

God Can Use You

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman shares his journey of transformation through faith, emphasizing that God can use anyone for His purpose regardless of their past struggles.

Duration: 41:45

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 41:10, Jeremiah 20:9, Matthew 11:28, Luke 15:20-24, John 14:6, Romans 8:37, 1 Peter 5:6, Revelation 12:10

Topics: "Redemption", "Humility"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes that God can use anyone, regardless of their past, to fulfill His purpose. He shares his personal journey from a troubled upbringing and struggles with addiction to finding redemption and purpose in Christ. Idleman highlights the power of testimony and the importance of humility, repentance, and a relationship with God over mere religion. He encourages listeners to recognize their worth in God's eyes and to seek Him wholeheartedly, assuring them that they are never too far gone for God's grace. Ultimately, he calls for a return to the basics of faith, urging individuals to humble themselves and seek a genuine relationship with Jesus.

Transcript

Good evening. I might say good morning a few times, so forgive me. Thank you.

Thanks again. You know, I just have to brag on your church a minute. You guys are so welcoming and loving.

It was just a pleasure to speak here this morning and to meet a lot of you. And you don't see that all the time. You can tell a church spiritually, you know, if they're healthy by the love.

By the love they have, by the unity they have. And I'm just going to share with you a struggle I've been having the last few hours. I told my wife about it.

She's here again tonight. My daughter, Aubrey. So let's give them a hand.

Thank you for coming. Long day. Fifteen hour day on Sunday.

We're not used to that too much. And then I think my mom snuck in somewhere back there. And my sister.

So they're here this evening as well. We only have an hour and a half drive. But my challenge was, I know there's people here that weren't here this morning.

And I just encourage you to listen to the second service if you can. Because I wanted, I felt the desire to preach that message again. But also knowing that a lot of people were coming and bringing friends.

And wanting to hear a little bit about my story. So I wanted to share that as well. So I'm hoping if I can try to tie in both of them.

But I would encourage you, listen to the message they're going to post from this Sunday morning. And when I share my testimony, I want to be careful because it's not really about me. Or when you share your testimony about you.

It's really about what God has done in your life. Isn't that true? It's about how he's working. His glory.

He gets the credit. Everything he's done. It's amazing.

And I'm just going to pull up a quick verse for you. I think we have it up on the screen. Revelation 12.10. If not, I'll read it.

It's a familiar verse. Especially the last half. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven.

Now salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God. And the power of his Christ have come. For the accuser of our brethren.

Who accused them before our God. Day and night has been cast down. This is how you defeat the enemy.

And they overcame him by the blood of the lamb. And by the word of their testimony. And they did not love their lives to the death.

A couple things we can pull from here. They overcame the devil by the blood of the lamb. That's the only way we can truly overcome in this time that we live in.

Is by the blood of the lamb. Which is Jesus Christ. And confessing him as Savior and Lord.

But the point I want to concentrate on is by the word of our testimony. The reason testimony is so important is it bears witness to what God has done. And I've noticed that your life is a better testimony than your mouth, right? I can say a lot of things with the mouth.

But it's the life. There's a poem I often read on Father's Day. It goes something like this.

Dad, the lessons you deliver may be very wise and very true. But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do. For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give.

But there's no misunderstanding, Dad, how you act and how you live. And our testimony speaks volumes about our character and about what God has done. And I believe this is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions.

I actually don't think Christianity is a religion. I know it's labeled that way. Religion really is man trying to reach up to God.

Relationship, Christianity, is God reaching down to man. And that's what separates it. There's a radical experience that the Bible talks about being born again.

Now, I think being born is a radical experience, correct? Being born again is the same thing spiritually that happens when we're made alive in Christ. The God we used to curse, now we love. The Bible we used to disdain, now we can't get enough of.

The worship music, we just turned that off. Now we want to worship God. Because there's a rebirth.

The spirit has been born again. And we give testimony to that. So what I'm going to try to do is get 48 years down in 35 minutes.

You ready? Now here's why I'm doing this. This is often why I do this. Is I want to give you hope and encouragement.

