

Hearing and Obeying God's Voice

by Shane Idleman

Hearing and obeying God's voice is essential for living a life of faith and obedience.

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Scripture: Genesis 12:1, 1 Samuel 3:10, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 30:21, Matthew 7:24-25, John 10:27, Romans 11:29, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:22, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Obedience to God", "Hearing God's Voice"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of discerning and obeying God's voice, using the story of Abram's call in Genesis 12 as a foundation. He discusses the challenges of distinguishing between God's voice, our own thoughts, and external influences, urging believers to step out in faith and obedience even when the path is unclear. Idleman highlights that clarity in hearing God's voice often comes through obedience and that disobedience can cloud our spiritual vision. He encourages the congregation to confront areas of disobedience in their lives, as true repentance leads to a deeper relationship with God and clearer guidance. The sermon concludes with a call to action for baptism and a commitment to live in obedience to God's Word.

Transcript

It's hard to discern that. Lord, is that You? Or is that me? Or is that the enemy planting seeds in my mind? Or is that my selfish ambition coming out? And it's hard because a lot of times, especially in Christian leadership, we want to, like if I release a new book, like, Lord, is this me? Or do You really want me to do this? And trying to seek God's will in this area. And what happened is, this became a very important sermon, obviously.

And it began to grow and grow and grow and that's why you see part one up there. So part two is going to be next week because there are so many things I couldn't, well, I guess I can take out, you know, if you're not in the Word, the Word won't be in you and how to look to the Word for hearing. I guess, you know, most people already know that.

No, that's important. And so I had to really just turn this into two messages based on Genesis 12. And then I believe chapters 13 we'll be encountering as well coming up in the weeks to come.

And 14, we'll just keep going through Genesis. So we can put up Genesis 12, verse one. The Lord said to Abram.

Actually, it's not yet Abraham. His name will be changed as we go, so I kind of forget that sometimes. The Lord said to Abram, just like Pastor Abram's name, get out of your country to a land that I will show you.

Now this has always stood out to me because that's not very clear. What about if God told you, hey, or Shane or my family or you, hey, go ahead and get out of Lancaster, California. Get out of there and I'm going to show you where you're going.

That could be a little, you know, nerve wracking. You know, all of you would have in mind, oh, Texas, Idaho, Tennessee, Florida. No, He might say Maine, Oregon, Canadian border.

And man, you got to appreciate what those truckers are doing. That is incredible. And what people don't realize, that's a different breed of people.

I just, I gave up my class A license. Used to drive the big rigs and things and heavy equipment and that's a whole, it's about as American as you can get and Canadian, I guess, as you can get and very patriotic, very, you know, just it's a whole different, you know, as soon as I saw them, I'm like, okay, they're messing with the wrong crowd up there. I don't know how it's going to go, but been praying for them as well.

Jim Garlow had on his show, one of the truckers who actually started it. And he said, we had to go to the truckers because we couldn't find enough bold pastors. That preaches a sermon right there.

If I ever spoke to pastors, I would highlight that. But he said, okay, I'm going to show you where you need to go. I will make you a great nation.

And so we see God's sovereignty all over this. It's not like God looked down, oh man, this guy, Abram, great guy. I think I'm going to use him.

And he was actually part of God's just sovereign plan. And it's one of those dynamics that we understand in Christian theology that's hard to really nail down is God's sovereignty in relation to our responsibility. Abram had a responsibility to obey.

And so when I'm going to lean on something, I always lean on God's sovereignty. If you're going to lean on one direction, lean into His sovereignty. He knows what is best.

I believe He orchestrates more than you are aware. Could it be with Trump's loss and Biden that it is setting up that Ezekiel type of battle with Magog and Gog, and you see Russia as part of that. And they're not really threatened by the United States anymore.

I can tell you that much. We've lost that edge of being the superpower because of this current administration. It's laughable.

And so you could see these sovereign things that people don't understand, but God is working behind the scenes. And we have to remember, it's not all about America. God's main place to where everything takes place is that area of Israel.

And so, I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. And for those of you who don't know, Jesus Christ obviously came from this lineage of Abram and David.

It's interesting, if you even look, some of the lineage there is not really what we would highly esteem. There's some Rahabs in there. And Jesus coming from that and God orchestrating all of this.

But I wanted you to be aware of the first key that is so important. When it comes to hearing God's voice, I mean, obviously, we have to know it's a good choice. You don't just step out in faith and sin.

But there is something where, Lord, I believe this has been on my heart a while. It lines up with Your Word. I'm sensing it's You, and without faith, it's impossible to please God.

So You're pleasing God. Lord, for example, when we started this church, I'm just going to step out in faith. Because I trust You.

I trust You're going to guide me. I trust You are going to show me eventually. And that pleases God.

I don't know if it's real pleasing to God or beneficial when we just sit at home waiting for that phone to ring. For example, people praying, I need a job, I need a job. Well, get off the TV and Netflix and go fill out some applications.

Go step out. Well, no, if God really wants me to work, He's going to bring a job to my front door. It doesn't usually work that way.

Because it's hard to direct something that's not moving. As a young boy, I always remember my dad had a boat and it had one of the steering wheels, right? I'm like, dad, it's not going anywhere. The boat's just not going anywhere.

Right, we've got to turn on the motor and get it going. And so often, that stepping out of faith, as long as it's... and I believe God knows our imperfections and our weaknesses, and when we truly step out and say, Lord, I think this is You, it's a good thing, it's a God thing, it's beneficial, but I'm stepping out in faith, I think God will help guide us and lead us in the right direction. Because He knows our heart.

