

Every Believer Is Called to the Ministry by Shane Idelman

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes that every believer is called to ministry and should focus on faithfulness rather than numbers in their service to others.

Duration: 52:02

Scripture: Acts 14:21

Topics: "Christian Ministry", "Faithfulness Matters"

Description

This sermon emphasizes that everyone has a ministry and the importance of fulfilling God's calling. It highlights the dissatisfaction that comes from neglecting one's ministry, the need to measure faithfulness over size, and the significance of focusing on the gospel in ministry despite challenges and discouragement. The sermon also touches on the need to turn from useless things, confront when necessary, and encourage others in their faith journey.

Transcript

Everyone in this room can have a ministry. The reason is this, and here's why this is so important. God calls us to make a difference.

Everybody in here has a ministry, and when you don't have a ministry and you don't do what God has called you to do or want you to do, you become dissatisfied and discouraged and you don't feel like I'm doing, God, what you've called me to do. Depression can set in, anxiety or fear or complacency, and God, I know you have something for me, but why am I not doing it? For a Christian to live like that is pretty difficult because you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing. It's like fitting a square peg or a square image into a round hole.

Have you ever tried that? It's like something's not working. Here's what happens. All of you are called to be in ministry, but we look at, oh, the pastor, that's our minister.

No, I'm just supposed to equip you to go out and minister. And the reason many people don't do ministry is, here's why, I'll just tell you up front, I've fallen prey to this myself. We measure it by the size, not the faithfulness of the heart.

Is there any difference from me speaking to you than somebody going out and reaching two or three homeless people after church? Or going to a hospital home and sitting with somebody for an hour, hour and a half? And that's why I said Jesse's here this morning. Sitting with him for an hour and a half was the highlight of my week. I left there in tears, I left there changed, and I'm like, that's ministry.

What Shane does, that's ministry. Or if I have a big ministry, that's ministry. And we get discouraged because we start something and it's not flourishing because we're rating it by the numbers and not faithfulness.

Jesus would often go to one person. Think about that. I need, I must go to Samaria, a man, a woman, at the well, changed her life.

I need to go and challenge a demoniac, or some accounts of the gospel say two demoniacs, and he stepped out of the boat and released that man from demonic oppression. His ministry, if you think about it, read through this, his ministry, it was as much for the individual as it was for the masses. The man by the pool, do you want to be made well? Yeah.

Then get up, take up your bed. One man. He would go to one person.

But here, and pastors get real discouraged, you know. I can imagine sometimes these pastors at big churches, oh, we're down to 3,000 people now. We were at 3,500 last year.

What happened? I'm so discouraged. I'm like, really? Because we start to measure it, and don't you? You get discouraged. You want to start a ministry.

The youth ministry. That's why I just really appreciate Luke is because it's hard to grow that, and if you get down to five, six kids, he says, I'm loving it, I want to do it next year. It's like, what? How do you measure that? Because you measure it by faithfulness, not by numbers.

Now, Shane, last week you said numbers happen at a healthy church. Yes, it does. Because it works both ways.

I think a healthy church, a healthy ministry will grow at some point. But God often uses the smallness of something to fulfill what He says in His Word, that if you are faithful in the little things, I will make you ruler over much. And I've learned that God is more concerned about our heart than what we think.

We man, if I could get 100 people, or if I could get, in the Bible studies, I've seen this probably more than anything else. We're down to five couples, and we're just, God maybe is calling us in something different. Well, are the five couples being built up? Are they being strengthened? See, we start to rate it by numbers.

So, if you all leave here, there's not somebody in your sphere of influence that you could not minister to, at work, your neighborhood, friends you know, we all, God will put us in that. So, all of you are called to the ministry. I hate to burst your bubble this morning.

It's not, you know, the church, or go talk to Pastor Shane, or go talk to the elders, they'll tell you. No, you sometimes, it's okay for you to pray for somebody. You know, God's not going to go, Shane's praying now, I'm going to hear.

He's going to, he hears the prayers of all the saints, praying for people. Oswald Chambers said, God buries His men and women, I put that in parenthesis, in the midst of paltry things. No monuments are erected for them.

They're not, actually they are ignored. Not because they are unworthy, but because they are in the place where they cannot be seen. See, our American culture has created something very dangerous called idolatry.

There's shows called American, and it's all about, even in the Christian music industry, I know people in that industry have hosted radio stations and put on events, and it's amazing how the lure of wealth and money will be there, and they'll come to an event if there's over 5,000 people. Now I know it's important to be good stewards of your time. You know, I have to turn down speaking engagements sometimes, and I just counseled one on the East Coast at a men's conference, I didn't counsel, I never committed to it, because I felt I would be gone here too many Sundays, and maybe God will call me to do that more often, but, and the donation they were going to give would pay my truck payment for many months, and you know, but you can't measure it by, Lord, what do you want us to do? And I tell people now, whatever, if there's anything in your budget, if there's not anything in your budget, I'm relying, I'm leaving it up to God, I'll just go, I'll pay you to preach.