One of the last people that should be up here right now is me. I remember 20 years ago, was it the rock and rodeo somebody told me about? Closing down those places and driving on the 58 at 4 in the morning with the sun coming up. Not even knowing how I got home.

God's going to say, I'm going to call you to preach there. And I was so far down that I didn't know how I was going to get back up. And you need to be encouraged.

Because sometimes we allow the Word of God to beat us up. And that's okay. We need a right hook from the Word of God now and then.

But we also need the encouragement to be built up and say, you are more than conquerors in Christ. You can get back up. You can fight this.

You can win with Christ on your side. Who the son sets free is free indeed. And we often think, well, if I'm free, why do I feel bound? If I'm dead to sin, why is this still alive in me? Even Paul said, oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin and death? And so there's a struggle in Christianity.

And we have to build people up and encourage them and get back up and fight this fight. So let me just briefly share a little bit about my life. And I can tie in, I hope, some of the points which I mentioned.

My mom is here. And what happened when she got married is Oklahoma married Southern California. She came from the beaches of Southern California.

My dad came from the farms of Oklahoma. And that's a very interesting combination in case you were wondering. You have the Southern California look, right, and the ethics of Southern California.

And then you have the working man on the farm in Oklahoma. So that came together in our household. And I'm wanting to obviously go quickly here, but there's so much in here.

I'm going to try to pull out the main points. One of the main points that I remember is I grew up in a partially Christian home. My mom was a believer.

My dad wasn't. And we were actually initially raised Catholic. Anybody else in here? Yeah, a lot of people, right? Roman Catholicism.

An altar boy and different things. My mom had this born-again experience and began to follow Christ. So the home was divided.

And it was an angry home. Anyone from an angry home? They know that that's hard. Oh, there's a lot more.

But it's hard, isn't it? Hard because you feel like you're walking on eggshells. And you feel the anger about ready to explode like a volcano. A home should be a safe haven, a sanctuary for our children.

Not a raging volcano. Not rage. And it should be where kids grow and are nourished and nurtured.

And I love my dad. And it's hard for me to talk about these things sometimes, but he was hard. It was a hard home.

And I don't recall him ever saying I love you and growing up in that. My mom assures me that he did. So I feel good with knowing that.

But because of this, being overweight as a child and growing up, as I got older and a little heavier and being made fun of, and still to this day I have a junior high yearbook. And I'm being rolled around in a red wagon. I'll tell you why this is challenging in a minute.

A wagon. And I broke my leg and they put an apple in my mouth. And the title in the yearbook said stuffed pig.

And that really, you know, it hurt. And it still hurts a little maybe. But so I said, okay, I'm going to get these guys back.

I'm going to get big. And I got into bodybuilding and steroid use and bench pressing 400 pounds and winning fights and, you know, that whole lifestyle of I'll show you. But the pain of that and the pain, I think, that's why men are so important in their homes.

That's why God has called you to be the spiritual leader of your home. I don't care about your past. I want to know about what you're going to do today.

You go home. You go home and you start to rebuild that family and say, son, daughter, I've messed up. But I'm going to change things.

And the men are called to be that spiritual leader in their homes. And when that's absent, that's absent. You should look at the statistics on absentee fathers.

What that causes. I believe that the current situation we're seeing in our nation is a direct result of the family. And so the absentee father, and many men say, well, I'm not at home.

But let me remind you, I'm not leaving home. I'm there. But you don't have to leave home to be an absentee father.

You can be absent emotionally, spiritually, relationally. And that absent presence, the presence of a godly man in the home has dramatic results. So long story short, first exposed to alcohol at 12.

Still remember the street. I still remember the house. And I said, this feels good.

I can check out for a while. Anybody been there? The problem with addiction, though, is it doesn't stop there. It wants to draw you in, doesn't it? It wants to make you think that, well, that's no big deal.

And that takes you in farther and farther and farther. And I just pulled up a poem on my phone. And I want to read it to you just briefly.

Because I want to, on one hand, I want to encourage you. But on the other hand, I want to show you how serious addiction is. And our nation is in a crisis right now for opiate addiction.