He sees that the heart is really wanting to serve Him in this area. Lord, remove my ulterior motives. Anybody ever have those? Remove my doubts and fears.

And so part of hearing and obeying God's voice, and these keys are not going to be in order, because sometimes they'll come first, other times they'll need to come last, but faith is taking God at His word and obeying Him. And it can be uncomfortable at times. He was to leave His family.

It's why I have the ellipses in there. You'll see that a lot as I'm going through. Get out of your country.

Leave your family. God goes on to say a little bit more there in His word. But to just get right to the point, that's the purpose of the ellipses there.

Without losing the truth, you get to the point. And so He had to step away from His family. And often, following God removes us from our comfort zone.

Because we, by default, my flesh likes to be comfortable. We had to step out in faith with a 7 a.m. service. Correct? I mean, I'll just hope this isn't, you know, upset anyone, but we didn't know for sure if we should start it.

I was like, hmm, I don't know. We'll have to shut it down. That would be embarrassing.

And now obviously, you know, close to 100 people sometimes, that helps take away a lot of the overflow from the 9 a.m. and the 11 a.m. in God. And also, is God mad in heaven? Like, why did they do that? More opportunity to worship me? More opportunity for people that like to come in the morning and that was a bad decision, Shane. I didn't see that either.

And so that stepping out in faith, He shows us, and as you're moving, and what I found over the years is as you're serving, He begins to open doors. But we want the, I want to do this. I want to be on the stage.

I want to lead worship. I believe, and usually the worship leaders often start small and God grows them. Or pastoring, preaching.

I was cleaning toilets at Hope Chapel 20 years ago. I didn't have no idea He was gonna call me to this, but as we serve, as we serve, our gifting is highlighted. And people say, you know, have you ever considered this or that? You'd be a good person to, and people identify you.

And that's what kind of shocks some people is we don't, often as a church, we don't appoint elders with our opinions alone. We watch who the people call elders. Who they respond to.

How they interact with the people. And we try to identify what God, He would be a good elder. That would be a good deacon.

That person would be great in service in this area. And we watch as they're serving. And so as you're serving, that is a biblical principle and then God can begin to steer you in a different direction.

You have to be ready for that too. It's not often we go in the direction we want. Because again, it's comfortable.

It's easier. I remember when I stepped out in ministry and me and Morgan were just married and I'm like, oh man, I don't know if I want to talk to teenagers. That's the hardest group.

They're distracted. And wouldn't you know it, for a year, I'm going to Calvary Chapel conferences or Forest Gorge conferences up in the mountains talking to youth. And wrote a book on what works for young adults.

And because it's not comfortable. That's a hard audience. They're not paying, hey, hey, hey, pay attention, get off your phone.

What are you yawning for? What are you talking? What are you passing notes? You know, it can be, it's not comfortable. It can be challenging. And but here's a point of interest.

I wanted to just bring to your attention. Do you see that last part? I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Now, this could be a sermon in and of itself, but I wanted to talk about something that I think is important.

That's why I called it a point of interest. There's a big part in the church that maybe some of you aren't aware of and actually some people don't go here because we don't believe this. It's called replacement theology.

And they believe that the nation of Israel has been replaced by the church. So there is no more, there's no longer a purpose for Israel. It was at Christ's death, burial, resurrection, the church now became the

spiritual Israel.

Has been grafted in. And to their credit, there are some good verses that can support that. However, as with all things, there's some verses that don't support that at all.

So as a church, as an eldership team, we view that God has a plan for Israel and a plan for the church in just a normal reading of Scripture. Now I know there's people who go here who don't agree with that. And I understand that.

We can still be brothers. We can still fellowship. We'll know eventually.

But what happens too, it's not just they believe that. The reason they believe that is it has to fit a certain aspect of their theological framework. When you believe a certain way theologically, you have to then change other areas of that theology to make it all fit.

Usually these people are in the reformed camp, reformed theology. And they embrace things like amillennialism. And again, one of my favorite preachers is Sam Storms out of Oklahoma.

Believes in the Holy Spirit, gets the Holy Spirit. He's wrote an entire book on how revelation has already taken place. And there is no millennial kingdom of Christ coming up.

And if you read his verses, his thoughts, very well thought out. I've got the book on my desk right now. And then you read another great theologian on the other side.

Hmm, wow, what am I supposed to do with this? So what I do is I hold things that are not crystal clear loosely. And I don't want to argue over it because how Lindsay was saying in the 1980s, it's coming soon. It's coming real, Chuck Smith was saying it.

I mean, we're still here in 2022. Who would have ever thought? So we just have to be careful in this area. And they look at verses and sometimes different groups, either side, will spiritualize.

Or because to make revelation really make sense, there's some allegory there. There is some typology. And if you know the Old Testament and you look through the Old Testament imagery, is the devil really going to be bound by a one inch thick chain? No, because he's a spiritual being.

So okay, he's not going to be bound by a literal chain, in my opinion. A thousand year reign of Christ. Did you know if you study the Bible, the thousand years, any time it's mentioned, seven other times in the Bible, it's never literal.

And so they have great points on this. But because of that theological view, and I won't go into it now, but they have to really say that the church has now replaced Israel. And Justin Martyr was an early believer in the early church.

He said the Christian church is the true spiritual Israel. So a lot of the early church fathers believed that God no longer had a plan for Israel. And the reason they embrace this in covenant theology is what's called, is basically, and they've got great points, if you do this, God said, I will do this.

And Israel didn't do this. They didn't keep His commandments. They didn't follow Him.

So He had to reject them in many ways. And so it's an interesting concept for sure. And for me, the early church fathers aren't who we look to for doctrine.

