes no sense. So once I would get that point across, this is a hill on which to die, I would say with equal passion to the next generation, to my kids, to whoever. Once you have truth, once this is your foundation, you have truth, it's a hill on which to die, please, please, I beg you, do not become a modern day Pharisee.

Do you know the Bible says also truth does? Truth puffs up. Be careful. Be careful.

You can become a modern day Pharisee thinking of yourself more highly than you should. But none of that matters. What I just said, none of that matters if you do not have love.

What did Jesus say? You'll know that they are My disciples by how well you translate the Greek, by how well you understand the Hebrew. They'll understand because of your Ph.D. in church history. They'll know that you're My disciples because, Shane, you used an inductive, deductive, immediate approach to your sermon preparation.

No. They'll say that's great. It's not it.

They'll know you're My disciples because of My love for eschatology and theology and pneumatology and all these ologies. No. No.

Be careful. You'll become a modern day Pharisee. Jesus says that's wonderful.

I'm glad you know all that. Each of you's got twelve Bibles and you've got your Bible on the phone. You've got commentaries online.

You can go back to the 1600s. That's great. But you have not love.

What did He tell the church in Revelations? Go back to your first love. That's wonderful you do all these things. Paul says you can speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but if you have not love, it profits you nothing.

You can understand all prophecies, all mysteries. You can have faith that moves a mountain, but if you have not love, it profits you nothing. You can give all your things to the poor.

Have your body to be burned, but have not love, it profits you nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind.

It doesn't envy. It's not rude. It's not boastful.

It's not proud. It's not self-seeking. It doesn't keep any record of wrong done against it.

It doesn't delight in evil. It rejoices in the truth. Love always protects, always hopes and perseveres.

Undergird everything with love and humility or you will become a modern day Pharisee. I'm amazed at the people. I mean, they can give you overviews of Genesis and Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy and Joshua and Judges and Ruth, 1 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastics.

They say, Shane, here's what the prophets said from Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel and Joel and Amos and Obadiah and Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi. Jesus says, that's great, but where's your love? You're a modern day Pharisee and you're pointing out the flaws in everybody else. That's wonderful if you have that with love and brokenness and humility.

Paul, after all that in 1 Corinthians 13, he says love will never fail. Love will never fail. But where there is prophecy, it will cease.

It will fail. Where there are tongues, it will cease. Where there is knowledge, it will be done away with.

What we see in part now. But when that which is perfect comes, that which is in part will be done away with. When I was a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

To become a man is to say, I need to love my wife more, I need to love my kids more, I need to love God more and have your life be changed and transformed. Become a man. There's no room for the modern day Pharisee.

God help us. Love will never fail. Paul says it will never fail.

Prophecy will fail. Tongues will fail. Knowledge will cease.

And as a side note, any of those who want to hang your theological jacket on that one verse as meaning the gifts of the Spirit have ceased, I would reconsider that. I'm glad I do not believe that. Because it also says knowledge will cease.

Then we're saying we can see better than Paul because that which is perfect has come. Perfect. Teleos.

Perfect. Jesus said, go tell Herod that fox that on the third day, I will be teleos. I will be perfected.

That is not a proof text for the gifts of the Spirit ceasing. That's a proof text for Paul saying everything will fail except love. He says tongues will fail.

Knowledge will fail. Prophecy will cease. But love will never fail.

Be careful, you'll become a modern day Pharisee. Be careful. It reminds me of that elderly lady who came home from church.

She said, oh, I love our new pastor so much more, son, than our old pastor. Well, why is that? She said, because our old pastor used to say, you're going to go to hell unless you know Jesus Christ. What's the new pastor say? He says, you're going to go to hell unless you know Jesus Christ.

Well, I said, well, mom, they say the same things. She said, yes, son, but the new pastor says it with tears in his eyes. See, people don't care what you know until they know how much you care.

The reason, the reason many of us are not affecting our community, our family, those around us, is because we become modern day Pharisees so impressed by our knowledge, so well by how well we understand the Bible, that we're quick to put them down. We're not letting love and truth and patience and gentleness and kindness guide our decisions. I mean, fill in the blanks.

Shane is patient. Shane is kind. Shane doesn't envy.

He's not boastful. He's not rude. He's not proud.

No, no. Do not look at me as that example. My wife, my in-laws are here.

They'll tell you, I'm missing every point, but I will die trying. See, it's about falling forward and getting better. Modern day Pharisee.

It's all around us. Think about it. We're to engage the culture, not enrage them.