I don't know if you've seen the statistics, but it's skyrocketing. They're prescribing it like candy. Xanax, Vicodin, all the different things.

Alcohol abuse, skyrocketing. Marriages and family. And I think this was from a girl who overdosed on heroin.

She wrote a poem. I destroy homes and tear families apart. I'll take your children, and that's just a start.

I'm more costly than diamonds, more costly than gold. The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold. Just try me once, and I might let you go.

But try me twice, and I'll own your soul. You knew this would happen many times, you were told. But you challenged my power and chose to be bold.

You could have said no and just walked away. If you could live that day over now, what would you say? I'll be your master. You'll be my slave.

I'll even go with you when you go to your grave. Now that you've met me, what will you do? Will you try me or not? It's all up to you. I can bring more misery than words can tell.

Come, take my hand. Let me lead you to hell. See, on one hand, people need to be encouraged, but on the other hand, they need a wake-up call.

They need to wake up because the ultimate path of addiction is destruction. That's what the goal is. The enemy is sent to kill, steal, and to destroy.

In case you're wondering what the devil's plans are, that's his plans. To kill, to steal, and to destroy. So I was exposed to that at 12.

And that began to be where I would find comfort in many things. And as I was growing up, I realized that I was a little bit different than other kids because I couldn't read very well. I didn't want to go up in public.

So my mom, I believe, had a speech therapist. And now looking back, it's dyslexia, where words like math don't even ask me to memorize a phone number. I'll memorize scripture, but just math and things, it's very hard.

It's very hard. Your eyes play different games on you, and you read different words, you quote things. So it's hard, and God used that, though.

So now looking back, he gets all the glory, all the credit. To write books, to me, is an absolute joke because that should have never happened. The last person on the planet that should be writing books that are grammatically correct and biblically correct is somebody who had disabilities in these areas.

But see, that's what God will often do. He'll take the least likely. Some of you here tonight, I believe, are future preachers.

I believe you're future worship leaders. I believe God's going to use you in a powerful way. And actually, your weakness is going to be your greatest strength.

Your weakness will be your greatest strength because then you rely upon God. I mean, I'm in that back room going, Lord, unless you move this morning, unless you move, I am lost. Unless the power of the Holy Spirit descends upon this place, God, you fill me with your power.

I cannot go up there. I cannot preach, and I mean it. Oh, trust me, I mean it.

I'm not just saying that. God, please. God, don't leave me hanging out there with this many people.

Move in this place. And when God takes over, you can cut the atmosphere with a knife. The spirit of God is convicting and drawing because in the weakness, you say, in my weakness, God, you are strong.

I'm trusting fully in you. And sometimes it takes that weakness. It takes that weakness to crush the pride out of you.

Let's be honest. What are the three main things, especially for men? Anger, addiction, and arrogance. Right? Anger, addiction, and arrogance.

They will take you down. So doing this, by the way, I graduated high school with a 1.8. I still barely squeeze by. And so just looking at what God has done, and that's my encouragement.

You don't have to have a master's degree. I'd rather have a degree from the master than a master's degree. Now, big disclaimer, because I'm going to get emails on that one.

I encourage education. I read more books than most people who have master's degrees. You always should be learning and growing.

Education is very important. But you trust in God. If I'm going to trust in my ability, and you're going to trust in your own ability, we're already in trouble because pride is at the heart of that.

God says, I hate pride. I hate pride. I hate the look of pride.

I hate arrogance because it's self-promotion and self-glorification. So from that, graduating high school, then I got into construction. Amen? Bakersfield, can anyone relate in this room to construction? Okay.

Hands up. Just so I know. Oh, okay.

That's not bad. Heavy equipment operator, backhoe, ran a John Deere case, cat, all the backhoes. I was a heavy equipment operator.

And God used that in many different ways as well. But then work slowed down, construction. You remember the crash of the 1989, 90s? And I went and I worked for 24 Hour Fitness.

I think there's some here in town. And I worked my way up the corporate ladder. Money became my god.

Success. And built a custom home at 24. And just had all, you know, just start to think more highly of yourself than you should.