We look to the Bible. And in my opinion, obviously, they're going to think that because there was no nation of Israel anymore. Until, what do many of you know? 1948.

Romans. God has not rejected Israel. You can read Romans 11, I believe 12, 13, that God has not rejected Israel.

And we see different roles. The church began on the day of Pentecost and appears to have a distinct role separate from Israel. And I even look, even looking at the news, you can see, I don't think it's all just coincidence.

And well, that's interesting. I asked a person who believes in covenant theology that once, well, look at what's going on with Israel. Look at this one world leadership possibility.

Look at, you can't buy or sell. He goes, well, that's always happened. Many Scriptures about God's everlasting promises to Israel.

I went on Google. There's a page of everlasting promises to Israel. 1948, Israel is declared a country.

Then it was attacked. Did you know it was attacked by Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, and still remained a country? It was a very short war. And there's been articles written.

It's very interesting. Again, I don't take these things as biblical truth because some things are coincidence. Some things are God's sovereignty.

Some things are definitely true. But there was an article, I remember, some time ago, 10 times God has hit America with a major disaster after the U.S. attempted to divide the land of Israel. And it lists about 10 different things.

Under Jimmy Carter, the worst nuclear power plant disaster in U.S. history. Under Bush, the storm traveled 1,000 miles in the wrong direction and sent 35 away, slamming directly into his home. And it gives list after list.

President Obama, Madeleine Albright. Remember her? What was her name? Yeah, Madeleine Albright. Something like that.

And so it's got all these things. Now, obviously, a person who's not gonna change their theological view is gonna say, well, that's just coincidence. That's interesting that that happened.

But you can kind of see there's a pattern. If you begin to divide God's land, and He hasn't called for that, He still looks at that as the apple of His eye, He's gonna spank you. And so if I was a president, personally, if I don't know what exactly Israel's, what God's exact plan is, I would be very leery.

Because you see, becoming a nation, you see the epicenter of all conflict. You see so many promises throughout the Bible that God will not cast away His people, that David will rule forever on His throne. Jesus is actually coming back to rule and to reign.

And there's an application there. And so we don't know His prophecy. I want to have a night of prophecy at some point and kind of give you guys a little background of what's going on.

And a lot of people do say that America's not involved in prophecy because it's never mentioned. But neither is Australia or Canada or South America. Just because a nation isn't mentioned doesn't mean they're not involved somehow.

But the epicenter, God's main focus, is there in Israel, Magog and Gog, from the north and east and how they're gonna attack Israel. That's the main focus. So I wouldn't expect them to mention Alaska.

Anyway, so that's just some extra things for you. And then verse four. So Abram departed.

So Abram departed. What did he do by departing? There might be a key there. So Abram, you could say, so Abram obeyed as the Lord had spoken to him.

Now, people do ask, how did he speak to them? How did he speak to Abram? Well, I will tell you, I don't know. But do you know, have some of you heard? You've heard the voice of God before. I mean, you know.

This is maybe not audible, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah. But there's a something as you're drawing close to Him and that deep calling unto deep and the Holy Spirit just confirms something and you know that God is really moving and speaking to you in an area. It could have been that.

It could have been possibly an angel going to Him or God actually did speak audibly. We just don't know. I know all things.

What cracks me up about people is they say, well, God doesn't do that anymore. How do you know? How God can do whatever He wants? He can speak through a donkey. He can have a whale or a great fish swallow somebody and speak to the fish and throw him up onto dry land.

So Abram obeyed as the Lord spoke to him and Lot went with him and Abram was 75 years old when he departed. Be encouraged, older adults. He's just beginning at 75.

And so instead of reading everything through Genesis 12, 10 through 20, here's the overview. There was a famine in the land that caused Abram to go down to Egypt to dwell there. He lied and said that his wife was his sister.

His wife was then taken to Pharaoh. The Lord plagued Pharaoh because of it before he could commit adultery. God plagued Pharaoh because he wasn't aware, so He gave him a little opportunity of grace.

And then Pharaoh said to Abram, why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you lie to me? And Pharaoh commanded that Abram and his family leave Egypt. I bet he did. And then Abram leaves for his final destination.

God gets him to that place, the promised land. This is where God is now going to work this incredible, incredible history of not only Abram, but Isaac, Jacob, and getting eventually to Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. But I added something this morning.

Getting up early helps a little bit, doesn't it? He lied and said his wife was his sister. Hmm. What do we do with that? Do we just give him a pass? And I actually read some yesterday.

I began to read. It's a poor media team. They want these slides like by Friday, and I'm not done until Sunday morning, usually.

And so I try to change things around. But I looked at some interesting what rabbis said, Jewish rabbis. And they would say Abram definitely lied.

He was in sin. And so, but then you have other people. I know Dennis Prager.

If you ever listen to him on the radio, sometimes he has an interesting commentary. He's not a believer, just like Ben Shapiro, and they're very Jewish, but they're not believers. So interesting things.

And of course, you look at commentaries, and I mean, that's between God and him. But it did bring up an interesting question and thought in me. Even Abram, this great man of faith, had doubts.

If we say, you're my wife, when we go into Egypt, and she sees you're a hoddie, can I say that? I forgot that I was talking to teens. You, you, you, they're going to see you. And the Pharaoh's going to want you, and he's going to kill me.

And they actually could do that. And actually, believe it or not, God's word, God's ways changed the whole course of history. Because now God says, be nice to the sojourner and the pilgrim.

Welcome them into your home. But that was never, if you look at ancient history, the foreigner was the outcast. They could kill them.

They could do whatever they want with him. So Abram, that's a genuine concern. That is a genuine concern.