Now, granted, truth will upset. Truth will offend. Jesus spoke the truth in love.

And it's really about having a humble, broken attitude, isn't it? I mean, you can say, yeah, Shane, I need love, but if you're an arrogant person, it's not going to happen. The humble, He teaches His ways. He says, the humble.

I teach my ways. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. In due time, He'll exalt you.

Exalt yourself and He will abase you. It's all about humility and meekness. And saying it almost with tears in our eyes, but you can't fabricate this stuff.

There's a lot of people on TV who try to fabricate love, don't they? We can see right through that. So once you have truth, do not become a modern day Pharisee. Avoid it at all costs.

My next point would be that your faith, your faith will stand trial. Your faith will be tested. Did you know that a faith that is not tested cannot be trusted? How do you develop forgiveness if you're never wronged? How do you develop patience? How do you develop patience if you're never being challenged? How do you develop trust? Oh, we trust in God, do we? I bet if He yanks that job from you, let's see what your attitude turns into.

What are you really trusting in? Watch that savings account dwindle down. Do you have a nice, humble attitude or are you getting upset? How do you develop Christian character without going through the furnace of affliction? You can't. And it reminds me of the story I heard, whether it's true or not, I don't know, so I'll throw that out there.

But of shepherds, they used to break the leg of the lamb that would wander from the flock, because it would wander and become easy prey. So they would break the leg and then split it up and then carry that lamb around. And through that broken, independent relationship, they would learn to trust the shepherd.

They would learn. He's saying, let me carry your burden. Let me carry your responsibility.

Don't trust in different things. Like Job said, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. It's not what we go through, it's how we go through it.

Your faith will be tested. Jesus said, Peter, I pray that your faith fail thee not. Not that you won't be tested.

Not that you won't be challenged. He said, I pray that your faith fail thee not. When all is said and done, having done all, stand.

That's the message of the Bible. Having done all, stand. Stand, therefore, with your loins going about with truth.

Having done all, stand. He's saying, I'll take your dealing with depression. Beyond anything else, He says, come to Me all you're weak and heavy laden.

I will give you rest. Lord, I don't know what's going on with my bills. That's okay, I've created the universe.

You don't think I can manage that? Unbelievable. The problem is, instead of relying on the shepherd, we rely on ourselves and we get ourselves in more trouble. Many times He says, you've done too much damage.

He says, get out of the way. Let me carry you for a while. Let me help you get you through that.

I looked back over my life and I went through hell and back. Hell and back. But that's why I can stand up here with passion.

Because I know the shepherd. Do you know the shepherd? It reminds me of the story of, they're having a contest at a church where two people are going to recite the 23rd Psalm. One guy got up there.

He was all polished, suit and tie, ready to just let the crowd have it. And he said, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He restores my soul. It was beautiful.

And then they went to find the other guy. He didn't show up. So the church said, oh my goodness, what are we going to do? So they grabbed the janitor.

Wait, come here, you know the 23rd Psalm, right? Yeah, I do. I do. Okay, come on, hurry, come on.

And he got up there and he just started to think about everything God has brought him through. And the shepherd, what he's meant to... And he got through the 23rd Psalm. He missed a few lines.

He teared up a little bit, but it wasn't as good. But when he was done, he got a standing ovation. And the young, arrogant kid, fresh out of seminary, got upset.

He said, I can't believe. I can't believe that. I said it much better.

And as he was leaving, the old elder grabbed him back. He said, before you leave, let me tell you, you want to know what happened? He said, yeah, tell me. He said, you knew the 23rd Psalm.

He did. But that man knew the shepherd. That's the difference.

Do you know this? A lot of people know this. They'll quote Scripture to me, but they don't know the shepherd. I'll tell you they don't know the shepherd.

They're backbiting, gossiping, negative. They don't know the shepherd. They're relying on themselves.

They're relying on their own press, their own strength. Do you truly know the shepherd? Because if you did half the things we worried about, we wouldn't worry about. God, how am I going to make this house payment? How am I going to do this? I'm losing my job.

The economy's falling apart. And I just see God up there probably saying, thank God, maybe it'll get some of you back on your knees and seeking me. God's not worried about the economy.

Do you realize that? He could care less. He doesn't lose any sleep over it. Nothing.

He could care less. If that's what it's going to take to bring this nation back, thank God. You see, personally, I'd rather leave my kids' character in the Word of God than 100,000 in a bank account and 401 in CDs because that in and of itself will destroy them.