And so from that, I became a manager and then district manager over areas. Victorville, Palmdale, Lancaster. I was down in Santa Clarita.

And I was able to, God was able to use that, though. Because looking back, I'm like, what a waste of time. But God used that so I could understand numbers.

Payroll, profit, loss. We had 150 employees within those clubs. So now things that are very relevant in the church, God will use your past from that.

See, so don't discard your past and go, what a waste. No, God will actually use you through your past. He knows what he's doing.

He's not going to go, oh boy, they just blew the last 10 years. I don't know what I'm going to do with that blueprint. No, he'll use it.

He'll turn it. Whatever you went through, whatever you went through, God will use that for his glory. And to build you up and to strengthen you.

So don't let regret beat you up because that's how you stay in addiction. Isn't it? Regret, shame, disappointment. Back to the addiction.

Regret, shame, disappointment. Back to the addiction. Third recovery home.

I can't quit this. Back to the addiction. Shame, guilt, I can't.

See how it's this endless cycle? And you have to break that cycle. And you say, God, with your help, you're going to use me and I'm going to trust you. So something I don't open up too much about.

But that finally led to a pretty bad divorce. I was in my 20s. We got married and didn't know the Lord.

And you know, that goes, it wasn't good. And anger, alcohol, and addiction finally took their toll. And scripturally, I was released.

So there's no issues there. But it brought me to a point of utter despair in God. Things were falling apart.

God knows how to orchestrate something, doesn't he? And I know it was the prayers of my mom, partially. A great deal of those prayers. The same mom that would put the Bible on the ACDC albums.

And Judas Priest. And Metallica. I don't know if they were.

But she would put that Bible on them saying, you know, I'm claiming the blood over this darkness in my house. You're not going to have that. And then that's when I would say, I'm going to have fun tonight.

Don't you dare pray. I'm going to have fun tonight. I've already got a six-pack and Mickey's Big Mouth.

Don't you dare pray. I want to have fun. And isn't it fun? I mean, isn't it funny how the devil presents this wonderful, wonderful bait.

But once you take the bait, then you see the hook. He always shows you, oh, that was so fun for an hour. And then you've got three days of misery.

Why doesn't he show you the jail sentence? Or the sleeping in vomit? Or waking up, you didn't know where you woke up. Why doesn't he show you the depression and the anxiety and the destruction? Because he always presents you with the bait. Just one more hit.

Just one more drink. I can relax. I know what I'm doing.

Now he plays into that. We have to be very careful in this area. So that led to my life crumbling, falling apart.

And 1999 was the turning point. 1999 was the turning point. I was hungover.

A sermon hit me right between the eyes. And God woke me up. And the prodigal son began to realize how far he's drifted.

And I cried out to God. I was filled with his spirit. I started to read the Bible.

I turned off country music station and put on worship. Because isn't it funny how what you put in your mind affects you? You know, you start to listen to those country songs. I was drunk the day my mama got out of prison.

And you start to, I just want to grab a 12-pack of beer and hop on a train. You know, George Jones, he stopped loving her today. And I'm just, oh, Lord, this is back into the pit, right? Back into that misery.

And it was a time where God was just working in my life. So I want to encourage you, even though I turned me back in 1999, there were times I slipped up. I fell back into the addiction.

And I fell back into that. And you need to be encouraged because it is a struggle. It is a battle.

Not too many people perfectly end their struggle. Struggle one day, freedom the next. It's happened.

I pray for that. People have been set free. Thank God for that.

But sometimes there's a struggle. Sometimes there's a battle for your soul. So from this point, 1999, came back to the Lord, 2000, I realized I can't stay in this business and the corporate world.

And God was working in my heart, so I wrote the first book. And that kind of took off. And then I wrote more books.

And the reason really for the books is to get the message out. That's why if you didn't bring money, you want to give some to friends, you can take some. I don't care.

It's about getting the message out to those who need to hear it. And many people, people are reading them in prisons, different states, sometimes different countries, and trying to get that message out to the people. So God used the ministry to do that.

I would mainly speak at men's conferences. I would travel and speak at different gatherings and church conferences. And God, many times God was saying, well, people were saying, have you considered being a pastor? I'd say, no, I don't want to do that.