Now, here's where I want to be careful. I'm not going to give anyone permission to lie today. Okay, especially, because our problem is not telling the truth.

Our problem is lying too much. And so I hate to even go into this because the liars in here are going to look for, not in here, but listening, elsewhere, are going to look for fuel. But they began, I believe Abram doubted.

What's going to happen? Should he have just trusted God? And said, God's called me to be a great patriarch and have kids and grandkids and great-grandkids, like the sand of the seashore. Should I just, am I going to trust in Him? So my encouragement to you was, it's okay to doubt from time to time. And really take those doubts to God.

That's the key. And what I've found is, in the life of many people, and maybe yourself, doubt can actually sometimes reflect humility. Lord, I don't know.

I'm not wise enough to think I got the answer down. I don't know. Can you show me? Can you help me here? Versus not doubting, little pride in there sometimes.

Now, I'm not saying doubt on everything. I think it's good to be solid, steadfast, unwavering, not double-minded man. But sometimes, doubt comes in.

And it shows humility. Say, Lord, I'm not sure. Would you show me? And on that note of Dennis Prager, I was reading, he went to, he spoke at an atheist convention in Minneapolis.

Big atheist convention. He goes, so tell me, have any of you ever doubted that maybe there is a God? Guess how many hands went up? Hmm. A little bit of lack of humility in that room.

You ask a Christian church, I ask you, I bet every hand would go up. Not doubt that there is a God, but have you ever doubted that, Lord, is this really you? But see how pride works? Not one hand. You've never doubted, you've never seen a life, a baby being born? Say what? How did that happen? From a man and a woman, there's nothing, and now here's this, how did? All this just happens.

You've never doubted that, that the sun 93 million miles away is just the right distance not to melt us, but to keep us warm. I mean, you've never doubted that there is a God. Come on.

But see the pride, the proud and the arrogant. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. It's been said that man's certainty is poison to his soul.

Man's certainty is poison to his soul to not be flexible and teachable, not on absolute truth that is well established, but in areas where we're not sure. So did Abram sin by lying? And again, I don't want to turn this into a sermon, but when you're confronted with things like this, you look at, basically, what are my choices? And we do see in the Bible, from Rahab to David and from Abram to Samuel, that sometimes people have not been forthcoming. But let me define a lie first.

It's the intentional communication of a falsehood designed to deceive someone who has a moral and legal right to know the truth. For example, was it okay for Corrie Tamboom to lie to the Nazis? And you see where this is going. Actually, did you know God told Samuel to lie? Oh, oh, oh, Shane, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute.

God said, Samuel, go anoint King David. David is king. Go anoint him.

Samuel says, I can't because when I do that and announce that, Saul is going to kill me. God said, then go tell Saul that you are just going to make a sacrifice for the people. Isn't that interesting? Why is that? Because you have no obligation to tell murderous Saul the truth if it's going to harm God's people, His way.

There's a lady by the name of Irene. I don't want to give her last name. Back in the 1940s, she hid about 12 Jews in the house.

She was a maid. She hid the Jews and she was a maid for one of the commanders in Hitler's army. And once he found them, he said, I'm going to murder all of them unless you become my mistress.

And he was married. And she did for a year or so until they could escape and get out. It's just very interesting, if anything, correct? So, in the state of our nation today, I'm very hesitant to even bring any of this up because everyone's looking for an excuse to lie these days.

And I think it becomes obvious here. So I'm going to leave it up to God and Abram. I don't know what happened, but that's interesting to pull from that.

And then we see again what happened here. The context is God was positioning Abram to fulfill His purposes. And then we can move to the second key, which is really important.

Clarity comes from, let's all say that one, live stream audience. Clarity comes from obeying God. Many situations go on in the church in the course of a year.

And I would say without a shadow of a doubt, without even guessing, the majority of confusion about God, about their marriage, about issues, and I'm just so depressed, I don't know. Without a shadow of a doubt, it's often because the person is in disobedience. I would say the vast majority of people in the church who are having a hard time hearing from God, discerning His will, are in disobedience.

And it clouds their vision. It skews their judgment. And they go through life kind of half-heartedly, like a double-minded man and stable in all their ways.

And what is God's will for this? What is God's will for that? And they're living, there's a sense of disobedience where they're not obeying God in certain areas, even if it's a little thing. I remember I was reading D.L. Moody's book. And I don't know, there's different views on this, so I'll be careful to the language I use.

But this lady, they were praying over people, and this lady so desired a mighty filling of God's Spirit. They call it the baptism of the Spirit, this overwhelming power and presence of the Spirit. The Bible refers to it as be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Don't be drunk with wine as in dissipation. Sorry, there we go. Don't be drunk with wine, let's just leave it there.

And then be filled, contrary, be filled with the Holy Spirit. And she was wanting this, and he was preaching. And she was so convicted because what she had been ignoring God for so many years was on her looks.

She had this nice hat, I guess hats back then were, hats and her attire, and she just, all of this, and God has been, you know, get rid of that, humble yourself, and no, no. And finally when she did that, the Spirit of God just mightily filled her. And I can give you list after list.

People gave up something that God was convicting them. They begin to obey in this area, and God begin to just fill them in. We think of these big things.

I'm not doing this and this, yeah, but what are the little things? Unforgiveness. You know, there's been times I've come to church, God said forgive that person, and just hug them, and I'm like, no, mm-mm. Nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope.

And the sermon is terrible. Or anybody argue as you're leaving the house, or just me and my? No. This is a spiritual service.

It's funny, I can look out my office, and I see you guys arguing when you get out of your car. It's like this, he's like. And she's like.

