

# Help! My Faith Is Faltering

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman addresses the challenges of faltering faith and emphasizes the importance of returning to God and building faith through spiritual disciplines.*

**Duration:** 51:02

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 16:3, Matthew 9:18-27, Romans 1:20, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:3

**Topics:** "Faith Development", "Trust In God"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and trust in God, highlighting how faith can falter when worship, obedience, reinforcement of God's promises, and trust are lacking. It stresses the need for a fully surrendered life to build strong faith, drawing examples from biblical figures like Abraham, Sarah, and Noah. The message encourages diligent seeking of God, reinforcing promises, and trusting Him even in the midst of trials and tragedies.

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## Transcript

What I'm seeing a lot in the church and just talking to couples and families is faith is faltering. Faith is wavering. A lot of the counseling appointments are because of faith.

Shane, my faith is falling apart. I can't seem to, where's God at in the midst of my dilemma, my trouble? Where is He at? My faith is weak. My faith is faltering.

So I want to give a message tonight just to you. And we began in Matthew chapter nine, verse 14 last week. And it talks about, we're talking about when the disciples of John came to him saying, why do we in the Pharisees fast often? And I'm not going to go and read that all again, because I gave a whole message on it last week.

And it really was more topical on this area of fasting and mourning and where the direction of our nation is, what God's word says, what the direction of the nation is. Very scary, very scary reality. And there comes a time where I believe the church needs to speak out and say, listen, return to him, people.

Return to the fear of the Lord. Return to God. You've backslidden.

Come back to the central focus. Come back, oh, backsliding church. And that's what we need to talk about sometimes.

And that's what I talked about last week. So if you weren't here, go listen to last week's message. And a lot of this will make sense.

But I left off at verse 16. And it's an interesting text because I've heard about a dozen or so different sermons preached in different directions on this. And this is where Jesus is talking about fasting, but don't fast because the bridegroom's here.

But when the bridegroom leaves, we will fast. And then he says, no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch pulls away from the garment and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins or else the wineskin would break and the wine is spilled and the wineskins are ruined.

But they put new wine into new wineskins and both are preserved. And I've heard a lot of pastors take that in a lot of different directions about what Jesus is doing now in grace versus the law or being filled with the Spirit, all different kinds of things. But what I want to do, just talk about it briefly because I'm trying to go through verse by verse, is it looks like in context, he's saying, listen, in the same way that you don't fast when the bridegroom's here, you fast when it's the time of morning, you don't put an unshrunk piece of cloth on an old wineskin because when that wine ferments, the whole thing will break.

So he's just giving, I believe, a practical application. Listen, here's what happens when the wineskin breaks and you use the cloth. And this is the same way of fasting.

You don't fast when the bridegroom's here. You don't fast in the time of rejoicing, you fast in the time of mourning. So to me, you don't have to read all these little things into it, which are good, they're biblical, but I think he's just showing a parallel there of what fasting looks like.

And basically, what I can pull from this is the right thing done at the wrong time is the wrong thing. Did you catch that? Remember that, Christians. The right thing done at the wrong time can be the wrong thing.

And we just saw this this week, we went to memorials, as I just talked about, and this is not a time to quote Romans 8.28 to the parents. You guys know what that says? All things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose. You don't quote that to somebody who's burying their child this week.

The right verse, wrong time. We also see this in instructing our kids. Sometimes we can do the right thing at the wrong time.

Last week, my son, my wife, remember, he cut his little finger at the pocket knife I gave him. And I said, oh, he's all deceptive. They said, how, why are you doing that? Why are you playing with that knife? I told you not to play with the knife like that.

See, that's what's going to happen. He's crying. No, that's why I told you don't play the pocket knife in the house with another knife.

See, that was not the right thing to say at that time. That's after the crying's done and you come, you know, comfort them. Now listen, son, this is what I told you.

So the wrong thing or the right thing at the wrong time, remember that in your marriages too. You can say the right thing at the wrong time and get in a lot of trouble. I'm actually convinced that many arguments in

marriage are because we said the right thing at the wrong time.

And all you do with that is you throw fuel on the fire. If you have a little fire going, try to throw some gasoline on it. Watch what happens.

That's exactly because our life and death is in the power of the tongue when we speak. So be very careful. The right thing and the wrong.

And that's what Jesus is saying. Listen, you don't do this and do that. You do these certain things.