Isn't that for guys who wear glasses and just smile all the time and nice guys, right? No pun intended here. Right? But you have this view. I had this view of a pastor.

I mean, it's just mild, meek, you know, just smiling all the time and just weddings and you don't know the hell I've been through. How am I going to? But actually God calls us sometimes to minister to those that we've come out of so we can actually relate to them, we can understand them. And through this, studying his word, there started to burn something inside of me.

I didn't know what it was initially until I came across an interesting verse. Jeremiah said, I'm not going to preach for you anymore. And he said, but your word was in my heart like a burning fire.

It was shut up in my bones. I was weary of holding it back. And I said, that's my problem.

I've got this fire of God burning. That's why I have a desire like I preached this morning to get the church back into prayer and fasting and the fear of God and the holiness. That's New Testament Christianity.

If you want New Testament power, you need New Testament holiness. We've got to get back to the basics and starve the flesh. I remember when we used to talk, 100 years ago the church used to talk about fasting a lot.

Now we don't. See how quiet it is? Nobody wants to talk about that. It was an interesting story.

I pulled up a month ago or so and dropped off some books while I was in Tehachapi. And Al met me, and he was helping me unload. And he goes, oh, fasting? I'm like, oh, Lord.

This is not going to go over good. He goes, this is exactly what people need to hear. So I was so encouraged by that.

In a nutshell, fasting starves the flesh. It starves the fleshly appetite. You're starving the thing that's getting you in trouble.

Fast. When Nehemiah fasted, he got direction. When Ezra fasted.

When Moses fasted. When Elijah fasted. When Paul fasted.

When Jehoshaphat fasted. When Esther fasted. Do you see where this is going? See, it's in all great men and women of God.

Starving the flesh to be filled with the Spirit of God. And somebody got radical. They went on a 40-day.

You know who that is, right? Jesus. It's interesting. It's interesting.

You don't even hear of him for 30 years. He's 12 years old. He stays in Jerusalem.

And his parents lose him. And they go back and find him. But you never hear of this guy for 30 years.

And then he walks up to John the Baptist. He says, I need to be baptized by you. Can you imagine baptizing? Can you imagine John the Baptist? What would you say? No, I need to be baptized by you.

And Jesus said, suffer it so that all righteousness would be fulfilled. And he was baptized. He came up out of the water.

The Spirit of God descended upon him as a dove. And he was led into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights to fast and starve the flesh. The Bible says something very interesting.

It says he came out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now you hear about Jesus. He goes from obscurity to notoriety.

You don't hear anything of him. Now he walks into the temple. He opens Isaiah.

And he said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me. And he's called me to preach the gospel, to mend the brokenhearted, to cure those who are sick, to lead the poor, to the gospel. He's called me.

He's anointed me. See, I believe that unction, that power, you want the Holy Spirit of God in your life. I'm not talking about weirdness.

I'm talking about the Holy Spirit we read about in the New Testament. Holy Spirit power requires Holy Spirit humility where you humble yourself so you can be filled with God's Spirit. So after all of that, many years of speaking, finally we were able to plant a church in the Lancaster Palmdale area.

And God began to open many doors. Radio and internet and Fox News you mentioned. And so many things that God has just allowed me to speak the same message you heard this morning.

To get this out. And I've noticed, it's funny. I don't remember who said this quote.

But it said that people are mortally offended when they come under the sound of Holy Ghost preaching. Because they've never been exposed to the white light of the gospel. So many in the church today, they don't hear words like repentance.

And the judgment of God. And the fear of the Lord. And it's foreign to them.

But it's biblical Christianity. And I want, my encouragement is to return back to those basics. Return back to the old paths.

The Bible says choose the old path. Not the new path. Choose the old path.

Go back to that. So that's really what happened with the church in 2010. We planted that in Lancaster, California with about 10 people.

And then it just continued to grow from there. And then speaking engagements and different things. So that's everything in a nutshell.

But here's really where I want to get to. A few lessons. Number one.