I will, I've told, I'll tell that Mormon church, I will pay their rent, I will pay your rent for a month if you let me preach the gospel. The real gospel. Now I haven't told them that, I haven't told them that, but I'm saying, you see, that's the, you go to where God has called you.

Now before you put me on a pedestal, I am challenged by this just as much as you are. There's not a week that goes by that's like, go stop by the hospital homes, they're right there on K4, you're right there in East Palmdale, you're right there in Rancho Vista, you're right there, and you're fighting that flesh. But if we just look at ministry as one person, go to one person, you will see your ministry and your life flourish, because then you're doing what God told you to do.

You're being filled up, and then you're being emptied into others. You're being filled up and you're being emptied into others. What happens, let's look at it a different way, what happens when I fill up with too much food? And I don't burn it, right? And I don't feel good.

I don't feel good. I've told my wife this morning, I haven't weighed this low in like three years, and I feel incredible, because the physical and the spiritual often go together. I don't want to take a nap as much, I want to stop by hospital homes, I want to be more involved, because that excess is leaving, and it gives me more energy to do what God's called me to do.

Same with you. Same exact thing applies. Well, let's get started.

This might be a long one. You guys ready for this? If you need to leave, remember I told you the trick, you tell your wife, or if you need to leave, I'm going to go to the bathroom, in a couple minutes, you just follow. And I'm of course halfway joking, I know a lot of people here are hungry for God, and it's actually very encouraging, because I've been to places, I've had a pastor at one point told me, you know, can you get your message down to 25 minutes? You know, we've got a lot going, and it's okay, I'm flexible, and it actually was really good, and then I'll get to other places.

You know, when I opened up, it was funny, when I opened up for Cutlass at the Lancaster Performing Arts Theater, you know, yeah, give it, you know, give some Medicaid, you know, sermon, just kind of, you know, tie it in, something kind of not too long, and then it went from 20 to 15, then I get there, and the guy's like, keep it under 10, so I'm like, I've got to go out there in 10 minutes, what am I going to take out? And so it's funny, though, because we often want to watch the clock, and not what God wants us to do. So I'm just going to let loose, let the chips fall where they may, but on this quote of Oswald Chambers, be careful in this area, because God does, I do actually more for God, and so do many people, than what they see. So you see this, but you don't see Monday through Friday, or Monday through Saturday.

Same with you. And a lot of missionaries on the field, I'm reading a book I'm almost done, An Asia Harvest, it's about smuggling Bibles into China, I actually have 40 copies we just got, if you're interested in one, smuggling Bibles into China. He can't even put his picture on the book, or on websites, I don't even know who this guy is, I talk to him on email sometimes, and you don't know who these people are, yet they're bringing the word of God into these areas, they're crossing borders, they're getting arrested.

And I'm just, I put the book down and just started crying on one chapter, because I didn't realize there's many people in China, Christians, that they've never even seen a Bible. And when they get it, it's like their child was just born. They're crying, they're crying, and he's like, people will get through the whole Bible in a month or two, a month or two, I can't get people to get through it in a year.

But they're so hungry, and that's convicting for me, but these people, they're doing far more than many of us are doing, sitting here in the limelight, in the spotlight, they are actually going out and doing that, and you don't have to do that unless you're called, but I believe that the more you do something, here's what happens too. You'll go, let's say, to the hospital home, and you want to tell everybody, right, oh, it's great, but then you just keep it to yourself, and then God begins to bless you, and it begins to well up, and you begin to be blessed because you gave to others. So Acts 14, verse 8, Paul just began a ministry, we've been reading about Paul, and he's been ministering to people, now he gets to Lystra, Acts 14, verse 8, and he got to Lystra, and a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked, he was born unable to walk.

So, and I went through this, and I just stopped at key points, because we're talking about forming your ministry and leaving here with a better plan of action. Your ministry will involve going to the needy. Just telling you right now, because we want to pick and choose who we minister to, don't we? I mean, when I start to pick and choose, Lord, I'll just, I'll take the affluent, I'll take those who just had a shower today, and I don't have to do too much, right, not going to get in a long conversation, just let me pick, see, when you pick and choose your ministry, you pick and choose comfortable.

But when God calls you to the ministry, when God calls you to certain areas, you will go to those who are needy, it's not comfortable. But then we see that God restores the humble and those who see their need. And as we go through this, and we look at ministry, God will restore those who are humble and who see their need.

