

Follow Me

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman's sermon emphasizes the importance of loving sinners while firmly opposing sin, advocating for a balance of compassion and truth in the church's approach to moral issues.

Duration: 55:03

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13, John 4:23-24, Galatians 5:9, James 4:8

Topics: "Mercy Over Sacrifice", "Genuine Worship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of loving the sinner but hating the sin. It challenges the listeners to have a balance in showing compassion without compromise, to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, and to understand the true meaning of mercy over sacrifice. The message calls for genuine worship as a way to encounter God and seek transformation in the heart.

Transcript

The message tonight is going to make some squirm in their seat and some leap for joy. Others, it's going to convict and others that might challenge in a good way. But the message is love the sinner and hate the sin.

Love the sinner, hate the sin, as I told the first congregation for service. I'll tell you, if you've mastered this area, please come up and see me after the service. I would love to find out how you balance and master this area of hating sin, but loving the sinner.

And that's what we see Christ. He did this masterfully. So we're going to look to that briefly.

But before I forget, some of you weren't here last week, and I just want to encourage you to go online. Listen to last week's message on faith, faith being the anchor. Faith is the anchor of life.

And we have to remember that the anchor doesn't prevent the storm. Does it? It only holds a vessel in place. And some of us need our faith encouraged.

We need our faith grounded. We need our faith to be that anchor to find deep water and anchor into those rocks. So go back.

And if you weren't here, listen to last week's message. And where we left off is where we find ourself right now in Matthew chapter nine. So if you have your Bibles, you can turn to Matthew chapter nine, verse

nine.

And we're going to try to unpack this. There's actually two different sermons inside of this, but I'm going to try to make it all fit. Matthew chapter nine, verse nine, as Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office and he said to him, follow me.

So he rose and followed him. Now, it happened as Jesus said at the table in the house that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? When Jesus heard that, he said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

But go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. And there's a lot there.

I almost titled this follow me, but then there's a sermon just in following him. But then also we see Jesus loving the sinner, but hating the sin. And look at these Pharisees, see, it still happens today.

Why does your teacher, why do you associate with sinners? You know, that same question is brought to us today often. I was talking with the pastor recently who planted a church in a not so desirable area of our town, and he said there's been families leaving because of that. There's a prostitute sitting next to them, or there's somebody off the street in the back.

Oh, we can't deal with this. What do you think the church is? We're all broken people. Christianity isn't a crutch, it's the entire hospital.

It's everything. A bunch of sinners coming for hope and restoration and repair. But how do we love the sinner, but hate the sin? It's a very difficult balance, and it's often brought up the question I get people mainly when they're mad at me, shouldn't only God hate sin? That's what they say, shouldn't only God hate sin? We don't need to be pointing out sin in people's lives.

And I actually had a conversation with the pastor, associate pastor in this valley, notice how I don't name names and churches and things like that. But I want to get the point across, is he was saying some very controversial things. So we went to lunch about four years ago now, I'd have to check, and he started to tell me that we can learn from other religions.

We can learn to pray and meditate from the Buddhists and the Hindu, and right then I knew this was going to be an interesting conversation. But what he said after that, I was just sitting there in amazement. He also said we should not talk about the fear of the Lord.

Really? How do you pastor and avoid these things? And then he said, we don't talk about sin either, Shane. People already know they're sinners. We don't need to mention that.

Well, to be honest with you, about 90% of our nation thinks that they're good people and that there's no need, they don't need God. So we have to address this topic. But I was, you can ask my wife, for a week I went through this, this weird, Lord, how can this be? This guy's an associate pastor of a large church in our area.

And how can we be so diametrically opposed in these areas? A Buddhist is going to teach me how to pray and meditate. And I'm not going to mention sin. I'll resign tonight.

I'll just resign because the Bible says something opposite to all of that. However, we need to be careful in this area. I'm going to try to impact this.

We have to remember, though, that sin is serious. They don't want to talk about the very thing that is destroying lives and destroying families. This is not a toothless lion that pesters us.

This is a demonic king. Satan is a demonic king that his goal is to kill, to steal and to destroy. And without Christ at the center of your life, he will prevail.

I don't know how I can say that any more strongly. It's not a little guy right here with the pitchfork. Oh, don't do this.

A little angel on this side. This is a demonic king, the king of the demonic realm. He comes as an angel of light transforming himself.

He'll come as everything you always wanted to destroy you. He comes in with the wiles and trickery and deceit. How do I defeat this king? You worship the one true living king and you look to God's word and you live your life according to scripture and you pray and you fast and all these spiritual disciplines that nobody likes to do.

We all like to talk about it, but we don't want to do it because it hurts. But it's in the spiritual disciplines that we find victory. So especially in this area of sin, I just pulled up a few verses.

The Bible says to abhorred what is evil. And I tried to find we don't really have a word in our English language. Abhorred.

It's to utterly debase, to cast down. It's almost like spitting on something and stomping it, debasing. I abhorred this.

The Bible says to abhorred what is evil and to cling to what is good. Jesus said that he hated the sinful deeds of the Nicolaitans. And the churches in Revelation, five of the seven churches, Jesus had severe rebuke for I hate these certain things in your life, Jesus said.