I don't know. We might have these on the screen actually. You don't have to have a testimony.

I want to really get that point across. You don't have to have a testimony. So many people say, oh, if I had a testimony.

You don't need to. Actually, the Bible encourages you not to. The Bible encourages you to live for the Lord from 12 years old, 13, 14.

To live for God. To be on fire for God. I'd much rather not have a testimony.

Because we all know the consequences come with it, don't we? So many people, they risk it. And they go, I'm just going to keep sitting. And they'll have a powerful testimony.

That's not good. You don't have to have that. But on the flip side, you're never too far gone.

You're never too far gone. I don't know where you're at this evening. I don't know if you just got high today.

If you're coming off of something. If you've ruined, you've lost it. You might go to jail.

You've lost your kids. Shane, everything's falling apart. You're not too far for God.

You're not too far for God. And then the second point, God is never to blame. God is never to blame.

The reason I bring this up is we can get on our pity parties. Myself included. I remember many years.

Well, if God loved me, he would take this away from me. If God truly loved me, he wouldn't allow me to go through that. Amen? We start to blame God.

And that's a trick of the enemy. Because the more we blame God, the less we can be filled with God's spirit. The less we can do for him because we're always in excuse mode.

Blaming God. Blaming him. When the Bible puts full responsibility back on us as believers.

And then the third point that I've gleaned from my life is that God will never leave you nor forsake you. See, you have to start taking God at some of these promises in the Bible. The Bible says, I will never leave you.

I will never forsake you. You can call on God at 2 in the morning. Who else can you call at 2 in the morning? Not very many people.

You can call on God. You can cry out to God and say, God, I'm dying here. I'm losing it here.

I need you. Call on him. He will answer.

He says, my ear's not heavy. My hand's not short. I can save you.

I can save you. But then it goes on to say, but your sins have hid my face from you that I cannot see you. Turn back to me.

Repent and believe. And then number four is huge. I would say this is one of my top themes when I preach, is humble yourself.

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Do you know why humility is so hard? Because it's supernatural. Pride is natural.

Pride, did anybody struggle with pride? I hope everybody puts up their hand, right? But it's in all of us. It's in all of us. Pride has to be crushed.

We have to humble ourselves. It involves saying things like, I was wrong. Just try saying that sometime.

I was wrong. I shared this morning. That would end most of the marriage problems.

I was wrong. I take responsibility. I shouldn't have done that.

I humble myself. I don't need to get the last word in. I don't need to get the last text message in.

I don't need to be that loud, nagging. I can just humble myself. Lord, would you use me? Because the Bible says the humble, he teaches his ways.

I will guide the humble. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. In due time, he will exalt you.

It's interesting. I love quoting 2 Chronicles as well, 714. If my people, what? Humble themselves and pray and seek my face.

I will hear from. See, humility is sweet smelling aroma to God. It's the flesh burning on the altar.

God says, you provide the sacrifice. I'll provide the fire. Put that body on the altar like Romans 12.

Giving your body a living sacrifice, humbling ourselves. And it's so hard. Sometimes we don't spot it.

The most prideful people think they're humble. I remember a story about Muhammad Ali. He was on an airplane.

And he wasn't going to put a seatbelt on. And the lady said, the stewardess, Mr. Ali, you need to put that seatbelt on. I'm not going to put the seatbelt on.

He said, no, really, we're getting ready to take off. You need to put that seatbelt on. He said, I'm not putting the seatbelt on.

He said, Superman don't need no seatbelt. And she said, Superman don't need no airplane. But see, that's, isn't that, see, that's the heart of pride.

That's pride in the Christian world, in a Christian life. I don't need that. I don't need God.

I don't need to repent. I don't need to say I'm sorry. And God says, I love humility.

The whole verse this morning, if you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me. God, that's a promise. See, you guys need to start taking God at his word.

God's word will not return void. His word is absolute truth. It's a heel on which to dive.

In a culture that thinks everything is relative, God's word stands as a beacon, stands as a lighthouse to guide and to direct. And even on that note, I just have another story. I hope you guys are ready for stories tonight.