So I don't want to spend too much time on that because I want to talk about this whole issue of health. My faith is faltering. And in doing so, I want to pull in different passages from the Bible showing how we can build our faith.

Because your faith right now, even tonight, is either building or it's being pulled down. It's either growing or it's withering. Do you realize that? One or the other.

Faith, like sin, doesn't stand still. It either grows or withers depending on whether we feed or starve it. And faith is the same way.

It's got to be built. It's got to be encouraged. So let's look at that.

And I want to throw out this question before I get to that. How can Saeed, you know, the gentleman I prayed for in Iran, if you don't know his story, it's unbelievable. I think he's in solitary confinement now, being in prison for his faith.

Lord knows what's going on with him. How can he hold on to his faith while others walk away at the slightest hint of trouble? You ever think about that? I mean, you think you just say, oh, hey, all is the real, God, let me out of here. Why doesn't he denounce him? Where does that faith come from? I've seen people walk away over childish things, over little traumas.

Also, how can martyrs who've been killed in the past rejoice, but others fall away because they love this world more than the things of God? So faith is interesting. Either somebody has solid faith that we look at and say, that's unbelievable, or it's like a little fragile piece of, you know, what's a fragile thing? Glass. Oh, yeah, those things.

Okay, let's say just a fragile piece of glass, and faith is like, any minute about rage is falling, drop it and fall apart. But your faith, we're just barely holding on like, oh, there it goes. Why does somebody have solid faith, rock solid faith? No matter what comes, the storms may come, but their faith is not going to waver.

What about Job? Though he slay me, yet will I trust him. God said, listen, devil, go do with Job what you want, but don't destroy his body. And all hell broke loose.

We talked about that before. But he held on to his faith. How is that possible? Well, I want to share that with you tonight.

And where I'm at right now is in Matthew 9, verse 18. And what's interesting about this is, this is where Jesus goes through, and let me just read it actually, verse 18. While he spoke these things to them, behold, the ruler came to Jesus, and he worshiped him, saying, my daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.

So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his disciples. And suddenly a woman who had a flow of blood for 12 years came from behind him and touched the hem of his garment. For she said, if I just touch his garment, I shall be made well.

But Jesus turned around, and when he saw her, he said to her, be of good cheer, daughter, your faith has made you well. And because of this man's faith, Jesus went and rose that girl out of death. And now he's healing this lady.

And then it comes to verse 23. When Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, he said to them, make room for the girl is not dead but sleeping. And they ridiculed him.

But when the crowd was put outside, he went and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. In verse 27, when Jesus departed from their two blind men, followed him, crying out and saying, son of David, have mercy on us. And when he had come into the house, a blind man came to him, and Jesus said to them, do you believe that I am able to do this? And they said, yes, Lord.

And then he touched their eyes, saying, according to your faith, let it be done to you. So it's throughout scripture you see according to your faith, because of your faith, drawing faith in all the time. But we know the dangerous side of that is then faith dictates everything.

We become God because our faith dictates the sovereignty of God. And that's part of what you'll hear sometimes the faith movement or positive confession, these types of things where your faith is really almost like God's a genie in a bottle or he's a butler. Whatever you want, my faith is so strong that I can get God to do whatever he wants.

But the Bible doesn't really teach that. It teaches that faith is solid. We must have faith in the promises of God.

We must have faith in his sovereignty. But at the end of the day, on this side, God is sovereign, his sovereign will prevail. But it is challenging to get to a scriptures like this, because how do you apply these things practically? Because on one hand, Jesus is our model that we're to follow, right? But on the other hand, he's a model that we cannot follow.

We see the perfect model here, follow me, do as I did. But on the other hand, we come short, we can't follow this perfect model. And so we get to these scriptures, how does this healing work and have faith and healing? And I'm not going to go over this again, because I already went over this a few months ago.

And it's in your bulletins. If you want to know more about healing, what the church's view on healing is, there's a message there, healing, seeking to clear the confusion. And in a nutshell, let me just say this, the reason many prayers aren't answered is because we think in the present tense, like microwave Christianity.

When it comes to this issue of healing, we're not God, Jesus was God, he was walking on earth as God, the incarnate son of God. So he knew the perfect will of God. So everybody he came in contact with was healed, because he knew the will of God, he was God.