I see it all the time in the parking lot. You can't fool me. She goes to hold your hand, you're like.

I was going somewhere with that. Oh yeah, many times me and Morgan, we've texted or called before I, listen, we gotta work this out before I go preach, because you know, you got a disobedient, you know, get your heart right. But it's easy for us, because we take two cars, so we've figured it out.

It's hard, all hell breaks loose. Like you can drive the kids to Magic Mountain, nothing, but you try to drive eight minutes to church, and it's like, there's demons in the car. So obedience, fulfilling that, when God's calling, and that's why I have this passion.

We've got free books you can take if you want, but I have this passion to help people physically, as well as spiritually. And Pastor Abram taught on a night during Ren in the Heavens, on this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. And he was convicted that God has been dealing with him for a long time on this area of sugar.

And because, you know, if we don't take care of this wonderful gift God has given us, and now I've got diabetes, now I'm overweight, now I can't pastor the church well, now God takes me 15 years sooner than I should go. But I'm ignoring this point of obedience, even the small things. And what we do is, we're convicted, oh man, I gotta take better care myself, I'm overweight, this isn't good, Lord, please help me.

But that donut's calling my name. And so for 10 minutes of pleasure, serotonin, dopamine, the pleasure trap, and then I'm convicted again an hour later. And I'm going through the day just, Lord, what am I gonna do? This is, in and out burger sounds really good.

And then I go there, and now I'm depressed again. But 10 minutes got rid of that, that struggle, I caved into it. Now, I'm not saying you can't have a donut now and then.

Come on, give me a break. But if God is dealing with you on a certain area of obedience, and you wanna ignore that area, and you think God's gonna speak clearly and directly and steer you in the right direction, but you're going to ignore these other areas, it could be moderate use of alcohol. It could be getting rid of nicotine, or whatever.

I mean, it could be porn now and then, or whatever. I mean, if you're continually just disobeying, it's gonna be real hard to see God's will and see it clearly. It's funny, every time I say something like that about diet, and some people go, well, when it's my time, it's my time, it doesn't matter.

Well, maybe, I don't know. But that's like saying I just drove off Goaty Pass on my way home, and if it's my time, it's my time. No, I drove off the mountain at 60 miles an hour.

It's my time. So there is a balance. God is sovereign.

He's set the affairs of men. But also, we have a responsibility to do that. So anyway, my point is, even the small things, they often lead to the big things.

And any time you're there, hello, I've been there many times. I'm sure I'm gonna be there from time to time. There is, your vision's cloudy.

You're not as certain, because there's that sin that has clouded your vision. There's shame, there's guilt sometimes, or I know God's told me before, even at this church, go and just apologize, forgive that person. No, no, no, no, no.

Nope. And I can tell in my sermon, when I preach, I'm frustrated because God isn't answering some prayers and things aren't going well, and what is your will in this? Well, go back to what I first told you to do, Shane. And so, this is such a huge key.

Now here is my challenge in this topic. Offering people grace and mercy, who blow it, and not just beat them up. You ever been beat up by someone, and just, man, I can never be encouraged.

You're just always on me, always beating me up. And so I don't wanna do that, but at the same time, we have to be deadly serious about this area of obedience. God doesn't play around.

There's no gray area. Well, you know, if you feel like it. It is so vital to the Christian walk to be obedient to the area He has called us to be obedient to.

Some of you are convicted right now as I speak. You know that God wants you to deal with something. And we just put Pastor Abrams' message on the radio all over the United States, on that message he gave on this kind.

If you're here at Ren the Heaven's Night, I even listened, was convicted again. This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. And he opened up about something that I know is so true, but so many people don't wanna talk about it, and that being how we take care of our body, and being addicted to sugar, and these things that are destructive.

God says, hey, you might die 15 years before I've called you. I need you. Get this stuff in order.

And we're like, no, no, no, no, no, I enjoy it. I'm not going to. That's disobedience.

Even in the little things. And that's why so many people, it's so funny, they think, well, that church, that's the church you can't drink coffee. You can do whatever you want.

I don't care. I'm just telling you how it affects me. And God has, for a long time, got to get rid of that little tiny vice in the morning.

You're Christian crack? No, no, I don't think so. That's not you, God. That's not God.

But I had to have that before my study. And I became irritable. I'd become angry.

My texts weren't as nice. And so I could see there's no fruit of the spirit from this little, tiny, lovely smell. But see, even the little things, if I disobey, that's disobedience.

And now I'm like, I'm confused. I'm like, things aren't going as well because I want to hang on to this area. But God knows the bigger picture.

And usually, these little things aren't necessarily little because they affect us in a big way. If I'm snapping at my wife and mean to the children and rude to people, that's not a good thing. So this little thing is causing a big problem.

And if a person, for example, he mentioned being addicted to sugar. If that's leading to being 70 pounds overweight and not being able to do anything for God and type 2 diabetes and dealing with your eyesight failing and dealing with things that could lead to, and you're just killing this wonderful gift that God has given you. These areas of obedience are very important.

I'm going to actually have a health seminar before summer. I'm going to help get you on the right track. And this is one of those big points because we don't realize that little compromises and the little things lead to big things.

So many people that I help in this area of health and fitness, I've not mastered it, but eating better. Here's what happens. They wake up, they're convicted.

I'm just going to tell you about me. I wake up convicted. Why have I gained weight? Why am I overweight? I don't feel good.

My shirts don't fit. I have half my closet doesn't fit anymore. You know, because, and then, oh, I got to do something better.

Lord, I know you're convicting me. Oh, but here's this chocolate donut. And for 10 minutes of pleasure, 10 minutes of pleasure, and then when that pleasure's over, back to guilt, shame.