And if your eye causes you to sin, cut it out. He said, don't fear man, fear God who can kill both your soul and body in hell. Jesus said these things.

Jesus Christ, the nice little turn your cheek, Jesus, that Jesus. So it's very important that we read our Bible all the way through and we can see the totality of scripture that sin has destroyed God's people from the beginning of time and sin will destroy God's people until the end of time. Not necessarily salvation, we're secured, we're sealed, I understand all that, but he's pulling us away from God, he's destroying lives.

So this is a serious issue. So God just we don't need to worry about sin, shame. Why do you always talk about these things? Why? Because sin put Christ on the cross.

Listen, that nice little thing up there is all glamorized and it's been sanded, it's been polyurethane and all this stuff. We can't see it right here, there's a banner in the way. But the cross was messy, it was bloodstained.

We talked about this on Easter. The creator dying for his creation whipped beyond recognition, beaten, slapped everything because it doesn't matter. As a matter of fact, the pilot, the pulpits want to be politically

correct and not offend anybody.

That's why lives aren't being changed. If preachers would preach under the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit with the word of God penetrating the heart, calling out sin, but building up and encouraging, but still calling out sin, lives would be radically changed. How do you know? Because I see it all the time.

Lives are radically changed when they're confronted by the awesomeness of God and by the unawesomeness of themselves. It's bad English, but it's true. There's not a word unawesomeness, I know.

Every time I mess up, my wife tells me when we get home, this, this, don't say junk in the trunk, don't, uh-uh. I say, I got to remember this. See, look at that.

I was talking about the seriousness of sin, and you guys just distracted me. James 1.15 warns that sin brings forth death. Psalms, I hate and abhor lying and sin, but I love your law.

See, and that's biblical truth is we have to hate sin, but I love the sinner. The problem is sometimes we hate the sin and the sinner, and we take it out on them. And A.W. Tozer, interesting name, but wonderful quotes, said probably 50, 60 years ago, when we become so tolerant, think about this, when the Church of America, when the pulpits, when Christians, when we, when me, when you, when we become so tolerant of every lifestyle, of everybody, of everything, we don't say anything, when we become so tolerant that we lead people into mental fog and spiritual darkness, we are not acting like Christians, we are acting like cowards.

Chew on that for a minute. When we become so tolerant, and I hear this, Shane, we shouldn't talk about any, oh, don't mention abortion, don't mention gay marriage, don't mention all the hot button issues, don't mention any of that stuff, let's just go love the people. Well, how do you just love the people if you can't warn of the destructive lifestyle? Every time I talk about this issue, people say, why do you have to talk about politics in the pulpit? I'm just talking about sin in the lives of people.

These things are destructive. Jesus, and I looked at a lot of Scriptures, so if I missed one, email me. But Jesus was not tolerant of sin anywhere.

I tried, no, no, no, sure, no, I just, I couldn't find anywhere where Jesus was tolerant of sin. He did, let me just turn the other way, let me wink, I know it's a, I know that's one, you're one little vice, you can just hold on to that, he never tolerated it. Everybody likes to say, Shane, but he, the woman caught in the act of adultery said, woman, I don't condemn you, oh, no.

But he didn't finish there, did he? But go and sin no more. The man, he healed, he found him, he said, listen, don't go, stop sinning, don't go and sin no more, or a worse thing is going to come upon you. He says, I didn't come to call sinners to repentance, or actually, I came to call sinners to repentance, I didn't come to call the righteous to repentance.

Why not? Because sinners need a savior. See, I just, maybe, I know I repeat this a lot, maybe it's just me, but I find it so ironic that the very thing Christ came for, to die, to preach to sinners, because of sin, because the wages of sin is death, because sin separates us from God, because his shed had to be bled for us, but we don't want to mention any of those things, Shane. So what do we want to be, just a popular church? A social club where we all come together, sing kumbaya and go home? I just, I cannot, I turn on Christian TV, come on, just talk about sin, talk about the cross, talk about the road to redemption, not about healthy, wealthy and wise, that's not going to cut it, guys, come on.

Where's that, where's the voices? Where's the voice crying in the wilderness saying, prepare the way of the Lord? What were they preparing the way of the Lord? Repentance. Repentance from what? From sin. Everything is connected back to this point.

But somehow we get into this, don't want to talk about these things. And we have to be careful, because we're not called to be sin-sniffing, arrogant Pharisees. Sin-sniffing, arrogant Pharisees.

I'm not going to say it again. Listen to the video, if you miss any of this stuff, listen to the video. But we're not, God, I'm trying to preach a serious sermon here tonight, guys.

But it's good, sometimes when I tell my wife, God, it got funny, she goes, good, we need a little humor, because it was getting thick in there, you could cut it with a knife. Well, here's the key. Although dealing with sin is critical because of its destructive nature, we also need to encourage, love, support, and seek to understand.

When we forget about grace, we become self-righteous, rigid, and unloving. So see how you balance it? And you'll see the article in the bulletin, sometimes I write those in the Christian Post. You guys read, follow that news organization.

Sometimes, I don't know why I post them in there, because you get, they got 500,000 likes, so you get a lot of people upset at the articles. I'm like, wow, what's wrong with these people? This is a Christian Post, aren't we all Christians? Listen, why are you guys always coming out against gay marriage? I said, because the culture won't shut their mouth. The culture's pushing everything on the church.