So in our feeble lives, right, we try, we pray for things, and it doesn't happen, and we pray for this, it doesn't happen, this person's healed, this person is not. It's like we walk around like, oh gosh, is this for

today or is it not? And I don't think we need to live like that. We need, we can boldly pray for people for healing.

Lord, I have the faith, Lord, I pray for healing. But you're sovereign, you're in control, it's your will, not mine. And this side of the camp says the opposite sometimes.

They say, Shane, you can't say that. You can't say if it's God's will, because that means, you know, you're praying kind of a half-hearted prayer. And I don't believe that at all.

I think it takes a lot of faith to say, Lord, I'm praying, I'm trusting you, Lord, I know you can do this, I know you can, but even if you don't, I will still serve you, I will still love you, I will still follow you. So that's what faith is. Remember the three boys caught in the fiery furnace right before they went in there? They said, King, we're not going to bow to you, our God can deliver us.

We're not going to bow to you, our God can deliver us. But even if he doesn't, we will not bow to you. That's a very good view on healing too.

And I'm praying, and Lord, why aren't you, even if you don't, I'm still going to follow you. Because this has been a lot of confusion. I've seen churches split over this.

I've seen arguments loud, get loud, and name-calling people not talk to each other again on this issue of healing. And I think we all just need to be honest and say, I'm not real sure. I know God can heal.

I know it tells me to exercise my faith, but sometimes people aren't healed. And that sometimes people are healed that don't have faith, and they won't even pray. And what's going on here? It's called sovereignty.

God's sovereign control. Because a lot of times through healing, we want it now, microwave Christianity. But God's doing something in that person's life.

Or maybe like Johnny Erickson Tata, right? You've heard of her on the radio. She'll say that God has kept me here to glorify him. This is my ministry.

He's not healing me. And she'll say that. And I knew a guy in town.

I still know where he lives. He says the reason she's not healed is because she doesn't have enough faith. It's pathetic.

Really? I mean, this is unbelievable. Where do you guys come up with this information? Not from here. But they'll take this scripture according to your faith because of your faith.

So that means now I can use faith like a genie in a bottle, right? I want this. I want this. But on the other hand, I don't want to dismiss faith because scripture says without faith, it's impossible to please God.

According to your faith, it'll be done to you. So I think faith plays an active role in our prayers. We have to go to God.

We have to pray as if he's going to do things and heal people. That's how we approach him. Because there's something powerful about faith that I don't think we understand.

Number one is because we don't have a correct definition of faith. Because sometimes we think, right, faith is believing whatever I want to happen. Okay, I have faith that this is going to happen.

Well, let's look at what the Bible says what faith is and how can we build our faith. Is your faith faltering? Because all of us, let's be honest, our faith goes like this sometimes, right? You're not always on the mountaintop. If you are, talk to me afterwards because I love to know how you do it.

Tell me your secret and be careful because probably not being honest. Most people, there's great faith and then there's, Lord, I'm having some difficult times. There's valleys and then there's mountaintop experiences and there's bottoms and there's ups, there's highs, there's lows.

Paul even said, I just spared of life. Paul, poor Paul, what's wrong with him? Didn't he have enough faith? He felt like dying sometimes. He would say, oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of sin and death so we can relate to these guys.

So with that said, let's look at faith. What is the definition of faith? Hebrews is the best part to turn. Hebrews chapter 11, I believe.

I should have wrote that down. I'm sorry. I believe it's chapter 11, verse 11.

If not, let me know. Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. So faith is a substance.

It consists of the things that are hoped for. Are you hoping for some things that God has promised you or that line up according to his will? That's faith, and it's the evidence of things not seen. So it's faith.

I'll use Ronnie and Chelsea as an example. I hope they don't mind, but they have faith because they better have faith because I have faith that this is not going to be the end of their ministry. They're going to be leading a lot of people in worship someday.

I have faith, so I hope you guys do. They probably have that promises in their heart that, Lord, I know you're wanting me to lead thousands into praise and worship. I know I can.

Lord, I know I have that faith, but help me with my unbelief. I have this thing that's hoped for even though I don't see it. That's called faith because God's going to grow that.

And same thing in our own lives, in your life, in your life. You know, I'm praying for family members. Lord, I can feel.

I know you're going to bring them to the Lord. It's to you, to the Lord. I know you're going to bring them to you, and I can feel it.

And you just keep praying. It's the substance of things not seen. Basically, things that haven't happened yet.