Lord, I know, I'm sorry. Ah, In-N-Out sounds really good. In-N-Out Burger sounds really, here we go, 10 minutes of pleasure leads me back into frustration and failure.

And so really, is it worth it for that pleasure to keep us in that trap, the pleasure trap? Now, of course, you can get to bigger things. I know men who are struggling in their marriage and just things are not going good and they're kind of mean to their spouse and they're not leading and maybe they're being kind of lazy. I'll catch them off guard.

Let me see your phone. Let me check your history real quick. Oh, I deleted that.

Oh, do you know there's ways to find what you've really been viewing beyond deleting your history? A porn addiction. And they wonder why they're so confused. Why they can't hear God's Word.

This area of obedience is huge. I mean, how about those who like to just have one drink, sometimes it turns into four. But it's only once in a while.

Paul said, Timothy, take a little wine for your stomach. But an IPA at 8%, you're going to feel pretty good. And so these areas that God, get rid of this.

I've got people here. I don't think they're here, so that's good. But they confide in me.

You know, they know they struggle with it, but the Bible says I can. But yeah, you know, it's only once in a while. It's not that much.

I don't get drunk. I don't go out in public. Why are you so convicted then? Because those who enjoy it now and then, they don't have a conviction.

So God is, see, these areas of disobedience. How many marriage issues could be fixed if the spouse would repent and apologize and own it? But I'm not going to do that. That looks like I'm weak.

They don't deserve it. Well, welcome to the biblical world of relationships. It never says what the other person's supposed to do.

It says what you're supposed to do. So are there areas in your life? Are there areas in your life where you're not obeying God and it's leading to His Word not being as clear? Is it enjoyable to begin reading God's Word? Enjoyable to worship when you're living in disobedience? That's why most people don't attend church anymore. Or they'll do once in a while.

Because their lifestyle is not necessarily honoring God and because they're not seeing clearly, they don't want to be in church, they don't want to be in fellowship. Worship is boring. And this disobedience leads to a lot of confusion.

And as we know, incomplete obedience is not obedience. Incomplete obedience is not obedience. God's dealt with me before in this issue of, let's say, nutrition.

And like Abraham said, eating better sugar. Like okay, well, at least it's organic sugar. I'll still have 150 grams of it, but at least it's organic.

You see that? No, no, no, no, no. And see how we play games with each other. Go and forgive that person.

Hey, I said hello. Partial obedience is not obedience. We negotiate with others and so we think we can negotiate with God.

Doesn't that happen? Any of you have kids or have had kids? They're master negotiators. No, you can't have that ice cream. Eat dinner first.

What about the ice cream that I promised to eat all my dinner? No, you have to have the dinner first. How about if I just have a little dinner now and then ice cream and then the dinner afterwards? And even as adults, we've negotiated. We negotiate with the IRS for a settlement or in the courts.

Or we negotiate on a price for a vehicle or on something. We negotiate. There is no negotiation.

He doesn't say let's come make a deal. He says this is the deal. And getting our hearts in this area, Lord, I just want to please You.

Obedience instills discipline even in the small and big things. And I've noticed, talking to people in my own life, if I'm not obedient with the little things, it falls into the area of the bigger things. Now this is a good opportunity.

I don't know if I listed it up there. A good opportunity to talk about deliverance and maintaining it. Have you ever been delivered from something? Cigarettes, Christian crack, alcohol, nicotine, porn, I mean, you name it.

Something has had a stronghold on you. But sometimes we find that people go back into it. And that would be a whole other sermon.

But I'm going to borrow what Damien said. Your wife shared it on Facebook. I bet you didn't know.

The victory of deliverance will be when the heart desires nothing more than to please God. Correct? So once your heart is I just want to please God, whatever accountability requires, whatever I need to do, I will do. It's when we hang on to that little vice.

I'll hide that alcohol somewhere over here. Or I won't get completely truthful or honest here. And you allow that door to stay open.

The enemy comes back in. If you reopen a door to a stronghold, it usually comes back stronger. Ask any person that's given up an addiction, it opens that door again.

And so that's why I put up there, many don't care what the Bible says. Their feelings, their emotions, and their desires control the way they live. And that's exactly what we're seeing in our culture today.

Why are so many people confused? Have you ever seen more confusion? There's a new emoji coming out of a man being pregnant. DMV, binary. Not sure what I am.

Not sure it's sex. Like all these different genders now. Like you literally can't, it's what you were born with, male or female.

There is absolutely no confusion. But why is there so much confusion in our culture? Because we are drifting away from God's Word. We're confused about gender.

We're confused about the truth. We're confused about God. Because they're doing things, how do I feel? My emotions, my desires, that's what's controlling me.

Hey, put on your big boy pants and let the Word of God control you. And you see the woke culture out there. Have you heard of that? This person said this 20 years ago.

And this person did this five years ago. And you can't say that about homosexuality in Romans 1. We need to remove you. We need to get rid of those things because we're allowing our feelings and our emotions to dictate everything that's going on.

That's why you'll see leaders making laws that, especially in California, you're shaking your head going, are they drinking the Kool-Aid again? Because that's not even possible. What are they doing? But Shane, we have to do this because it doesn't make people feel good. Can you not say things that way because people don't feel good? It really hurts their self-esteem.

Now, I'm all for encouraging, but sometimes you've got to convict. You've got to let the Word of God convict. That's the problem.

There's that, oh, I'm convicted. That's right, the Word of God says now I repent and my relationship with God is fixed. But what we're doing is we're encouraging people in their sin.