So it's your job, it's my job to point them in the right direction. What ministry is, you go to a need, you help to fulfill that need, and you point that person in the right direction. I've commented many times before, I wish we had something maybe right in the middle of Lancaster or somewhere where it was just an acre, acre of farming or hoeing weeds or something, I could, all these homeless people I run into, be here tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock, just grab a hoe and all hoe weeds with you and let's get these guys

working and point them to a solution.

And you also see the sincerity of their heart. And it's wonderful to watch God work in the heart of those who are humble and teachable. And something on this, humble and teachable, when you begin to walk in your ministry and what God has called you to do, I believe that all of you can leave here with some type of ministry that God, things you aren't even aware of, people you could start ministering to, be careful you don't say this, it's my ministry.

It's my ministry. Sometimes in the past when we started Westside Christian Fellowship, not here but in Lancaster, I've had to talk to people where I'm talking with them and say, yeah, but my ministry. Okay, well, let's back up a little bit.

It's God's ministry, it's Jesus, we represent him because what happens when it's my ministry, when it's my church, when it's my, you begin to put too much emphasis on you and who's not in charge, that being God, and the emphasis becomes you and not what God has called you to do. So be careful, people are like, is that Shane's church? No, that's not Shane's church. That's God's church, he planted, the church is still gonna be there when Shane goes bye-bye.

So it's God's church, it was planted years ago, and we're just stewarding what he has called us to do. And I think it's Psalm 107, I read it to the men yesterday, we had a great men's walk, about 35 guys showed up to walk on the aqueduct, and then we had about 70 guys and kids, their sons here, and I talked about the story of Samson. It's gonna be on video I think at some point, so we'll get that to you if you're on the email bulletin, but I read this scripture and I felt the need to read it again today.

Psalm 107, 27, 28, in the NIV, they reeled and they staggered like drunkards. They were at their wits' end. You're gonna find many people like that in ministry, just like this, suicidal, at their wits' end.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He'll often use you to help them in that area. And then what's ironic is when he pulls somebody out of their distress, he calls them to that type of ministry.

We've got ministries, right now they're gonna be starting marriage ministries, where the marriage was falling apart a year ago, now they're on fire for God, now they want to help others. We've got recovery groups where people have come out of addiction, they've been set free, now they want to. So be careful, don't let your weakness throw you a curveball.

In that weakness, God can use you to minister to others. That's why I think he brought me through so much. I can relate to the person who has had an abortion.

I can relate to the person who's went through a divorce. I can relate to the person who has been cheated on. I can relate to the person who's been addicted from everything to IPAs to sugar to chocolate to coffee.

The list goes on. Addiction personality. I mean, I can relate to these people, but then you go and you help them because that's part of the ministry.

People are like, you're addicted to sugar? Yeah, you can be addicted to sugar. Did you know that? Oh, you didn't know that. Well, you try not having any for the day, and you'll find out very quickly how addicted you are.

Take your favorite thing and avoid it for the day. You will become a monster. A monster.

Right? And it's, of all the things, too, this is funny. When I was on my fast, I walk in, there's a little welcome basket. Oh, well, Frito chips, chocolate things, Hershey's, Twix, Snickers, whatever it is, Fig bars.

I'm like, you're going in the closet. You're going in my truck. You're getting out.

Devil, you are a liar. Because it's this, and that's a whole other sermon. I'm actually going to wait for that one.

But let me get back on track. Verse 9. Phil, you know it's coming, huh? It's coming out. It's going to come at some point.

This man heard Paul speaking. So the man who was born unable to walk, he heard Paul speaking. And Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to heal, said with a loud voice, Stand up straight on your feet.

And he leaped, and he walked. It's like Paul is preaching. Paul's filled with the Spirit of God.

He sees this man. He's looking at this man. He sees that there's this element of faith in this man.

And he activates that faith and calls that man to walk. But we see a few things here. God was his focus.

God was his focus. And Paul was open to what God wanted to do. See, Paul was open to what God wanted to do.

But I think in many of our cases, especially in America, read some of these missionary books. You'll be, that still happens? God still moves? God still raises people from the dead? Little baby? No, that doesn't happen anymore. That couldn't happen anymore.

God still heals? I mean, when you're counting witch doctors on the mission field, and you're contending for a real spiritual battle, you will see amazing things happen. But now we tend to doubt what God wants to do. Like, well, Paul did that.

But if I see someone who can never walk, I'm just too scared to, you know, I don't want to go there. I mean, that would be embarrassing, wouldn't it, in front of all of you? But I also believe that this is a gift of faith that the Bible talks about. That God will give you a gift of faith.

And if you've ever had that, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You feel as if you could just speak it, and it's going to happen. You are so confident.

You know that God's going to work. You're sure of it. And you are faith-filled and strong.

It's a gift of faith. And we see Paul activating that. He surveyed the situation as well.

Paul surveyed the situation. And Jesus would. And this is interesting.