Church, change your doctrine. Church, change your bylaws. Church, shut your mouth and don't talk about these things.

So the culture's coming at me, so I gotta push back. I gotta say, I draw a line here and no further. So it's not the church's fault, it's the culture's fault for bringing it out and making an issue every single week.

So I said all that to say this. There are many times I talk with those struggling with same-sex attraction. I remember my wife, I missed breakfast with her, because I was in Palm Springs.

This guy was jogging, he's just looking at me. I'm like, what's he looking at? So I start, now I know, but I was. What he was like, do you have a problem? So I heard him talk and I knew.

So for 45 minutes, I just like to understand and encourage, I understand that. But once you tell the person, I mean he was like real receptive once I said, hey, I'm a sinner too. This isn't some sin way up here, I'm a sinner.

Not on that side, I don't do those things, I do these things. I'm a sinner, we're all sinners. That's what the homosexual community needs to know.

We love you because we're all sinners, we're all sinners. The only difference is they said, Christ, I call out to you, I confess my sin, I repent of it, I need you, I need a redeemer. That's the only difference.

So we're trying to get you to embrace that, to repent from that, that's the only difference. And after the conversation, he left there, I encouraged him, it was a good conversation, but I had to sit and just listen for a while. I understand, you've been beat up when you're a little, your dad didn't, and I understand that, but these, so he goes, but I love this guy.

I said, but so when you leave him next month and you love somebody else, so it's always okay if you love them? Well, no, I guess not. And then here's what God's word says. All of us have fallen short of the glory of God.

Here's what his word says. Jesus used the word pornea, it's where we get our word pornography from. Any type of illicit sex outside of God-ordained marriage between a man and woman.

Well, Jesus didn't say anything about homosexuality. We didn't say anything about bestiality, or pedophilia, or necrophilia either, did he? Well, let's connect the dots. Anything outside of that.

So see, that's why the church has to bring it up a lot, is because they're being challenged on a weekly basis. I have to meet with attorneys to get our bylaws changed to underscore what marriage actually is. And we're gonna be sued, lawsuits, if I don't marry a certain couple.

And then there's gonna be shut your mouth laws probably by 2020 where somebody could turn me into the police for saying this. So you don't tell me the church needs to shut up. The culture needs to experience the power of God like pulpits being flames of righteousness, saying we love you, but this is not right.

We care for you, but we're concerned. That's how people change. So that's what Tozer meant.

We can become so tolerant that we lead people into a mental fog and spiritual darkness, and we are not acting like Christians, we are acting like cowards. Because it's much easier to say nothing, isn't it? Oh, if God called me to say nothing, I would be so happy right now. If he called me to just shut my mouth and be a real estate agent, don't write articles, don't write books, don't upset people, don't probably get death threats in the future, I would love it.

I would love it, bring it on. But why can't I? Because his word is in my heart like a burning fire. It's shut up in my bones.

I'm weary of holding it back, and I cannot. If I stop to do, when I don't wanna write articles like the ones in your thing, when I don't want to, I feel pressure, I feel, Shane, get this out in love and be that voice in the wilderness crying, drawing people back to me, because if it's done in love, it's powerful. When the truth is done in love, it's powerful.

That's where lives are changed. So that's finding the balance. We love the sinners, why? Because we are one.

Well, actually, the Bible now calls us saints. Once that price has been paid on the cross, we repent of our sin, then we're referred to as saints, because that old sin nature has been crucified with Christ. It's been eradicated, it's been dealt with.

Remember those big theological words we talked about last year, propitiation? Propitiation, say that three times. That means that the wrath of God had to be satisfied. It had to.

There's no way that a holy, righteous God can dwell with sinful man. So Christ took on, propitiation took on the wrath of God, and then expiation, it's linked with the scapegoat in the Old Testament. Now our guilt and our shame has been released.

So not only has sin been dealt with, we shouldn't carry the guilt and the shame either. So to me, this is a wonderful message for those who struggle with same-sex attraction. That's why I bring it up a lot of times, because it's a wonderful truth.

Listen, you don't have to deal with the shame and the guilt and these things. Christ paid that penalty. And that's why it just fits in here with this issue.

The ability to relate to people on their level, show genuine concern and love them regardless of their lifestyle is a mark of true Christianity. And let me go on the record here. We're saying that, John, I think left for the second service.

Matt, I know well enough as the elders, as the leadership team here is here. We love you regardless of your lifestyle. I can say that and honestly mean it.

No matter what your lifestyle is. Shane, I just got drunk. I just got high.

I just got this. I just got porn. We love you.

It's love. It's the love of Christ compels us. Somebody who truly feels the Spirit of God loves you.

But I hate the sin that's taking you down and I will preach against it and I will warn you and I will encourage you to turn from that. So that's how you balance loving the sinner and not the sin, is you relate to them. You show genuine concern and you love them regardless of their lifestyle.

What it is, three words, compassion without compromise. Without is one word, right? As I'm saying that, I'm thinking, it's four words. Compassion without compromise.