I have faith because God, you are the God of restoration. You're going to restore my marriage. But what about if he doesn't? Is he still God? Because I know people, I've prayed with people up here, crying here, crying back there when we first started the church, and guess what? It didn't get restored.

And they would say, Shane, I'm praying, I'm petitioning, I'm fasting God to restore my marriage. And the spouse is out, found somebody else. What do you do with that? Is your faith? That's why your faith always has to be linked to him, not the circumstances.

If your faith is connected to your circumstances, you'll walk around like a double-minded man, the Bible says, double-minded woman, unstable in all their ways because my faith is tied to my circumstance. No, your faith is tied to God. No matter what comes, it's tied to him.

So faith, that's the definition of it. It's not whatever we want, however we want. It's the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Now, here's the key. Faith is not mind over matter. You know, oh, this guy's trying harder.

I'm going to try harder. It's mind over matter. Come on, chair, move.

You know, I've got the faith and, you know, this Star Wars stuff. That's not faith. Faith, based on what I put together and looking at all the scripture, it's aligning our life with the will of God.

We recognize his promises, and we have the same desires as he has, and we look forward to the opportunities he's given us. But on the flip side, faith is also the anchor that holds us in the storms of life. In a nutshell, faith is God at the center of your life, holding it all together, and I look to him.

No matter what comes, I will look to him. No matter what may transpire, I will look to him. But we like to look at what's happening to us, right? Do you know the word happiness comes from hapistance? And it means what's happening to me right now.

That's where that word happiness comes from. I have happiness because of what's happening to me right now. And then tomorrow, when I don't have happiness, what's that called? Oh, sorrow, depression, gloom.

So our life is lived off everything what's happening to us. So how can these people, and especially in the underground church, experience tremendous joy and peace and persecution because their eyes are set on him? And you have to constantly put your eyes on him because the world will pull you away. You often hear me say by default, right? I explained to my kids the other day what that means.

You don't have to do anything and you'll gravitate away from God. You don't have to do anything. Just sit here, go home, just sit, watch TV, eat.

You'll just gravitate away from God. The flesh just pulls you away. It's like my little kids, you know, they like to put little sticks in the curb and gutter, you know, as long as the water's clean, right? That's running down the street and make little boats.

You never see those going the other way up the hill. Just drop it in there and there it goes. That's what happens to people.

You drop them in the world, there they go. You drop them in the world, there they go, swimming downstream with the culture. So the Christian faith is this way.

It's against the current. It's upstream. So you can't look at your circumstances because that will just pull you back down.

And that's why spiritual disciplines are so important. That's why the church doesn't talk about them a lot. Holiness and prayer and fasting and worship and reading the word of God.

Very good things because those keep me against the flow of the culture and point me into the direction of Christ. They're called spiritual disciplines for a reason. They're not spiritual recommendations.

As soon as they become recommendations, we don't do them, do we? Because we don't want to. They hurt. So here's the main reason people falter that I've seen over the years.

You can look in the word of God. God's not doing this or that and we become sour. We become bitter.

Do you know there's a lot of bitter resentful Christians that are mad at God? There's a lot. And I just want to tell you tonight, I don't know if there's any here tonight, but it's not God. Don't be mad at Him.

It's once we turn our life over to Him. I think it's okay to be emotional and get upset and go through things, but ultimately you don't want to hold on to that. And you hold on to that bitterness upset about God.

You don't want to live your life that way. James 1.3, the testing of your faith. Here we go again with that word.

The testing of your faith produces patience. So everybody who prays for patience, you're not going to get up in the morning and have patience. Guess what's going to happen? You're going to have difficult kids or difficult marriage or difficult co-workers to foster patience.

And then the beginning of this verse, count it all joy, brethren, when you fall into various trials. No, I don't like that verse at all. Count it all joy.

It's not joyful. It hurts. But he's saying, listen, look at your affliction.

Look at your tribulation. Allow that tribulation to lead to patience and endurance and the attributes of God in your life. But it's through that suffering.

Look at what it says. The testing of your faith. When faith is tested, it comes out tried.

And you show me a person who's never been tested. They have the golden spoon, right? Or silver spoon in their mouth. Nothing.

They have weak faith. They get shaky legs as soon as something bad comes up. But you show me somebody who stood the test of time.

They've got some years under their belt. They've got strong faith. They can look cancer in the eye.