Money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. And in this nation, in our pride and arrogance, we don't need God that much when we can write a check. So we should, like James says, thank God for the tribulation, not being excited that you're going through, but thank God it'll draw me closer to Him.

Looking back, I would not have changed a difficult time in my life at all if it brought me closer to the Shepherd, to know Him as Jehovah Jireh, my Provider, Jehovah Nisi, to know God in all of His splendor. Your faith will be tested. Charles Spurgeon said, the Lord gets His best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction.

He gets His best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction. To be honest with you, I don't want somebody to even preach to me if they've never been through a lot. I want somebody who has practical life experiences to tell me how it has changed their life.

And that's what our neighbors are wanting, our co-workers. Show me, show me how this has changed your life. I've talked to so many people, right now they're just down with the economy and their jobs.

They're just down and they've fallen. They can't seem to get up. Does that sound familiar? Just the weight is too heavy, it's too hard, and it feels like we've lost the race.

I hear that all the time. So because of that, I wanted to just read something. It's not the shortest poem in the world, but it's going to, I believe, hopefully rejuvenate some of us.

And it goes something like this. It says, They all lined up so full of hope, each thought to win the race, or tie for first, or if not that, at least take second place. And fathers watched from off the side, each cheering for his son.

And each boy hoped to show his dad that he would be the one. The whistle blew and off they went, young hearts in hopes of fire. To win, to be the hero, there was each boy's desire.

And one boy in particular, whose dad was in the crowd, was running in the lead and thought, my dad will be so proud. But as they sped down the field, across a shallow dip, the little boy who thought to win, lost his step and slipped. Trying hard to catch himself, with hands flow out in brace, amid the laughter of the

crowd, he fell flat on his face.

So down he fell, and with him hope, he couldn't win, not now. Embarrassed, sad, he only wished to disappear somehow. But as he fell, his dad stood up and showed his anxious face, which to the boy clearly said, get up and win this race.

He quickly rose, no damage done, behind a bit, that's all, and ran with all his might and mind to make up for his fall. So anxious to restore himself, to catch up to win, his mind went faster than his legs, and he slipped and fell again. He wished then that he quit before, with only one disgrace.

I'm hopeless as a runner now, I shouldn't try to race. But in the laughing crowd, he searched and found his father's face. That steady look said, get up and win this race.

So up he jumped to try again, ten yards behind the last. If I'm going to gain those yards, I've got to move real fast. Exerting everything he had, he regained eight or ten, but trying so hard to catch the lead, he slipped and fell again.

Defeat, he lay there silently, a teardrop from his eye. There's no sense in running anymore. Three strikes, I'm out.

Why try? The will to rise had disappeared, all hope had fled away. So far behind, so air prone, I'll never go all the way. I've lost.

So what's the use, he thought? I'll live with my disgrace. But then he thought about his dad, who soon he'd have to face. Get up.

Get up. An echo sounded low. Get up and take your place.

You were not meant for failure here. Get up and win this race. So up he rose once more, and a new commit.

He resolved to win or lose the race, at least he wouldn't quit. Three times he'd fallen, stumbling. Three times he rose again.

Now he gave it all he had and ran as though to win. They cheered the winning runner as he crossed the line first place, head high and proud and happy. No failing, no falling, no disgrace.

But when the fallen youngster crossed the line last place, the crowd gave him the greatest cheer for finishing the race. And even though he came in last with head bowed low and unproud, you would have thought he won the race to listen to the crowd. And to his dad he sadly said, I didn't do so well.

To me you won, his father said. You rose each time you fell. And now when things seem dark and hard and difficult to face, the memory of that little boy helps me in my race.

For all of life is like a race with ups and downs and all. And all you have to do to win is rise each time you fall. See, I bet, I bet, I would wager that that young man would become strong and steadfast.

But the guy who got first place, no failing, no falling, no disgrace, he will never know the challenges of life. Because life will beat you up. It will chew you up and spit you out.

That's why your faith must stand trial. Your faith must stand trial. It will be tested.

Like Job though, although he slay me, yet will I trust Him. And this faith that people think, oh, once you come to Jesus, nothing bad is going to happen. No, the rain falls on the just and unjust alike.

And see, that's really what faith is. It's the rock. It's the anchor that supports our life.

So when life happens, we can stand. Having done all, stand. David said, where will I go? Where will I go? Behold, if I go to Heaven, You are there.