So try to memorize that. That's how you balance. Shane, how do I love the sinner and hate sin? Compassion without compromise.

We don't compromise. It's the last time I'll mention it because I know people are getting, but on this issue of what they're trying to ordain, gay clergy and gay marriage and this whole issue, I would love to just give a whole sermon about this. This is why true Bible-believing churches can't back down.

They can't just, oh, okay, we'll give you that one, you give us this one. We have to contend for the truth. And when God calls something sin, we have to say, we love you enough to tell you the truth.

Well, that's why the article in there is, what does God's word say, not jars of clay? Because that lead singer for jars of clay, I think he's retracting some of his words now. But he came out and said, well, the Bible isn't really clear on this issue of morality and I want to say, what Bible are you reading? The problem is, these people aren't in the word of God. I'll just shoot you straight.

They don't know what it says. They're looking to liberal theologians or liberal teachers to tell them what it says. Because I can take you to Genesis where men created, men and women were created in the likeness of God.

God created them. You can go to Leviticus. You can go to stories in the Old Testament.

You can go to First Corinthians. You can go to Timothy. You can go to Romans, suppressing the truth and ungodliness.

God gave them over to a depraved and corrupted mind. So when sin begins to take control of our lives, it's because we suppress the truth. We suppress the truth and as a result, by default, we go in certain directions.

Some into that lifestyle, some into the party lifestyle, some into this. Anytime you suppress the truth and ungodliness, then that will rule and reign in your life. So that's vitally important.

And I heard this the other day. I want to share it with you guys. It's called the Gospel According to You.

Oh, you can already tell where this is going? Men, men read and admire the Gospel of Christ with its love so unfailing and true, but what do they say and what do they think of the Gospel according to you? You are writing each day a letter to men. Take care that the writing is true. The only Gospel that some will read is the Gospel according to you.

And this really struck me because when I heard this, I was sitting there thinking, you know what? Most people aren't going to read this. Hollywood's not going to take the time and go Genesis through Revelation. Let's see if this guy's right.

Or people we talk to, they're not going to see it. So when we name the name of Christ, they see in us what they perceive is the Gospel, the Gospel according to me. How I treat them is going to speak volumes as to the sincerity of my commitment to Christ.

Remember last Father's Day, and I'll probably remind you of it this Father's Day too, but there's a poem that goes something like, Dad, the lessons you give me may be very wise and true, but I'd rather get the lesson by observing what you do. For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give, but Dad, there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live. We need a two by four to the head tonight.

All the parents in there, your little kids are watching. We're representing the love of Christ in our life. I preach Christ crucified and the kids see it at home.

Is there a disconnect? Remember that I love to quote Josh McDowell. He said, the reason young adults don't follow Christ is they say, how can we follow the Christ when we don't want the Christ that our parents have? Did you catch that, or is it just me? Because that right there is enough to stop the sermon and just worship. How can millions of young adults, how can we follow Christ when we don't want the Christ that our parents have? That's the number one question he gets, and that should force all of us on our knees before Almighty God to pray that God break our heart, because that's why it's happening.

It's not coming because their parents are too loving, gentle, kind, and merciful. They're ruling their house with a rod of iron, but they know nothing about the compassion of Christ. Listen, I don't say all this to go, oh, yeah, that makes sense.

I say all this so the heart breaks and the change can take place during worship. That's why we give difficult messages. That's why God sends his messengers to deliver messages to his people, to warn them and to convict them.

But do they listen? No, they scoffed at his prophet, they mocked his word, and they despised his messengers. And the anger of the Lord arose against his own people until there was no remedy. And that's my concern.

See, as much as I don't wanna say it, when we confuse God's patience with his approval, and we just continue and allow certain things when God is calling us back to a place of holiness and repentance, that's not a good spot to live. This is why a humble, gracious heart is so important. Truth that is not underscored with love becomes obnoxious, and misrepresents the gospel.

When we have this without love, we become obnoxious. I'll give you an example, I gave the first service, and I'm glad there's a first service because sometimes I learn from my mistakes. But just being transparent, I think my wife will remember this too, about six months ago, I actually apologized to the guy since then, I've seen him since.

But in front of Vons, we got into this discussion, he believes in baptismal regeneration. I don't know if you know what that is, kind of big word. Basically means you're not saved until you get baptized.

So you can profess Christ as Lord, you can repent, you can, the Lord's changed your life, there's a fruit of the Spirit, but no, hold on, don't get excited yet. You're not going, you gotta go get baptized, then you'll be saved, you're not yet. So as I was getting more passionate outside of Vons, I said, that's a works-based oriented religion, that's heretical, and just kept throwing things at him.

Like, you baptize unbelievers, you're gonna go baptize an unbeliever, the Bible says to baptize believers. You're walking very dangerous ground, what did the thief on the cross do? Was he not with Jesus in paradise? What does a man do, does he die, he has a heart attack on his way to baptismal? Is he eternally lost? Come on, guys, wake up. I hurt his feelings, I don't know how that happened.

Because I can't talk to you, and he just laughed. You bet you can't talk to me. Round two, let's go.