They can look whatever in the eye and say, I have faith and I'm not wavering. Well, another key verse. By faith, we understand.

Here we go again in Hebrews. By faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that the things which are seen were not made of the things which are visible. So he's saying by faith, we see that there's a God, right? By faith.

So when it comes to faith, you don't have to apologize for your faith. You got that? You don't have to apologize for your faith. I hear a lot.

People say, oh, that's, I know it's silly. I know it seemed outlandish. There's some God I know, but it's my faith thing.

No, they need to be apologizing. You walk outside, look around. His invisible attributes are clearly seen.

You know, we talk about the oxygen level and the nitrogen level and the planets and the earth just tilts just a certain way and the sun comes right up and the moon. Everything's just right and it just all happened. You don't have to apologize for your faith.

We understand. By faith, we understand. Why? Because his invisible attributes are clearly seen.

Romans 1. God's invisible attributes are clearly seen. Somebody says, there's no God. Just look around.

His invisible attributes are everywhere so that they are so powerful. His invisible attributes are so powerful that the Bible says that you are without excuse. So when it comes to the judgment day, people say, oh, I didn't know.

You're without excuse. Creation screams creator. You walk in here, you think these chairs just put themselves in that right order? Over a million years, they would do that.

They would build themselves and put the screws on the legs. How much more of the universe, how much more of the world keeping everything together? God says, you're without excuse. It's everywhere, everywhere.

And people like to, you know, they debate, oh, there's no God. Well, who gave you that sense of morality in your heart? Everybody knows there's a conviction there. If there's no God, why are you so mad at him? If there's no God, why do you want to get rid of him? Why? Because it's in there.

Created in his image because of the fall of sin without Christ, without turning to God, we're caught in that sinful nature and we don't want to have anything to do with God. I remember at the memorial today, there's people sitting in front of me. I could tell as soon as the pastor got up there, I didn't preach at that one.

But as soon as he got up there, people were like, it's time to go, time to go to the bathroom. Hi, we're talking, look on the phone. I don't want to talk.

Don't bring up the word of God. Don't talk about those things. Why? Where does that come from? Where does that antagonistic spirit come from? So it says right here, by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

God spoke it and it came into existence. That is not something, well, I just have faith and blind faith and we really don't know. Of course, there's an element of faith involved, but at the same time, look at what you're putting faith into.

A creator that sustains everything. When I was studying the makeup of the body, the skeletal system, the muscular system, the neuromuscular neurotransmitters and all this stuff about how the body works in fitness, I was just, how can somebody not think that somebody put all this together? It just blew my mind. This isn't some silly kid that needs, you know, Christianity's a crutch and I better just look at how the body's made up.

Scientists can't even design a telescope or anything as good as the eye, the human eye, how it can bring in and bring out the light, everything. They can't even invent that. Nothing compares to the brain, how it holds all this information, how it can disseminate right and wrong.

Remember back, therefore, to make a choice in the future and make a choice now. Where does all that come from? From premortal ooze that came up out of it and then one cell turned into two cells and then this and then there's a man, there's a woman, there, here we go. That's silly.

That's foolishness. I mean, I don't mean to joke about, but it's outright foolishness to think nothing, something came from nothing. Order came from disorder.

All this came from chaos. It makes no sense. So that's one step of faith.

Do not apologize for it. God does not seem silly and outlandish. It makes perfect sense if you look around.

Just look outside, walk outside the next time you're having difficulties. Look outside, look at the universe, look at the stars at night and say, Lord, if you hold these in your hand, clearly you hold my situation in your hand. Think about next time you think, oh, God, I don't know if he heard my cries.

I don't know if God can handle this one. Just walk outside. Just look around.

Look at what he's done already. And then I've got four or five points here. The first one is by faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.

You know this story in the Bible, right? It's not fiction, it's truth. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice to God than Cain, so Cain killed him. Jealousy.

But by faith, it says by faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice. So conversely, faith falters when worship and righteousness falter. This was about worshiping.

Cain was bringing his offering of worship. So your faith will falter when worship falters. That's why I promote worship so much after the service, before the service, whenever you can, get into your car, get into worship, because that builds your faith.

Why? Because it's a spirit in you crying, Abba, Father, drawing close to the Father, not get away from me, Father, right? Many people don't want worship, and I just can't understand it. I just don't understand that, because that builds your faith. As your heart's crying out to God and worshiping, say, I don't know how.