When I read that story about the man at the pool, was there other people around the pool? Jesus would often just go and heal certain people. And it immediately came to mind Matthew 7, 6. I'm going to paraphrase it. Jesus said, don't waste your time on things or people who will throw it back in your face.

Don't throw your money or assets to those who act like pigs. They will trample those resources and then turn on you. The verses, you know, giving your pearls to swines and things like that.

But wait a minute, Jesus. You said, pray for my enemies. Go and help those.

And now you're saying this. I don't understand. Well, that's why I would encourage you to spend your time, a lot of times, reading the whole counsel of God.

Because scriptures that you think contradict each other don't when you understand the heart of God. For example, Jesus said, turn the other cheek. But when Jesus was slapped, he didn't turn the other cheek.

He confronted the man. Wait a minute, you're going to get, no he's not. Because the whole point of turning the other cheek is personal insults.

And just, you know, I'm going to let that go, I'm going to let that go. But there comes a time when there's time to be bold and to confront. Because if not, if you're just always turning the other cheek, then you become a doormat.

The wife who's constantly getting beat up becomes a doormat and her husband is never challenged. You see how that works? It's a principle here. So yes, we're to reach out and to help others.

But you know those people. I know there's people right now that I need to not, that I need to avoid. And I'm not going to reach out.

I know that might sound harsh, but because you know, you've been, one example is that group that was at the atheist debate, the satanic group. And he Facebooked me this week and said, I'll be at your men's breakfast, hail Satan. I said, no you won't.

You're not coming. I didn't even respond. I said, no.

I'm going to take you to prayer. You're not coming. Guess who didn't come? I'm not going to throw because I don't feel that God is leading it.

At some point, you don't just keep being a passive doormat, come and run this place. No, you're coming to my ground now. You're coming here.

You're not welcome here if your heart's not right. See that's the difference. You can come if you're open and teachable and are wanting to listen and learn and want some fellowship and you have some questions.

No problem. But if you're coming to bring dissension and turmoil and conflict, you're not welcome here. I mean, you can, you can look throughout scripture.

That's biblical. When did God say we, we, we cower down like a little puppy? Okay, Satan, you have your way, you threat us and now we're going to go and walk on eggshells. No, by the authority of Jesus Christ, you're not welcome here.

We're going to preach the gospel and let your heart be challenged and change. So see, it's the heart of God. It's the heart of God.

But here's the thing people won't understand with something like this. Well, Shane, that sounds like a little, you're mean-spirited. No, because I have a history here.

I talked to this person for an hour after the debate and he was not teachable and humble and willing to listen. He was wanting to throw this garbage in my face and if you're going to come here and throw this garbage at other people, no, we will shut that down. That's just biblical.

That's actually good leadership. And my flash is to say, okay, you know, just whatever, you know, and just, but bold leadership, the elders would agree that we say no, I mean, you're just not welcome here if you're not willing to be open and teachable. See, that's the difference.

And I just got an email this week from a friend out of state. Gosh, I don't even know if I should go here on these things. But it's important because of this issue.

They have a homosexual couple, two women, lesbians that would, that want to serve at the church. So one, there's some fruit there in their faith. The other, there's not.

Shane, should we let them serve? We don't want to, you know, discourage and maybe they're growing and we don't want the church to come. And I said, personally, that's not too hard biblically because you're endorsing a lifestyle. You're affirming a lifestyle that the Bible actually says come out from that and repent and believe.

And then as a church, you're not watering down the message because they serve. You're actually holding a standard by which God wants us to lovingly judge people. Now if there's repentance and there's fruit and there's separation, give it some time.

Give it some time. Let's see if there's genuine fruit. And then, but if people shouldn't run your church, we're going to offend, that God should run your church.

And what does God want to do? So if it's coming from a humble attitude, a loving attitude, would I let somebody say, I just left my wife last week, can I pass out bulletins and be a greeter? No, you can't. No, you can't. Well, that's me.

No, it's not. I'm not going to affirm their lifestyle. I'm hooked on pornography.

Can I help in youth? No, you can't help in youth. We actually ask the men helping in youth these questions because we have a responsibility. See that's not mean spirited.

That's bold leadership that wants to protect the flock. Now do we get everything right? Of course not. And there has to be some grace with people.

But we're not going to affirm, we're going to help. We're not going to offend on purpose, but if the truth of God offends, then there's not much we can do about that. So that's what Jesus meant when he said, don't throw your pearls to swine.

I'm not saying these people are swine that I've been mentioning, but I am saying be careful with who you invest your time. There are some people, I'll invest my time, I'll talk with them. But then as the week goes on, I'm like, okay, not going to do that again, because they're not open to that.

So careful in this area. And it's interesting. This man, this man who was healed, he had faith and was healed.