It's the story of a battleship that's off the coast of Alaska. And they're doing deep water exercises. It's pitch black out.

And this big battleship sees this light coming at it. So it signals, turn your course 20 degrees, starboard. And the signal comes back, no, you turn your course 20 degrees.

He said, wait a minute here. You're challenging me? I'm the highest ranking officer in the United States Navy. Change your course immediately.

And the signal came back. You see the lights. He said, Captain, with all due respect, change your course.

This guy is mad as can be. He throws down his coffee. He says, give me that signal.

And he says, I am a battleship, and if you do not change your course, I'm going to blow you out of the water. And the signal came back again. Captain, with all due respect, change your course.

I'm a lighthouse. But see, get the significance here. You cannot change God's word.

You cannot alter God's word. It's going to sit as a lighthouse. It's going to be a beacon of life.

I don't care what the Supreme Court says. I don't care what the school district says. I don't care what God's word says here.

I can't change. I can't change. You change course.

I can't change course. You can't conform it to what you want to say. It says my word is like a hammer, like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces.

It's the fire of God, the word of God, the authority of God. That's why they said to Jesus, no man ever spoke like this man. We've never seen anybody speak like this man.

Why? Because he had authority. He had the word of God. And as believers, take that and say, God, your word says you will never leave me.

You will never forsake me. If I humble myself, if I empty myself, I will be filled with your spirit. See, humility.

God has to, isn't it so ironic that we have to get to rock bottom before we finally build our house on the rock at the bottom? And Jesus said, if you hear my word, he who hears my word and does it, I will liken it to a man who built his house upon the rock and when the rains came, when the wind beat upon that house, it did not fall because it was built on the rock, the solid rock of Jesus Christ. You need to stop listening to the media. Stop listening to friendships that are pulling you in the wrong direction.

Why do we call them friends if they're pulling us back? Why do we call them, oh, these are friends if they're pulling us back away from God? Is the relationship in? Is your friendship, the friendships you're in, are they pulling you closer to Christ or drawing you away from them? Are they building you up or are they pulling you down? Hard decisions have to be made. God says, how bad do you want it? Do you want it bad enough to get rid of that relationship that is destroying you? Do you want it bad enough to get rid? Do you want it bad enough to get rid of that addiction that is harming you? Do you want it bad enough to remove everything out of your life and seek me with all of your heart? Because that prayer, I will hear, that heart, I will answer. That heart cry, I will answer.

Oh God, if we could just get the church back on the altars again. Do you remember when we would come and weep at the altar and say, God, if you don't move, if you don't take this away from me, I cannot make it. If you don't save my daughter, my grandchild, Lord, I cannot make it.

I'm crying out to you. And God says, I hear your cries. I will not leave.

I will not forsake you. And I talked about this this morning as well. The beautiful word.

The beautiful word is repentance. Repentance. Isn't it ironic? I hated this word 20 years ago.

I hated that. Repent. Repentance is changing your mind about sin.

Changing your mind about how you view sin and repenting. Changing your mind and changing your actions to seek heart after God. Repentance is all throughout the Bible.

Jesus preached repentance. Isn't it interesting? He said, okay, disciples, go and preach God's love. No, I love God's love.

I love God's grace. I love God's mercy. But before real, do you want real lasting change? I'm talking to those who want real lasting change.

It must be preceded by repentance. Repentance changing the mind about ourselves and how we see ourselves and our lifestyles and saying, God, this does not honor you. I repent.

And like David, David had to be warned by the prophet. And David said that he cried out to God. And God heard his prayer.

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

Read the Psalms. Look at the heart cry of the people. So you must repent.

You must repent and believe in the gospel. No more excuses. No more excuses.

And this was probably the hardest for me because this is what I fought the most. Because pride comes in and we don't want to admit that we might have been wrong. We don't want to admit that there might be a God that is right and I've been disobeying Him.

And God will use situations. Some of you, it's financial. Some of you, it's relational.

Some of you, it might be health-related issues. Some of you are so far from God, you don't even know what to do. Let me encourage you.

You don't have to do anything except cry out and say, God, help me. Help me, God, please. Do you know the heart of the prodigal son's story? It's so important because the prodigal son said, let me go and spend everything.