And so, of course, right there, I'm like, oh, yeah, really, that's real gracious and loving, and I probably could've explained it a lot better had I just listened. So I actually saw him a week later and apologized, and now I just get passionate about it, I just, you know, that's a good excuse too, right? I'm just passionate, I'm just passionate. No, he just said, I'm sorry, I was a jerk.

So, anyway, that was my recent one of being, of not being gracious and blowing somebody out of the water is basically, you know, what I did. But I am amazed, I'm actually amazed often at how many defenders of the truth, how many people, defenders of the truth, ignored the clear-cut teaching of Scripture on grace and forgiveness and mercy and love and gentleness and long-suffering. And every time I challenge them on it, you know what they say? Yeah, but, yeah, but, they're doing this.

No, no. Hold on, we'll come back to what they're doing, but first, what are you not doing? See, we can be defenders of the truth, but how do we ignore the plethora of examples of Scripture talking about genuine love and grace and mercy and long-suffering? God forbid, no wonder we're not making lives in the different ways. We're throwing the Bible at Him instead of living it out.

And I just see this all the time. They're defenders of truth. Okay, but you sure wouldn't know it by your attitude.

Well, I don't care about that, I'm passionate. Somebody's gotta contend for the truth. Yeah, like Jesus, not like Hitler.

If you're upset, get upset at God, not me. This is just straight biblical preaching, what the Bible says. Boy, that was a long introduction.

Now I'm getting to the message. Well, we've got a couple hours left. I'm just kidding, I'm just kidding.

Well, no, I'm serious, I've got a long time, but I'll try to hurry. Jesus still says, follow me. Jesus still, well, remember back in Matthew, I said Jesus said, Matthew, follow me.

You know He still says that today, right? Follow me. He's telling you, back row, follow me. Front row, follow me.

Follow me, follow me. He says the same thing to us today, to follow Him. But you know what happens in American Christianity? I call it American Christianity, because you know, American Christianity, do you realize that we're actually laughed at in China, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Uganda? You realize that? The American church is made fun of because of what they see on TV.

Oh, I didn't get a parking spot out in front, and they're walking 10 miles in barefoot to sit on dirt with scorpions. God help us. Just yesterday, I paid the guy that mows our lawn.

I'm saying, I pay that guy more than they make in a month to take this much off my grass. Could you go and just take it right there, nice and like a haircut? I want my lawn to look like it has a haircut. And he makes more from me than some of these families do in a month.

They laugh at the American church. There's no power in your preaching. It's all about health, wealth, and wisdom.

Nobody's getting healed. Nobody's getting delivered. Nobody's getting set free.

You can complain about an hour and a half worship service. Try four hours of seeking God. They laugh at us.

Why, because they know follow him. We don't. Here's our version of follow him.

Jesus, bless my agenda. Jesus, bless my plans. Jesus, bless my life.

Basically, Jesus, here's what I'm doing. Would you come and follow me? I'm gonna go to school. I'm gonna do this.

I'm gonna make six figures. I wanna live up on the hill. I want this for my, I want this.

Come on, Jesus, bless my plans. Come on. That's not biblical historical Christianity.

That's called me-centered Christianity. Follow me is the opposite. Jesus, whatever you call me to do, I will do.

I will follow you when the storms rage, when the floods come, I will not be overtaken because you hold me with your right hand, with you, you guide me, you lead me. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Why, because I'm following him.

He's not following me. So that's American, we need to rethink how we look at follow him. He's not a genie in a bottle and he's not a butler.

You've heard me say that often, right? This is why. Okay, Lord, here's what I want. I wanted this and I want that and I want this.

Or a butler, get me this, get me this, get me this. He's the Lord Jesus Christ. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord.

We sit under his authority, we sit under his dominion, we sit under his sovereignty. He rules us. As Daniel says, the very God, O King, God holds your breath in his hands and he owns all your ways.

God, that's the God we serve. It's a privilege to follow him. So when Jesus says follow him, I have a whole sermon right on this.

But what happens a lot of time is any time we, like what I do sometimes, rebuke the American Christianity, the lukewarm church, right? You know what people say. But shame, we are winning them. We're winning them to Christ.

Really? Are we really winning them to Christ? Because let's see what A.W. Tozer says. Are we winning them to true discipleship? Are we winning them to cross-caring, to self-denial, to separation from the world, to the crucifixion of the flesh, to holy living, living to nobility of character, to despising the world's treasures, to hard self-discipline, to a love for God, to a total commitment to Christ? No, we're not. So don't say we're winning them because we're winning them to everything but those things.

We talk about the self-denial. They say, I don't want that. Pull yourself away from the world.

I don't want that. Carry your cross. I don't wanna carry that cross.

Jesus Christ, you stay up on the cross while I sit on the throne. The Bible says you get off your throne and you get yourself on that cross. You crucify yourself.

If you carry your cross and you follow me. It's that serious. Hey, listen, just as many fingers, I could sit in that seat right there and be hearing the same sermon.

Oh, God, you're right. Because we like to make God out to what we want, right? And here's one of the things I've noticed. The more spoiled we get, the harder it becomes.

I've got video of the underground church in China. They are weeping when their shipment of Bibles comes in. And they're crying, they're worshiping God because they get their Bible.

They have to go underground. They're arrested, they're beaten. That happened in many of our churches.