Behold, if I make my bed in Hell, even You are there. If I take up the wings of the morning and go to the uttermost parts of the earth, even You are there. He says, I will be with you no matter what you're going through.

He says, I will be with you. I might have created the circumstance, or if I haven't created it, I will see you through. That's one of the biggest things you can impart to your children is a steadfast faith.

When you're going through difficult times, passing that on. The next point that is vitally important, and hopefully I can share this in a couple weeks more with Josh at the youth conference, and this is especially relevant to young adults. Recognize the desperate.

And I wish there was a stronger word than desperate. Recognize the desperate need for holiness. Do you know the Bible says, come out from among them and be separate.

Come out from among them and be separate. We're to be in the world, but not of the world. If the world's going this direction, guess what? You better be going this direction.

The desperate need for holiness. Well Shane, can you explain that a little more? Well sure, I'd love to. The psalmist said, come and worship the Lord in holiness.

Holiness is not some weird, outdated word you think of somebody wearing a robe and they're so holy. No, holy is being set apart for the service of God. Having a life that reflects a surrendered life.

Adoniah Jetson called it the exchanged life when he was a missionary. It's a life surrendered. You're holy.

You're set apart. And that's why it amazes me. Amazes me.

What we allow into our minds and into our homes. Did you know that we're supposed to be pure vessels that God can use? And a pure vessel cannot come from a polluted mind. It's not possible.

Think about that. We're as a nation, as a church, and I hear it all the time, you know what entertains us? Witchcraft and vampires. Homosexuality, adultery.

All these things entertain us. We love to watch it and we wonder why the power of the Spirit is not working in our lives. Why we don't have a passion for the things of God.

Why does the Bible seem boring and God seem distant? It's because the work of the Holy Spirit is being suppressed. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Let your mind, whatever things are pure and noble and honest and upright and just and worthy of praise, meditate upon these things. The Bible's crystal clear on this. Yet we feed our minds with things that directly oppose the will of God.

You will not have clarity on many issues. You will not be able to overcome certain lusts and addictions. You will not be able to overcome depression and different things if you're continually feeding your mind with the things of the world.

Especially with the young adults, we talk to them and they just love all these shows with vampires and witchcraft and all these different things. I don't mean to harp on this subject, but I need to be honest and say those things are an abomination in the sight of God. They're a stench in the nostrils of a righteous God.

Without question. Think about what we're allowing into our minds. And we wonder why, Shane, a lot of what you're talking about is great, but doesn't really move me.

It doesn't move us because our mind is filled with things that directly oppose the will of God. Paul said do not, do not be conformed to this world. Do not.

Do not be fashioned and shaped to this world. How, Paul? Well, he goes on to tell us, be not conformed to this world, but be transformed, made into a new person by the renewing of your mind. It has everything to do with what you put into your mind.

You're watching things that depress you. You're hanging out with people that depress you. You wonder why you might be struggling with depression.

You wonder why you're struggling with lust. Were you putting soft-core porn into your mind every night? I wonder. God, help us.

I mean, you guys remember, I look back at my notes a few years ago when I spoke. I said in my lifetime, some of you here in my lifetime, we went from I love Lucy and leave it to Beaver, to now Queer Eye for the Straight Guy and dating shows and reality shows and all these things that are a stench in the nostrils of a righteous, holy, pure God. You're allowing these things into your home and as men, as fathers, as leaders, called to contend for the faith, called to transform your home, called to pray over your children, to create an environment, to foster an environment of holiness.

You are opening your family up for deception. There's no other way to put it. Imagine Paul himself sitting on our couch, let alone Jesus, seeing all that stuff and saying, oh, wow, that's entertaining.

Let's watch more. He's saying, what are you doing? As your man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Out of the abundance of the heart, your mouth speaks.

What you put in is what you'll get out. Very simple. It's not you don't need a doctorate degree in theology.

What you put in is what you get out. Why do you think he talks so much about focusing on the things of God? Blessed is the man. Do you want to be blessed? Do you want to be fruitful? Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord.

And in it he doth meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree, planted by living waters who will bear its fruit in season. And everything he does will not wither.

Why? Because he did not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He meditated on the Word of God. What you put in influences you.

What you put in influences you. There's no other way to say that. Later on, if you turn to, I believe it's Numbers 22, there's something known as the Doctrine of Balaam.

King Balak hired Balaam to go and curse the children of Israel. So he went three times and tried to curse them. He tried to curse them, and curse them, and curse them, and it didn't happen.