Then in Mark 9 24, we see a man who says, I believe, Lord, but help my unbelief. And his son is healed. And then we see in Matthew 8 8, a man comes and said, Jesus, just speak the word and my servant will be healed.

So he's an intercessor. The man who was healed didn't even know Jesus was around. He didn't pray anything.

So is it his faith? Is it her faith? Is it Jesus? And in ministry, you'll have to do this. You'll have to exercise tremendous faith. You will struggle with faith and you'll need to intercede for people.

All three of those die off and pray. I'll just admit to you right now. I prayed in hospitals.

I prayed when people are on their deathbed. And Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief. Because we're not perfect on this side of heaven.

We struggle with that. Even praying for healing. You know, I'm like, Lord, I believe, but are you really going to do this? And you struggle with that and that's part of ministry.

Here's the key though. You also have to be an intercessor. And this is where it gets difficult.

One of my concerns now for where I see America and the world in general is such atrocities can happen and we've grown numb and cold to it. We can no longer intercede for the single mom who's struggling or the person who's lost something. Or look at all these, when I first heard about beheadings, I was shocked.

Now it's like it's on the news every week. Look how callous and cold we've become. And to truly be an intercessor, you've got to feel the heart and the pain of the person.

Jesus was. He interceded on behalf of us. And then verse 11.

Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices. So the people who are not believers, they see that this man's healed and they raise their voices saying in the Lycaonian language, that means they weren't Greek, they weren't Roman, in the Lycaonian language, the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men. So they see a genuine healing.

They go clearly the gods have come down off, what is that, Mount Olympus, right? They've come down off Mount Olympus and they visited us. And Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul Hermes because he was the chief speaker. So a few keys to ministry from this, Proverbs 27.2, let someone else praise you and not your own mouth.

Now many years ago when I read that, I'm like, that doesn't even sound good. Let somebody else praise you? Well look up the word in the Hebrew language. And it means this, let someone else give an accurate acknowledgement of what you're doing and not your own lips.

So it would be like somebody involved in, let's say, gosh I don't even know what, we just talked about, so let's say a homeless ministry, right? Such and such, I so appreciate what you're doing, we see what you're doing, the life's changed, thank you for doing that. And they can humbly acknowledge that, give credit to God. But if they're coming around, hey, look at what we did, look at what's going on, look at what I did,

look at what I accomplished.

And let someone else acknowledge your ministry, let someone else acknowledge what you're doing and not your own lips because that keeps you humble. Because it's a heart issue, right? Isn't it a heart issue? Now, don't follow prey to the other side though, you ever seen that person? Oh shucks, little old me, me, oh, me. But inside, they're eating up, they're eating, they're just, oh, praise me more, praise me more.

But they're hiding by the, oh shucks, right, just me, oh, I'm just serving God, brother. But inside, their heart is just a mess, right, it's just pride and arrogance and they're starving for more of that. So be careful, don't say, oh little shucks, little old me around here, right? But it's okay to acknowledge, like we just acknowledged the team back there, the media and sound, Christine, Jake, thank you so much because the only time we really notice you is when something goes wrong, right, it's not working, where are you? But when everything's right, we forget.

So we acknowledge those, we thank those, we thank all the ushers that are serving, the children's ministry helpers, let me publicly acknowledge the 40 people or so that help keep this going every Sunday morning that are donating their time. So we just follow Proverbs 27, let someone else acknowledge you. And here's a good test, when you start to get mad like nobody's acknowledging me, be careful, be careful, the enemy, that is a stronghold.

Now for a minute here, this is just fun, who were Zeus and Hermes? Who were, right, who were Zeus and Hermes? Well they were two of 12 Greek gods who lived on Mount Olympus. Now I think if you go there, that belief system has faded now, right? I don't know if we think there's, Thor is out, right, a movie I haven't seen, but I've heard he's got a big something and throws it and it's like thunder and it's like these Greek gods and they make movies out of it, but you really don't believe it anymore, I hope, right? That's not true, who were these people? And God just, man this point I told my wife too when I got home, this point was just lit up the page on me and I got so excited, I just said God you are so good, here it is, who were Zeus and Hermes? But we don't do that with Jesus, we say who is Jesus Christ? Who is, he's here, he's real, he's alive, he's our savior, who is, not who was. Rarely we say who is Jesus, watch even unbelievers, watch who is Jesus, they'll interview somebody on CNN, or I better back up, I might get a little loud here, Fox News, they'll interview somebody who is Jesus but they don't even believe in him, see they can't get past it, who was Jesus, no, who is he, who is this person everybody bows to or everybody's upset at or people are losing their lives for, who is Jesus Christ? You better answer that question correctly, because he still exists, that is the God who was from everlasting to everlasting, the alpha and the omega, that's why he's called that, from the beginning to the end, the wonderful counselor, the prince of peace, the mighty father, the lion from the tribe of Judah, my banner, my shield, my butler, my Sabbath rest, he's everything, he still exists.