I don't think any of us have mastered it, but you got to try. Put on music, get your heart in the right frame of mind, begin worshiping Him, and it might hurt a little bit. That's why the Bible says, draw near to God, and He'll draw near to you.

It's not easy. It's not. It's simple, but it's not easy.

So we see that faith, by faith, He came and He worshiped God. So your faith will falter. If you're not a worshiper, your faith will not be as grounded as somebody who is a worshiper, because they're connected.

That's the time. Do you think we connect with God in a meaningful, powerful way right now, sitting here? In some way, but really, think about it. Just listening.

Oh, he has good ideas. Here he goes again. Gotta do this.

Gotta do that, and then we get in our car, go eat dinner, and wake up. Dude, where's that meaningful relationship with God happening? If you're not worshiping, guess what? It's not happening. That's one

thing we want to teach our kids.

If we can teach them how to worship God, don't follow my coattails. Go in your own room and cry out to God and worship Him, because that builds faith. It's hard to knock a worshiper off the steps.

The enemy can't come into a worshiping heart. What he does is he gets that heart out of worship. They might be in the Word, but they're not in worship, and that's how he draws us away.

So faith falters when we don't worship. I like what Warren Wiersbe said. We don't live on explanations.

We live on promises. You cannot live your life on asking God for an explanation. Why'd you do this? Why'd you do this? Why is this happening? Do you guys have some why's in your life? I have about a hundred.

Why that? Why this? Why that? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? But our faith cannot be based on explanations. It has to be based on the promises of God. And how do you get your heart back on the promises of God? Through worship and the Word of God.

You see how important that is? Just as a side note, I've talked to mainly a lot of men, counseling over the last few years from here, other churches everywhere. I don't have a lot of time to do as much as I'd want, but talking to these guys, marital issues, pornography, addiction, all kinds of things. I always say, tell me about your time of worship with God.

You think anybody has ever said, oh Shane, man, every morning, every morning, I'm up worshiping God for an hour, hour and a half, I'm crying out to him. Sometimes I end up on my floor prostrate or sit in my chair or take, I'm just worshiping him. It's so powerful.

You think I've ever heard that? Never. Because it's hard for sin to grow in a worshiping heart because that's where it's crucified. See, you can know the Word of God.

The demons know the Word of God and they tremble. And don't get me wrong, I love the Word of God. I've committed my life to studying this and grasping the deep truths that are in this Bible.

I love it. We preach it. I proclaim it.

I use it and whatever. But without worship, without worship, it becomes just, well, I know it, but it doesn't apply to my life that well. I can follow the principles.

I don't do this. I don't do this. I don't, you know, with the old saying, I don't drink and chew and hang out with those that do and all.

Okay, great. God, that's not rules. It's a relationship.

And worship happens in that relationship. Why do you think it's hard to worship? Why do you think you don't have time for worship? Why do you think you're too busy to worship? Why? Because that's the warfare. That's the weapons of our warfare.

You think a pornography addiction is going to gain a stronghold when you're sitting worshiping God for an hour every morning? That's impossible. There's struggles, but I'm talking about a stronghold that grabs a man or a woman and takes them in, in a worshiping heart. That's why he wants to get you out of worship.

And that's why worship seems so hard. Oh, Gene, I don't know what to do. I don't want to just sit there.

I get bored. My mind drifts. Yeah, it takes a little effort.

Actually, a lot of effort. If you draw close to me, I will draw close to you. The Bible says that.

Actually, I was going to use this illustration later, but I better do it now because it definitely applies. I know you guys say you like your illustrations, right? That verse, draw near to God. Draw near to God.

Have you heard it? Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. It's almost sometimes we read it like a bedtime story. Draw near to God.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. But today, that draw near to God, I looked it up.

It's helco, the helco in the Greek. You know, it's a dragging. It's a forceful dragging.

It's not just, it's a contending. It's a going against the grain. It's a going against what your flesh desires.

So what I brought to give this illustration, some 100-pound dumbbell. It's a 100-pound dumbbell. So this, I don't know what this represents.

You can, whatever you want. That's you. That's whatever.

And God says, drag. Draw near to me, and I will draw near to you. But you say, that's heavy.

Yeah, that's heavy. But He says, I will help you. Draw near to me.