He went back to the king and said, I've got to give you all your money back. I cannot curse what God has blessed. That's the same in our lives.

He cannot curse what God has blessed. But you know what? I'll get them to curse themselves. We can't do anything.

See, there's a shelter of a marriage between a man and a woman, a husband and a wife, surrender, lordship of Jesus Christ. There's a shelter. The enemy can't come in and curse that.

But he said, you know what? King Balak, you know what? Let's entice. Let's entice the men with the women of the land. Let's lead them astray by having them worship other gods.

They'll curse themselves. I don't have to. They'll curse themselves.

And sure enough, the doctrine of Balaam led the children of Israel away. They left the protection of God's shelter because they got involved in the things of the world. There's two sides of this.

I don't want to make this more than it is and be, you know, TV's of the devil and all that kind of crazy stuff. There's good things on there, I'm sure. 99.9% of the time there's not.

But I'm not looking as, you know, I'm just saying be careful what you put in your mind. I mean, Desperate Housewives is the number one show in our nation. Wow! We glamorize.

We glorify adultery. We wonder why marriages are falling apart. We're wondering why men are walking away from their wives never to return.

We wonder why affairs is commonplace in the church. I'll tell you, it has to do directly with what you're feeding your mind. A study.

A study came out probably 10 years ago. We hear divorce rates half in the church. 1 out of 1,050 couples get divorced who read and study the Word of God together and have this be the foundation of their life.

Why don't we hear those statistics? 1 out of 1,000 end up in divorce. Not 50%. 1 in 1,000.

The media doesn't want you to know that, do they? Ah, see the church is just like everybody else. The reason is because we're not set apart. We're not being holy vessels that God can use.

And I know many people are going, Oh, that sounds great, Shane, but it doesn't matter. I'm not going to change a thing. Well, fine.

Just understand that your life is affected by that. You will never know the things of God and have a passion for the things of God if you're continually feeding your mind with these things. The next point.

Vitally important, and I don't have much time, so I've got to breeze through these. Seek to be filled with power and prayer. I mean, I can't stress this enough.

A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian. That prayer moves the hand of God. Prayer moves the hand of God.

If you're too busy, you're too busy. Remove some things from your life that allow you to pray and seek the hand of the Father. And also, with prayer, seek power.

Be open to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not some weird mystical force. He's a triune nature of God.

Triune nature of God. And remember I talked about last time too, the two extremes with that view. On this side, if it's odd, it's God.

Anything goes. Look at that guy acting like a dog and swinging from the chandeliers. Anything goes.

The Holy Spirit's moving, brother. No, it's not. No, it's not.

And then you have the other side. Remember what I call this? Straight as a gun barrel. You're straight as a gun barrel, sir, theologically, but you have no power in your life.

You have no passion. You quench and grieve the Spirit of God. Just straight as a gun barrel, but just as dead, just as empty.

That's why you have to have balance with the work of the Spirit. As D. Martin Lloyd-Jones says in his great work, *Preachers and Preaching*, that a lot of the Reformed camps use, he said, never interpret Scripture based on your experiences, but always interpret your experiences based on Scripture. You see that? Is it of God? Test it.

The prophets are subject to the prophet. Is it of God? Test it. Test it.

Embrace the work of the Spirit. I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, but the Bible says the Spirit leads, intercedes, guides, directs, empowers, gives unction, gives boldness. Oh, and we're afraid of that? The very thing that people need is the very thing they're afraid about.

And we love to debate all these things. Is there a baptism of the Spirit? Is there this? There's one question I have. You have all the Holy Spirit, but does He have all of you? Does He have all of you? Martin Lloyd-Jones wasn't afraid to use that term in his book.

Unction, anointing, baptism of fire, whatever you want to call it. I mean, a hundred years ago they used to ask, does He have His baptism of fire before you could even step to this pulpit? In other words, has He surrendered to the work of the Holy Spirit? Is He filled with the Holy Spirit to go and preach with boldness? Not weirdness. Boldness.

Not if it's odd it's God, but on the foundation of Christian faith. Seek that power. I would tell my kids, I don't care if you want to tell your kids something different, but I would tell mine, seek that power.

Be open to the work of the Holy Spirit. I mean, you can call me a fanatical, you can call me extreme, you can call me a holy roller, you can call me a Jesus freak, but please don't call me lukewarm. Please don't say I'm not open to the work of the Holy Spirit, because that is why I can stand up here for you today.

I was fearful of crowds until I surrendered my life completely. I was just filled with this overpowering presence. You can make fun of that, you can debate it if you want, but I've experienced it.