Not my butler, butler, it's an Old Testament imagery of strength, that was a close one, right? Boy, you wouldn't believe the emails I get, if I misquote, that's Psalm 27, 12, not 22, you belligerent person, don't you study well, I'm like guys, give me some grace here, remember dyslexia has a problem with numbers, and it did happen, she doesn't go here anymore, she's back in Lancaster, drove me crazy, every week I get an email, you misquoted this one, or you said this word, I'm like, oh, Lord, is this genuinely somebody who wants to help, or is it a critical heart? It's a critical heart, okay, thank you, moving on. But I'm open, if I misquoted something, let me know, because we change it on the nose, we change it, I'm all for that, but we shouldn't come to church looking for these things. Yeah, that was just a tiny event, just bear with me for a minute there, but ask my wife, I am so bad on numbers, you can give me a phone number and I'll

forget it, I'll dial the wrong number, I'll put the wrong thing in the bank account, I just, numbers are just so confusing, I can sit here and quote scripture for the next couple hours, but when it comes to numbers, it's just something is off, and I didn't do good at math, and algebra was not even an option, it's not even on the radar.

So every time my kids aren't doing good at math, I say, but look how I turned out, right? I don't need to come up here and go E equals MC squared, that's going to help me here, the ratio of water to hydrogen to, you know, and 22 times 412, you need to have that real quick, no I don't, my phone has a calculator on it. So make sure you know who Jesus is. The Bible says He's the Son of God, He's the sinner's savior, He's the only way, the only truth, the only life, which is funny, I get criticism on saying that too, because it doesn't say only, it doesn't, the Bible says He is the way, the truth, the life, and I want to emphasize the only way, the only truth, the only life, nobody comes to the Father except through Him.

So He's everything, He's the reason we're here, He's the reason I'm here, He's the reason we worship, He's the reason I put this together, He's the reason that we exist, and we are saved because of Christ. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. They were going to sacrifice to Paul and his helper here.

Now keep this in mind, nearly all religions make a sacrifice. All religions, Hindu, Buddhist, they'll sacrifice something, go online, most religions have a sacrificial system. Why? Why? Because we know inside that we've fallen short, we know that we owe something, there's something in our DNA, I don't know if it's in the little strands and things, but I know it's there from our Adamic nature, our nature from Adam, that we know something is not right.

I have to sacrifice something, I have to give something, something has to die in order for me to live. Now people actually try to use that against me and say, see all religions do that, and I say, see that actually confirms God to me, because it's the same heartbeat that has to worship something in the six, whatever billion people on the planet, they have to worship something. They feel that there is something out there greater than them.

I mean, listen, atheists who doesn't want to admit to it, but I know in their heart they know that they're not that, they're not all that, right, what the kids say, I'm not that in a bag of chips, whatever that means. You know, but we know there's something beating in us that knows something is not right, or I have to worship something. Why? Because we are created in God's image, and that image, Norman Geisler, he's a theologian, he said, God's image in us is effaced, it's not erased.

Effaced means it's damaged, it's marred. So God's image in us, I mean this is amazing, if you just sit and think about it for a while at home, you are made in the image of God. That young adult that wants to take her life, tell her she's made in the image of God.

The abortion industry that likes to pull out arms and legs and sell things, those are made, those children are made in the image of God. That will change how you treat yourself, that will change your life, you focus, but that image is effaced, it's damaged, it hasn't been erased, it's still there, that image, that broken, marred relationship, that's why so many people feel broken, because they are. They're struggling, they're running to this addiction or this prescription or this relationship and they're running to the next thing because they're broken.

So part of the ministry is you point people to Jesus Christ. You point people to Christ. And on that note, make sure you have the right sacrifice.

Make sure you have the right sacrifice. Because many people, they're going through life, they are sacrificing, I hope God sees my good deeds. Many religions, I hope my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds.

So they're making a sacrifice and it's the wrong one. The price has already been paid, the sacrifice has already been made. We just repent and we acknowledge that.

And then verse 14, but when the apostle Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes. See the difference, we read earlier Herod, when they said, the voice of a God and not a man, the voice of a God and not a man, Herod said, yes, thank you, and he was killed. These men go running into the crowd, no, we are not gods, we are just like you.

Men, why are you doing these things? We are just like you, the same nature, and we preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God who made heaven, the earth, the sea, and all the things that are in them. Turn to that God. That's part of ministry, you turn to that God.

I just ran into another homeless guy this morning, early this morning, 6.30, I've known him for a few months. He got his truck back, I helped him a little bit, and then he lost his truck again. It's been impounded, now it's been sold.

And I said, you've got to turn everything over to God. No, he said, no, I know God. I said, yeah, but that bottle's got you.