We'd say, oh, I'm not that serious, guys, come on. We know nothing about that fully surrendered life. So Shane, what's your point? My point is this.

Conviction is a good thing. Allow that conviction of the Holy Spirit to say, God, I need to surrender my life more to you. That's why one of the themes of this church is the fully surrendered life that I will preach on till the day I die.

You might say, when are you gonna stop preaching on it? When you do it. When I do it. The fully surrendered life.

The Bible knows no other life. And sometimes I read the Bible and I just kind of laugh because we know nothing of New Testament Christianity and they knew nothing of our kind of Christianity. Now granted, I've got a lot of grace in there and love and understand it's challenging and this and that and our big culture

and I know it is challenging.

That's why it's called self-denial. Pick up your cross and follow me. And there's many points in that, but I think you get the thrust of that.

And the next part he says here is, why does your teacher eat with sinners? Why does your teacher eat with sinners? And this right here just reveals the heart of these people. Does it not? The Pharisees. Why would you even eat with sinners? Why? And John MacArthur said this, I love this quote.

There is no suggestion in Scripture that Jesus purposely assumed the look and the lifestyle of a sinner in order to gain acceptance. See, and here's what I've noticed in the church. There's two extremes.

The one extreme is, don't deal with the sinner. Stay really distant. We're going to build a big church compound.

We're not going to deal with sinners at all. We're just going to just, you know, us four and no more. We are hard to the core.

If you don't agree with us, hit the door, that kind of thing. That's pretty good on the fly, huh? So that's, we're not, ah, don't touch a sinner. Do you know there's been prostitutes in here? Homosexuals? People addicted to porn, perverted.

Did you, were you aware of that? I don't know if you're aware of that. It's the church. Everybody's welcome because they need to hear this message.

But that's the, now granted we're careful. You know, we've got, you know, policies and procedures in place. But that's the one side, right? But what's the other side? Let's just look just like the lifestyle.

Nothing, so I can minister to them. I'm going to go to Vegas. I'm going to have some drinks.

I'm going to drop a hundred on black. I'm going to go swim by all the G-strings in the bikinis in the pool. I'm going to look just like that.

Whatever he's laughing about. That's what this side does. They've got to relate to the sinner.

I got to do everything the sinner talks about. I got to go to Yard House and have a big beer so I can relate to the waitress. I can minister to her.

I want to say, does it eliminate work? Does it eliminate work? So there's this tendency to get so much like the culture that the culture says, I don't want anything to do with you, you clown. There's no difference. There's no distinction because I hear, here's what I hear from the world.

Christians who ascribe to holiness and practice what they preach really turn me off. Do they say it? No, here's what they say. Christians who say one thing and do another really turn me on.

They're hypocrites in the church and that's why. So you got to find the middle ground. We've got to embrace the sinner and relate to them, but don't let that cultural mindset, don't let that lifestyle pull you in the direction.

Well, how do I know, Shane? Well, very easy. Is the direction that they are leading you the direction that is pleasing to God? Because you're not ministering to people if they're pulling you into sin. But we like to hide

behind that, right? Go have some beers with the boys, talk about God, come home drunk.

Really? That's how we minister? Listen, others can, you cannot. Those who are truly following God, truly following God, there's a lifestyle difference. There's a distinction.

And I think yesterday my wife mentioned to me, it's kind of sad, but a lot of the friends we had 12 years ago, maybe it's my fault. I don't know, but a lot of people, I just realized it, maybe it's my fault. But a lot of the people we hang around with 12 years ago, we just, there's not a connection anymore.

But go on Facebook, they're at Havasu, you got the corona out, you're going to Vegas, you're doing this. Come out from among them, be separate. I can't be pulled back into that lifestyle.

You see the difference? You can watch all this garbage, vampires, the occult, witchcraft, and then they get mad at me for writing articles about it. So see, it's a hard life, it's a lonely life of being a voice crying in the wilderness because you want to relate to sinners, but you can't allow the sin. You want to love them, but you can't be pulled away by that lifestyle.

Because Jesus said love the sinner, right? And minister to them, but what did 1 Corinthians also say? 1 Corinthians 15, 33, do not be deceived. Evil company corrupts good habits. Well, what do you do with that one? So I'm telling you, listen, guys, go minister to the sinners, go minister to them.

But evil company corrupts good character, be careful. Like, uh-oh, how does this work? Well, two things, and it'll be very easy to identify. We are called to minister to others in all areas of life.

We cannot totally separate from them or from the culture. What good is a light that is hidden? But if the relationship, here it is, but if the relationship is pulling you in the wrong direction, it's time to rethink the relationship. Unhealthy relationships corrupt godly character and draw us further from God.

The Bible encourages us to avoid destructive relationships for this very reason. So it begs the question, what direction is the relationship leading you? Are you leading it or is it leading you? Is the activity God honoring or is it God mocking? So as we're ministering to people and loving the sinner, be careful that you don't look just like them. You know, it's just, it's a powerful testimony to tell somebody why you're not having a beer as it is to tell them why you are.

For some reason, we think, oh, I need to be, they need to relate to me. No, they don't need to relate to you. They're looking for the difference and the distinction.