And my experience lines up with the Scripture. It's funny how nobody has a problem with the work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Nobody has a problem with that.

They say, but now, today, things are different. Well, I'm glad I don't believe that. Because He inspired this Word, and the same Spirit resides in us that inspired that Word.

You better surrender to His influence. You better surrender to His work. The next point, put first things first.

I wish I could spend more time on this, but in the church today, we're putting God first, and then of course, and then ministry. No, no, no, it goes God, then your family, then ministry. And I'm getting tired of reading about people in positions of leadership within the church that are too busy in ministry and their families and their marriages are being neglected.

Sir, resign from your position for a while. Get home and heal that family. Just two weeks ago, a guy who I don't agree with, but he's in the light line in the charismatic movement.

He's going through divorce, and his wife said he just loves the ministry more than me. God help us. And his statement was weak.

God has called me to preach, and I must... What are you talking about? That shows me where your heart is. Our relationship with God goes into our relationship with our family. And then from that goes ministry.

Our kids are saying, Daddy, show me how to be a man. I'm too busy for you. I'm ministering.

Our daughters are saying, Daddy, hold me. Teach me. Show me how to be a woman.

Give me the affection due. I'm sorry I'm too busy. God help us.

This point is so important that I forgot it. What I mean by that is I fall into this trap myself. I began weeping as I forgot this point.

I'm so focused on this and the ministry and what you've got to do. But the family is dying. I could not stand up here if I did not have such a wonderful wife.

I'll tell you that right now. And to continue to ignore these spouses in our life is an abomination, I'm sure, to God. He said, you shall become one flesh and serve as one flesh.

When the ministry destroys our family, step away, sir. You may not agree with that, but that is biblical. That's the only way I can stay up here is at the foundation of the family.

If the family's falling apart, the family's disintegrating, it's not the family that needs to go, it's you need to step down. You ever wonder why in the Old Testament He told husbands to take a year off and just spend it with your wife? Because it's that relationship that's going to get you through the storms of life. The reason we focus too much on ministry and not the spouse is because of arrogance and pride.

Look what I'm doing. I'm serving so much. I hate when people tell me how much they're serving.

How you doing at home with your marriage? Oh, things could be better. And again, we have our share of problems as well. I'm not saying that.

It's not a perfect marriage. But the day that ministry gets in place of the family is a sad day, and that's what's happening in our nation. Of course there are seasons, of course, but that's what's happening in our nation is we're not putting first things first.

The last point, if I could talk to my children, if I could just leave them with one last point, all these things are great, but you know what? I'd throw them all in the trash if it were not for this last point. I would tell my children, I would tell you, anybody that's listening, choose the narrow road that leads to life. Choose the narrow road.

Jesus said, I am the only way, the only truth, the only life. And I talk to people, they say, that's so narrow-minded. Yeah, He said it's the only way.

That's hate speech. No, God said He loved the world, that He gave His only Son. Well, that seems arrogant.

No, it's humility that says we need a Savior. Think about it. Choose the narrow road that leads to life.

When we die, you cannot bicker with God, you cannot argue, you cannot bring your list of good works. You will hear, well done now, good and faithful servant, or depart from Me, I never knew you. Those are our options.

There's no middle ground. You can't say, I think I know Christ, I hope so, I wonder if I do. That's like asking me if I'm married.

And I say, I hope so, I think so, well, I'm trying. No, you either know that you know that you know. If you do not know Jesus Christ today as your Lord and Savior, this book, the absolute truth of God's Word, says you are on the broad road to destruction.

That shouldn't be discouraging because there is hope. People get so upset at that, I would say, why? Here's the answer. Yes, that's a big problem, but here's the answer.

It's the lady who went into the jewelry store and said, oh, I love that big gold cross, I want it, I want it, but Mr. Jeweler, please take the man who's hanging on it off. That's what we want. We want our form of Christianity, but we don't want to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

That is the last and final point. Are you truly on the narrow road that leads to life? And you know it. You know it.

You say, I think so, I hope so. Jesus says, come to Me. Oh, you're weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

It's our decision. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, Charles Spurgeon said, run like two railroad tracks. We will not know where they cross until eternity.

Yes, He's sovereign, but we have responsibility to repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ. It is the only name on which you can be saved. I could preach on that for the next hour, but I'm out of time.

I just want to pray because today is the day of new beginnings. When you hear my voice, God says, harden not your heart.

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