And they're so confused. They're so confused. And what you tell people that are confused, you encourage them, hey, it's okay to be confused.

If you're struggling with what gender you are, you need to know it's okay to be confused. Let's take it to the cross. Let's take it to Jesus.

Let's give Him, because you're confused about that, someone else has a problem with this. They can't stop lusting. They can't stop depression.

And so there's struggles that all of us have, but we need to bring those struggles to the cross and give them to Christ and let Him heal our heart. And sometimes you might have to live with that struggle. For the rest of your life.

I know, praise God for some people that say, I'll never have a drink again. It doesn't even enter my mind. I know other people who are just getting by, day by day.

If I go back to that, why is it still a struggle? Why aren't I delivered? Well, sometimes you've got to carry this burden. God's not a genie in a bottle and just gives us everything we want. Sometimes, why am I in this difficult marriage? You might be there till the day you die.

Because it's a commitment. 1 Samuel 3.10 He said, speak. He was young.

Samuel was young, living with Eli. And Samuel said, speak for your servant hears. Basically, I am ready to obey.

And 1 Samuel 15.23 Rebellion is as a sin of witchcraft. Did all of you know that? When I rebel against God, and if you need these images, just email the office, I'm sure we can send you the PowerPoint presentation. If it's still called PowerPoint, I don't know if I'm dating myself.

But rebellion, when God says this, I say no. It's as the sin of witchcraft. And the context of this verse is on an offering.

Saul said, I'm not going to wait. I'm not going to wait. I'm going to handle the offering.

Good thing. Good thing, disobedience though. Samuel was to do the offering, not the king.

So rebellion endangers our faith. It clouds spiritual vision. It leads us in the wrong direction.

It feeds the wrong spirit. It diverts our heart away from godly worship. Here's the biggest thing happening.

You don't see this in the underground church in China or in Afghanistan. The true church, the northern part of Africa where they're actually killing a lot of Christians. They're watching their children be killed before their eyes before they kill them.

Trust me people, you have it good in America. Even in California. My goodness.

Don't get me started. But many believers live in rebellion. In this sense, I'm a Christian, but I'm not going to give up this and this and this.

Jesus said, take up your cross, follow Me, die to self, and then you follow the Spirit. There's joy and there's peace, but we don't want to give up. I don't want to be some weird Christian.

I like God, but I also like this. And I want to keep this. And God says, no, you've got to deal with that.

And so many people in America want to live kind of in both worlds. I want God on Sunday, but I want to live like hell on Monday. Okay, partial obedience is not obedience.

This is something I think we just added in the slide. I'm going to talk about this next week, but it's so important. Obedience also protects us.

Obedience also protects us. I don't know if we have that or not. It might say part two.

Obedience also... oh, no, I don't think it does. My fault. Jesus said, I'm sending you as lambs among wolves.

Did you know that? Jesus said, I'm sending... I'll get to that in a minute so you guys can hold tight. I'm sending you as lambs among wolves. That's not very wise, Jesus.

I'm sending you. You're going to go out among wolves, but you're just a little lamb. But by obeying Him and staying close to the shepherd, you are protected.

Did you know that you could have a wolf right there where Abraham's sitting and a sheep right here? Nothing would happen to the sheep if the shepherd is right here with his staff. And so obedience keeps

you close to the shepherd. Disobedience makes you walk out close to the enemy.

For the enemy goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, who comes out and is easily prey for him. So read this with me on the New King James Study Bible commentary. Always be ready.

Always be ready to listen for and obey the words of the Lord that He speaks to you. Listen, this part is so important that if I just came up here and read this and sat back down and we went into long worship, this would preach, because this is where many people are having problems. Always be ready to listen and obey.

Know that God continues to speak only to those who want to know what He says. So many people are, Lord, speak to me. No, no, go back and obey this first.

I'm not going to, this isn't Christ's right. This isn't you can negotiate. Go back and obey.

That's why Jesus said he who has ears to hear, let him hear. Having ears does not necessarily mean that we are hearing. How many people hear the message this morning but are not going to obey God's Word? Sometimes we don't want to do what God is saying, amen? So even though we hear, we aren't fully really listening with the intention of obeying.

Beware of the common trap of substituting religion for obedience. How often does this happen? This is me. They just nailed me.

We can get into a religious rut of good things such as Bible reading and prayer. Always done it for 20 years at four in the morning. So I must be good.

Always the same day. Always the same time. Always for the same length.

But still be disobeying the voice of the Lord. So I want to cover a lot more of that next week. But I want to just hop ahead to the fifth key because this is important too.

To get clarity. So if you're following along, third key and fourth key are next week. And be here in person, much better.

There's not a day goes by somebody says, you know what, I'm watching online. Well, you know what, it's like 1,000 times. I've tried to watch online, it stinks.

I mean, it's okay if you're driving, but I could be there experiencing that. My kids are disrupting me. It's like, how do you do it? Now I know there's people watching actually, a friend of mine, bedridden, others in different states.

That's good, that's why it's there. But if you can be here, be here next week talking about part two. So clarity through, well that's good too, but clarity through that will fix it.

That will get you back on track. That will clean it up. Sin is deceptive.

Sin blinds our spiritual eyes and it leads us away from God. Listen, we hear testimonies, we share them sometimes. We wish we could share all of them.

One just came in this morning. Different states, in Tennessee, in Florida, Texas, here locally in California. My marriage was restored.

My depression was lifted. My addiction was crushed. My confusion is gone.

My relationships are whole. All of them, all of them fixed via repentance. Via repentance.

What is repentance? What? I am wrong. I am wrong. Even a saint, did you know a saint needs to repent? Lord, I am wrong.