See, that's what's got you. You go back to that useless thing, you go back to that thing that's bringing the depravity, but in our pride and our arrogance, we say, we got this, I'm right with God, you might be right with God, but you've got a lot of things you need to work on and get rid of those useless things. Shane, how do I know if they're useless? Are they drawing you closer to Christ, or are they drawing you away from Christ? I've got family members, I won't say how close, right? You'll know who they are if I say how close, maybe distant, maybe who knows.

But I tell them, I say, you've got to end that relationship. Oh, she's a good friend. You know, all she's doing is posting stuff about being drunk and high and flirting and all these things in Vegas by the pool.

That's not a good friend. That's pulling you back into the misery that you're wanting to get out of. Turn from these useless things.

What is useless in our life that is keeping us from following Christ? Fully surrendering our life to Christ. A man said to D.O. Moody, he said, D.O. Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to Him. The same call goes out today.

God is waiting for those who will fully surrender their life. And then the enemy comes in and says, you can't do that. You're not perfect.

Guess what? I'm not either, but I'm not going to let that sidetrack me. Useless things. What useless guy could stay here 20 minutes? What turn from these useless things, useless things that have no spiritual health whatsoever.

And you know why it's so hard? Let's just be honest this morning. It's so hard because we love them and we're addicted to them, aren't we? Try it today. The thing that is just useless.

Facebook, the negative news, every time I go to the news, I'll just tell you right now, I just leave that page. The world's falling apart. What's that little chicken little, right? Sky's falling, sky's falling.

I mean, look at everything. Conspiracy theories and this and the Obama administration, the Trump administration, ISIS, North Korea. Now I've got to worry about North Korea? There's a good chance they're going to try to hit Los Angeles with a nuclear bomb.

Or is the wind going to be blowing this way? I mean, do we just go outside and go, all right, we're done, Lord, come take us? I mean, God, what are we doing? And you just get paralyzed. Or time on Facebook, or YouTube, there's YouTube videos a lot of you shouldn't be watching. That's why you're coming up with weird things in your mind.

Because not everything, not everything is edifying. Not everything builds you up. It actually pulls you away from Christ.

Because it's useless. That's one of the primary goals of the ministry is to help people turn from these useless things. And on that note, ministry isn't always about wiping away tears.

Sometimes it creates them. Because we think of ministry like, kumbaya, let me just hold you and help you. Sometimes it's challenging and confronting the person.

Your ministry sometimes will produce tears. There's nothing more effective, in my opinion, now this happens maybe 20-25% of the time, not normally you're comforting. But there are times when in your ministry you will lovingly confront that person.

And you will tell them, you are hurting your family. You are hurting your children. You are distant from God.

You need to turn around. And you might not hear from them for a while. But that's okay, they needed to hear it.

Also, part of ministry is, we can't just feed the stomach but neglect the soul. That's not ministry. It's compassion and it's outreach and it's good, but be careful.

We sometimes gloss over ministry by, okay, well I handed out sandwiches or I painted their house or I picked up trash. And that's good, don't get me wrong. But that's not necessarily the main focus.

Go through this whole book of Acts. Paul's main focus is the gospel. His main focus is the gospel.

Everywhere he went, the gospel, the gospel, the gospel. That's the main focus. Because that, here's why, because what you focus on becomes the priority.

Verse 16, I'm going to try to get through this. Who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. So Paul's saying, I better kind of give you a fast forward here.

Paul's talking to this group of people. He's saying in bygone generations, mainly in past generations, God allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he did not leave himself without a witness.

See this is why nobody has an excuse. And that he did good. He gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

He's telling the people, where do you think those crops came from? Where do you think that perfect balance of nitrogen, oxygen, helium came from? And where do you think the rain created the soil absorbed it? Where do you think all this came from? You are not without a witness. You know that there is a one true and living God. Stop following these little idols, these little carved images that you make out of a tree in worship, and you have this little Buddha, this little whatever it is, and you just go through life bowing to the wrong God.

The pagans had no knowledge. The pagans had no knowledge of the Old Testament. So Paul couldn't say this is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He just said this is the God who has given you everything you need, who has provided for you. And then Paul, because of this, the people still wanted to sacrifice to them. But then the Jews, the good old unbelieving Jews from Antioch and Iconium, they came to where Paul is.

Now if I'm not mistaken, where Paul is, Lystra is down, and these Jews are up in an area about 20 miles away. And they decide to do this. We're just going to go tell on Paul, right? We're going to stir up some controversy.

So be careful. The Biblical ministry is not always fun and glamorous. There is an enemy who hates what you're doing.

He hates what you're doing. You think he likes what I'm doing? You don't have to answer that one, huh? Or what you're doing, or what my wife is doing in helping us, and all of you, he doesn't like what we're doing. So the Jews came down from Antioch and Iconium, and they persuaded all the multitude to stone Paul.