The powers and the distinction of the gospel, the difference in the gospel to change a life, not the same. Now, please don't misunderstand. We've got to relate to the culture, right? We've got to relate to understand where they're coming from and I got it, but that doesn't mean that we fall into the sin when we absorb that lifestyle and then we need rescuing just like they do because we've been drawn in one step at a time, one compromise at a time.

And I see this a lot, especially with young adults, especially with young adults who are on fire for God, they're wanting to minister and then boom, they go into that old lifestyle with those friends and what happens? The friends pull them down, right? Well, think about this. Even a little girl, my daughter, would it be easier for me to pull her up to me? Or would it be easier for her to pull me down to her? What would be easier? To pull me down. That's why the Bible talks about being equally yoked, not only in marriage.

I believe that scripture pertains to business deals and friendships, kindred spirits equally yoked, pulling each other together because it's very easy to be pulled down than it is to be pulled back up. So we have to be careful because a lot of times we want to minister to others, right? But if that ministry is pulling us down, that's not a good direction to be going and the enemy knows that, the devil knows that. That's one of the wiles of the devil, the trickery of the devil, the deceit of the devil.

He'll lull us into believing certain things. Oh, I can do that again, I can this, and then there we go, we're trapped at the bottom. And that's how he works.

Now on this issue of loving the sin or hating the sin, if you're everybody's friend, in other words, you're known as a social butterfly, you're everybody's friend, everybody, oh, you know, such and such, you're everybody's friend, then you probably need to work on truth and being a little bit more firm and challenging people and lovingly because it's powerful in your everybody's friend mode to also lovingly encourage them. But on the flip side, if you're everybody's critic, you need a shot of love tonight because that's why you're not winning people to Christ, that's why your family doesn't want to follow you, that's why you're not getting much out of God's word, that's why the Bible, because that truth without love, that critical spirit is not good. Do you realize that God condemns a critical spirit throughout Scripture? Biting and devouring one another, Galatians says.

Why do you bite and devour one another? So be very careful, find out what side of that you're on. And then finally, I'm getting to the end here, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick do. Jesus said those who are well have no need of a physician.

So it begs the question tonight, do you think you're well? Do you think you're good? Listen, if you know about God, you own a Bible, you've been to church before, that doesn't matter. When it comes to eternal salvation, none of that matters. Oh, I'm good enough, and when I talk to people, you do too, they say, oh, I know the man upstairs, I'm a good person.

When I die, God will see my good works. He's not gonna look at your good works. He's gonna look at one good work done on Calvary 2,000 years ago, that's all he's gonna look at.

So it's very healthy. Jesus said, I've come to call the sinners to repentance. I came as the great physician to call those who need healing to deliverance, that's why he came.

So if you came tonight and you don't know the great physician, if you're sick and dying in your sin, turn to him tonight, look to him, the only one that can save you. You're not good person, you're not good enough, you won't talk to the man upstairs, you won't cut a deal, there's no deals. When we die, the deal's been sealed.

And I should do a whole sermon on this sometime or write a book about it because I talk to people and they say, well, when I get to heaven, I'll be able to tell you. No, no, no, no. You'll be either on your face saying, oh my God, what have I done? You're not gonna, what do you think, what do you think? He's gonna say, what have you done with my son? That's it, what have you done with my son? Well done, thou good and faithful servant or depart from me, I don't know you.

Those are the two options. We don't hear about this and kind of negotiate, I'm a good salesman, I did all these good things. He'll say, well done, thou good and faithful servant or depart from me, I don't know you.

That's how important this topic is. People get upset, why do you have to talk about this? Because eternal destinies are weighed in the balance. Heaven and hell, light and darkness, right and wrong.

All over this question, are you well, are you good? If not, turn to the one who has the answers. Tonight, not tomorrow, not next week, now you'll consider it. You don't consider this, you repent and you believe on the only name that saves.

You know the old saying, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. I meant to, I wanted to, I decided to. But God says do it, do it tonight.

And finally, this is probably one of my favorite points because it's where my heart is at. Jesus says, but go and learn what this means. Listen, sit up, no yawning, no looking at phones, listen to this.

But go and learn what this means. Jesus is saying, he's telling us, go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Go, learn what this means. He's telling the legalistic, rigid, dogmatic, Pharisees, religious rulers of Jesus' day, go, learn what this means.

And to put this in context, you have to go back to the Old Testament. There's many references to this, but one I was gonna read, if you get time tonight, read Hosea chapter six and just see if you can get through that at all because it cut me to the heart for God's people. Hosea six, what God was doing is he was calling his people back to him.

He was calling, come back to me. But what they would do is they would bring the bull, they would bring the goat, they would bring the ram, whatever, they would slit the throat, allow the blood to fall on the altar. And there's my sacrifice, God.

There's what I did. There's what I did. God says, I don't want any of that.

Take away from me the sound of your noise. Take away your instruments, but let justice run down like a river. Let righteousness flow down like a mighty stream.

I don't want your sacrifice. Don't come in here playing church. I want you to rent your hearts, not your garments.

Don't come and rip your shirts. Oh, I'm so sorry. Rent your hearts.

Stop with the sacrifice. Stop with coming to church as if you're doing me with a favor. So Jesus says, go learn what this means.