Fill me again with your Spirit. You're gonna find my face on this altar getting my heart right again and repentance begins to break the shackles free and the light comes on the glory of God and now there's peace and there's joy. Oh, now I hear your word clearly.

Now your word comes alive because repentance took place. Changing my mind and changing my direction about sin. That is so important for the saint.

I'm excited about that because that's how people break free. Now for those who say there's nothing to repent of, well, good for you. That happens sometime.

I don't have, personally this morning, I cleaned house, my heart yesterday. I don't really know of anything I need to repent for again. But it's that state of repentance, being willing as a saint to say I was wrong in that area.

Now, but what about when a sinner repents? A saint is already a believer. They have the Spirit of God. They're often quenching and grieving the Spirit of God.

They know God. But their repentance is not for salvation. Their repentance is onto sanctification.

They get deeper and closer to God. They clean, have you ever been set free of something and repented and oh, I can't wait to get to church. I can't wait to get home and read God's Bible instead of staying bound in it.

So that's what happens when the saint repents. I've seen people at this altar during Rend the Heavens that were like at each other's throats and now they're hugging and weeping. Repentance takes place.

And then they say, Shane, now God's will seems clear. Now I know what I'm called to do. Now the fog has been lifted.

Right, because repentance cleaned the airway, cleaned the heart. But also sinners need to repent. This is a different type of repentance.

A sinner is repenting to God for their sin. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. And once you know the Good Shepherd, you will hear His voice.

Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice and a stranger they do not follow. And that relationship now, once you begin to, that's why people when they finally come to really know God, not religion, not religion. Did you know that religion is not good? Religion is me trying to reach up to God and going through the motions and doing these different things.

And look, God, look how good I am and look who I gave to and look what I did. And God says, no, that will never do. Relationship is God coming down to man in the form of Christ and taking on the sin and the guilt

and the shame and dying on the cross.

And we just embrace that wonderful gift by faith. So see, so many people have religion, going through the motions, going through the motions, and they lack a relationship. That's the difference.

That's why so many times church seems dead. Or formal, or going through the motions, or there's a religion aspect. I've got to do this and I've got to do this and there's just no change.

And if your religion hasn't changed your life, change your religion. So relationship is that fire for God, that anointing of God on your life. And even the prodigal son, the prodigal daughter that comes home and cries out again to God, God, I've been too far, I've drifted, and I need You like never before.

So what we're going to do, we're going to actually have baptisms during closing worship. And this is a very important thing because this is a Scriptural truth that Jesus Himself tells us to obey. I just baptized four people that were never baptized as Christians.

One was scheduled I think and four others were not. And when I talk to people, I'm like, you became a Christian? Yeah, you ready to get baptized? Oh, no, no, no. I'm not ready for that.

What do you mean? Ready for what? Jesus isn't divided. He's not a get out of hell free card. It is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. And what we do in our heart, Lord, I repent of my sin and because I repent of my sin, I'm going to confess Christ publicly. Jesus says, he who denies Me before men, I will deny him before the Father.

Go, believe and be baptized. How many of you are maybe stuck in a rut because you never got baptized? You think, oh, that's too serious. No, there is no middle ground.

There is no gray area. It's all of Christ or none of Christ. If He's not Lord of all, He's not Lord at all.

There's a full repentance that takes place. So if you need to get baptized, I'm getting wet and cold for the third time today. So I would, well, actually, it's warm.

Actually, it's pretty warm. Susie got to 90 degrees. That's pretty good.

But it shouldn't be about that. The Jordan River was very cold where Jesus, but it helps, it just helps. But this is a time to obey.

Even the live stream audience I told earlier, if, get on an airplane or drive out here, we would love to baptize you or find a local church and get baptized. Because that's a step of obedience. I remember I came back to the Lord.

I'm a 30-year-old male and God has convicted me. I'm like, no, no, no, that's embarrassing. I've been at this church for two years.

They think I'm a Christian. I'm teaching a young adult thing. Oh my gosh, help me, Lord.

Why, I don't need to get baptized. I did it, I think, when I was 12. I got into a pool, it was fun.

And it's just pressuring. I think I did it as an infant. I was an altar boy in the Catholic church.

I think that's okay. And so, eventually, I got baptized right before Christmas in 2000. And the Spirit of God was just so present.

The Word of God, there was a new dynamic took place because I was worried about my image and not fully surrendering. And then you get to that point, then it was easier to actually minister to others, is actually to preach, because I am not ashamed of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the power of God to salvation.

I don't care who sees, shout it to the rooftops. Shout it everywhere that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. I bow my knee, I confess Him today.

I'll get baptized a million times over for showing I'm not embarrassed of the Gospel and that He is the only way, the only truth, the only life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Christ. So, could this be why you're not experiencing the fullness of God? Could it be why maybe a healing's delayed or a financial breakthrough's delayed or a relational repair or a marriage repair? I don't know.

I just know sometimes God will use things to wake us up. The altar is available. We're not as scared of this altar.

We're not ashamed of this altar. We know we all need more of God. If you need prayer for healing or deliverance or an addiction or depression or anxiety or same-sex attraction or lust, shame is all that in the church.

All that and many more. Every sin you can list is in the church. There's no new tricks.

The less of the flesh, the less of the eye, the pride of life. That's where the enemy goes after us. We would love to pray with you and agree with you.

You don't have to be specific, but let them pray with you and bring it to, because sin loves the darkness. Did you know sin grows in darkness? Keep it covered. Don't say much.

Let me deal with it on the side. It just grows. But you expose it to the light, it begins to wither and die.

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