So you go from praises to stoning. And I remember Jesus, hallelujah, the Savior is here to crucify him the next day. Riding on this donkey, and people are praising him.

Hallelujah, hosanna, and then crucify him. And that is the tides of ministry. Be careful.

Never measure it by the praises of men, because you will be defeated and discouraged every single time. I've noticed that here come the praises. Well, get ready for the valley of defeat.

That's just part of it. That's part of ministry. Satan does not go on vacation when you decide to get involved.

I talked to the men yesterday. Discouragement has a purpose. The purpose of discouragement is to discourage and get you sidetracked and going in the wrong direction.

Think about it. The harvest for a farmer comes after the work. The athlete wins after afflicting and disciplining the body.

The soldier celebrates after the victory. So there is constant pressure and constant chaos sometimes. Control chaos in ministry.

It's difficult. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. Well, this is obviously some type of a miracle.

These aren't little stones. You ever see a kid, you know, I've talked to you about this before, throwing little rocks at somebody, right? Don't throw rocks out back. This is stones, stoning.

They're big, and the person will be down. It'd be easy to stone somebody right here. Right, you're just throwing stones at Paul.

So he just got up and went in the other city. Okay, that's a miracle. That's a huge miracle.

Some type of miracle took place. And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, and they strengthened the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in faith and saying, we must, through many tribulations, enter the kingdom of God. I've got another 25 minutes, but I'm going to save that for you.

That way, you have to come back. You're going to want to know how this ends. And also, I just feel that we've said enough, and we just need to go into a time of worship.

But let me focus on this last point. He went, you'll see Paul often. Now, this is something that's interesting.

This, I mean, shipwrecked, beaten, stoned, dragged around the cities, molested spiritually by the religious leaders. They would tear him down. He would go to the churches, and I never read where Paul came in to discourage them.

And now, he would let them have it sometimes if they need to repent and things. But he would go and he would encourage the people. He would strengthen them.

And your ministry, in your ministry, you will do this. Strength is found in continuing on to the next ministry opportunity and encouraging people. In your ministry, and you're acting like I have one.

You do. Can't we all name a person or 10 that we could minister to? The neighbor that you know is just lost, as lost as they come. There's a few in my track.

Right? Where you work, in your sphere of influence, there's ministry everywhere. So we learn here from Paul, remind people about the goodness of God. Here's all you have to do.

You open the conversation. You talk to them. You begin to tell them what God has done for you.

That's why many people don't have a ministry. God hasn't really done anything for them. I hate when I hear this, I'm a self-created man.

That breath you just took is a gift from God. More Christians need to be filled with the Spirit of God so they can speak about the power of God. That's why many people don't minister.

I don't know what to say. You don't because you haven't been changed and challenged. Because when you've been changed by the Word of God, you have to tell people.

You have to tell people. What about the song we love to sing, I was blind but now I see? I was lost but now I'm found. I didn't have a loving father but God loves me.

And you even have to encourage them. I tell people, many times when I pray, I pray that God come into the midst of my pain. I can relate to you because sometimes they think pastors, everything's going great.

Or they think of you, right? Everything's going great. No, you have to tell them. I even pray in the midst of my pain.

You have to encourage them in the midst of your pain. That's why I love the song we sing, Lord, where will you find me? Will God find you? Honestly, will He find you grateful and thankful and full of His Spirit and broken before Him? How will God find us during worship this morning? How will He find us? The heart means everything. The heart of the person means everything.

So the final encouraging word is this, ask God what He wants you to begin today. We have ministries, we have dozens of ministries in this room. Shane, how can I reach out to those who are divorced or separated? Shane, how can I reach out to the homeless I see off the freeway? Shane, how can I reach out to the single moms who are barely getting by? How can I reach out to the person who's struggling in this? How can I reach out? A guy recently, we have it going on still, he said, I want to help men who struggle in the area of sexual purity.

I want to help them. We've got a class, Pure Desires. Now here's interesting, he said something to me, he goes, you know, we won't have a lot of guys show up.

Really? So that place should be full. I said, no, nobody wants to admit it. Who doesn't struggle with purity? You want to know why? Because God has created us to lust for our spouse.

And when that lust is redirected, it becomes a perversion and the purity that God designed then becomes polluted. So something that is good and God ordained, the devil perverts it and then it becomes impure. And then we struggle with the impurity instead of focus on the purity that God has called us to.

So I would encourage you, get more information on that because all of us can benefit from that class. I've never asked a 75 year old, when do you stop struggling with it? You have to ask somebody older than me. I mean, it's like, it's an issue, we can't just go like this.

Because what happens when you go like this? It just grows and grows and grows and the sin loves to grow in that darkness.

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