God desires mercy, mercy, a humble, broken, contrite heart crying out to God, not doing this and doing this and reading this. I'm so spiritual. They would come and they would bring the animal sacrifice and God would mock them and say, go take that away from me.

It's a stench in the nostrils of a righteous, holy, pure God. I want a broken and contrite and humble heart. That's all He desires.

It just amazes me that that's all God wants. He doesn't want your money. We don't ask for money.

He doesn't want 10 checklists. He doesn't want all the... He just says, come. Come with a humble, broken heart.

Would you break your heart? Would you break your heart over the condition of your fallen nature? Would you just break and say, Lord, I need you. My heart needs you. As a deer cries out or pants after a river, my soul pants out for you.

Pants for you, Lord. Would you save me? That's all He wants. He said, would you call me for help? That's it.

Don't bring the sacrifice. Don't come to church. Don't act like... Don't come to church, of course.

You know what I'm saying? But at the end of the day, He's saying, listen. Look at your heart. And we just had a worship night.

I think it was Monday. 60, 70 people. For an hour and a half, we just worshiped.

And I left there thinking, why don't more people worship? Why don't more people worship? Because that's the answer. You think just hearing this is the answer? You hear this, get in your car. In 20 minutes, you'll be... Forget about it.

You'll see how the basketball stats are going tonight. I don't know if it's NBA or college or something. Somebody said, oh, you're not gonna have very people tonight.

They're all watching the games. But I don't know. All I know is that God is calling us to worship Him.

Those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. If I had another 30 minutes, I would talk to you about the power of worship. And I talk to people all the time.

They don't have a worship life. And to me, that doesn't make sense. It's a reminder of when I used to travel a lot.

I don't do it now as much. I would travel and speak. And as much as I would preach from the pulpit, I would go back to my hotel.

Guess where my heart would be? Home. I wanna just be home with my wife and kids. All the time.

I'd go back and just say, I wanna be home. That's what worship should do. There should be something inside of your heart saying, I wanna be home.

I wanna go home with God. And if you don't want to worship or you don't worship or you don't like to worship, I wanna ask why. Why? Ask God why.

Because all the time, I was gonna say nine times out of 10, but it's probably 10 to, there's something wrong with the heart. There's something wrong with the heart. Men wanna play tough guy, so we don't wanna worship.

That's what women do. Well, that's really what men need to do. Remember, I thought I was a man when I was bench pressing 400 pounds, beating everybody up and drinking 12 pack of beer.

That's a man. I was dying inside. I didn't have control of my life.

My life had control of me. And it wasn't until I worshiped and that heart broke and worshiped. So as Ronnie and Chelsea come up, think about that.

In the sin-sick, perverted, God-rejecting culture, how can you not worship? I need a spiritual shower. I feel the decay of the world, the sin-sick, perverted culture. How can you not worship? How can we come in here, hear the word of God and not worship? That's probably one of the most perplexing questions I've been trying to ask for the last three and a half years.

Why is there such a problem with worship? Why do people do not worship at home in the morning? I'm not talking about just, oh, I'm talking about opening up the word of God, putting on music that you like and allow your heart to talk to God and just be broken and repent and cry and say, Lord, I'm not doing good. I'm depressed. I'm fearful.

Lord, I need you. I wanna be filled with the spirit of God. That's healthy.

Actually, that's how the heart changes. The heart doesn't change by just the preaching alone. All the preaching alone is moves the hardness, moves the world's things, moves the, it starts to open.

The heart is right there. Then, now that the heart is exposed, then it goes into a time of worship and prays and cries out to God. That's how hearts are changed.

I see it every week, and you do too. Those who truly, truly worshiping God in power and spirit and truth truly encounter Him. I'm not talking about jumping up and down or raising hands.

I'm just talking about worshiping God. It's gonna look different for you and you and you and you, but one thing I know, it's not worried about what time we're getting out of here. It's not worried about why is the lights dim or what's that picture of.

Worship is worshiping God, saying, Lord, what I heard tonight, I'm thankful for and I'm centering and I'm focusing my heart towards you. That's what worship is. So let's go ahead and stand and we'll go into a time of worship.

We ran a little late, so a couple things. Aaron, you can get the other light as well too. You guys, if you need to leave, you can head out the exit door.

I know there's a children's ministry meeting. Even though I'd rather have everybody in here worshiping, I know that there's different schedules. So if you need to exit, exit out the back.

But I would just encourage you as they do a few songs, make your way to the prayer area back there. We've got people back there who will pray for you. And I know that everybody in this room needs prayer.

Everybody. I would raise you back there. I need prayer for direction.

I need prayer for encouragement. I need prayer for the onslaught of things that are coming against this church and the family. I'll be back there too is with you.

So I would just encourage if you need prayer, make your way back there. Many times I don't think we receive because we don't ask. Hello, God, I'm asking.

I'm taking a step forward. So make your way back there. There's already people heading back there during worship.

I'll actually be up front if you need prayer. Come up and see me or head to the back or just stay in worship while they do a few more songs. And just let your heart cry out to God and take this environment home.

That's the important thing. Don't just go back into the worldly mindset. Take this environment home.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/5TP3xuPtDOE.mp4>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/shane-idleman/follow-me/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net