Modern parallel would be he had Vegas. He lived as a high roller in Vegas. And then the Bible says when he came to himself, he was eating with the pigs.

The only food he could get was with the swine. And he said, my father has room enough for me. I'll just go back and be a servant.

See, he humbled himself. He humbled himself. And I love reading the story because you can see the son and the father's waiting for him far off.

See, it's not this view of a father. I knew you'd finally come home. It's the father running to him and grabbing his son and saying, my son that was dead is now alive.

I think we have a song about that. I was blind, but now I see amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. God, I was bent for hell.

I was going away from you and you reached down and your love and your forgiveness. And you said, son, come home. You don't belong here.

Come home, daughter. You don't belong here. But deep repentance has to take place.

That's a beautiful story with the prodigal son because God, you have this image of God the father waiting for the son, waiting. And I share it at the second service. I'll share it with you in case you weren't there.

But the hardest job, the hardest part about pastoring, bar none, without anything second is watching people die spiritually. With living water just steps away. Watching them die spiritually.

It's right here, would you take Christ? Would you fully surrender your life? I mean, God, there's so many things I can't even, I wish I had more time, but one I remember I was praying for a girl to overcome marijuana. She was struggling with it. And praying for her, and I said, you gotta turn from this.

You gotta stop this. It's not gonna lead to a good thing. And she didn't wanna fully surrender.

I said, living water just steps away. Marijuana leads to heroin, which leads to a heroin overdose, which leads to me doing her funeral in her 20s. Another lady I was called, a young mom, to a hotel in a not a good part of town.

She OD'd on pain meds. And we had to take her little three year old out in the grass and play with the little three year old while we waited for the coroner. Listen, life is real.

These are real stories. God is real. God's here to redeem and to set free.

But you have to come to that point of repentance. You have to come to that point of repentance. So I'm gonna do something simple tonight.

I'm gonna ask those who need to come home, those who need to repent, need to get their life back on track, those who need to maybe come to Christ for the first time, I'm gonna be up here with the prayer team. And we wanna pray for you. I'm not in a hurry.

And we have to remember that no one's gonna stand next to us on the day of judgment. No one's gonna stand next to us. We're gonna go before God and God's gonna say, what did you do with my son? Because knowing about Jesus is not knowing him.

Correct? For example, if Billy Graham was sitting right there, he's gone now, but if he was sitting right there, I would say, Dr. Graham, I know all about you. I know your story. I've read many biographies.

I know when you walked down the sawdust trail under the preaching of Mordecai Ham, I think in the 1940s, I know all about you. Oh, this is wonderful. You know what he would tell me? I don't know you.

See, relationship. And here's my concern for the church in America is we have religion without relationship. I go to church.

I own a Bible. My mom's a Christian. I'm good.

No, you're not good. I was born in America. Aren't I a Christian? No.

Have you truly been born again? Have you repented and believed in the gospel? That's the only way. Jesus said, I am the only way, the only truth. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Well, that's pretty narrow. Yeah, so is gravity. Two plus two, still four.

Yes, narrow is the road. Broad is the road of destruction. There are few who go by it, and I wanna encourage you tonight to repent and believe, get back on track.

God can do, you'd be amazed at what God can do with humility. The years that the enemy has taken from you, God can rebuild. The years you've wasted, the tears you've lost with your children, who doesn't have tons of regret? Going, oh, Lord, what have I done? God can switch that.

He can begin to prosper you again. He can begin to bless you again. I'm not some prosperity preacher.

I'm not talking about that, but I believe in the prosperity of God, the blessings of God, that God will watch over your family. He'll rebuild relationships. He'll renew relationships with your children.

He'll give you your position back. He'll begin to bless you and honor you, but you have to humble yourself. Humble yourself and come to faith and believe in Christ or rededicate.

Prodigal son, come home. I could just get straight to the point, couldn't I? Prodigal son, wayward daughter, you must come home. You must say, I'm eating with pigs.

I'm in a low spot. I can't continue to do this. I need help, and I need prayer, and I need God.

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