Pull. My flesh doesn't feel like it. I don't want to do this.

He says, draw near to me, and I will draw near to you. I'm getting tired. More now, you don't know what I've been through.

Draw near to me, and I will draw near to you. Fight with all your soul. Pull against the flesh.

The flesh is too heavy. I'm giving you. He says, no.

Draw near to me, and I will draw near to you. Drawing, it's that dragging. But it's hard.

It's heavy. There's a burden to carry. Yes, but that's the load.

There's a load to carry. Have you ever heard that phrase, let go and let God? It's not in the Bible. Here's what happens.

Uh-oh. I let go. Where's God? Let go and let God.

It sounds good, but doesn't work. Come on, rope. I let go.

Where are you at? Jesus said, take my yoke upon you. It is light. My burden is light, but you'll have to carry something if you seek me with all of your heart.

It's not just little, you know, grab a little piece of hair. You know, this is seeking him with all of your heart. If you seek me with all of your heart, you will find me.

If you draw near to me, I will draw near to you. But it's a hard drawing. It's not an easy.

It's almost like you're fighting everything in you. I don't want to get up in the morning. I don't want to do that.

My flesh doesn't want to worship. He says, draw near to me, and I will draw near to you. And then when it's getting difficult, he picks it up, and he helps us.

So don't get me wrong. I'm not putting all, I better get this out of the way. I'm not putting all this effort into, you know, the last thing I want to do is be called a moralist, and it's man's effort, and it's all up to me, because it's not.

It's all up to God. But I can't just let go and let God when God calls me to draw near to him. Draw near, and you will find me.

Seek me with all of your heart. These are promises you can bank on. The problem is people don't want to seek him with all of their heart.

They want to seek him with a little bit. I don't want to turn into some weird guy. I don't want to do, you know, I don't want to seek him with, oh, that sounds.

The Bible says it's crystal clear. Draw near to him, and he'll draw near to you. But it's not the kind of just, oh, that sounds great.

It's a warfare. It's contending. It's battle.

Paul says, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil, the trickery of the devil as you're drawing close to him. Guess what? Those fiery darts are going to be coming. They're going to be pulling you away from that.

So that drawing is a difficult thing, but it's the most important thing you'll ever do. Draw near to him, and he will draw near to you. And then we also, by faith, we see that Noah, by faith, Noah being divinely warned of things not yet come, things not, let me read it, by faith, Noah being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Well, in a nutshell, let's just look at that first sentence. By faith, Noah being warned of God, moved with fear. What happens if Noah didn't do anything? I don't know.

Speculation. If Noah didn't do anything. By faith, Noah being warned of God, moved with fear, moved with reverence to the building of an ark and the saving of his family.

So this tells me faith falters when we don't obey God. When we don't move, if God is telling us to do something, and you know, I don't have to go over the whole list of things, if you know God is telling you to do something, listen, it can be from get rid of this relationship you're in to get rid of this habit you have to get rid of whatever it is. If we disobey God, it hurts, and our faith doesn't grow.

What does it do? It withers. So there's many people walking around in the church, born-again believers walking around with faith that is weak and faltering because they're disobeying the clear commands of scripture, what God has called them to do. For without faith, it's impossible to please God.

And how do we please Him? By obeying Him. And listen, nobody will obey Him perfectly. If you've mastered that as well, see me after the second service.

So it's not perfection. You hear me say that often. It's not perfection.

It's about direction. Where's the direction of your heart? And listen, I'm trying to build your faith. I can't tell you what you want to hear.

I got to tell you what you need to hear. And I've seen people when they're on fire for God, when they're walking in the will and ways of God, and they're quick to repent. And we know, don't we, right now God's convicting us.

Listen, you need to work on that area. You need to get rid of that. You need to do this.

When we move with fear, move with reverence, according to what God has done, it builds our faith. It's a faith builder. What about Abraham? By faith, Abraham, uh-oh, here's that word again, obeyed.

By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called. God told Abraham, go to a land that I will show you. Where is it at, God? I can tell you that.

Just go to a land that I will show you. Okay, can you give me a, what mountain, what city? No. By faith, Abraham went out and God led him step by step, week by week, month by month.

God led him. By faith, Abraham. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out.

And I've learned that God will guide us sometimes more by withholding information than by giving it. How many are you going to get down the way home? God will guide you more by withholding information than by giving it. But we want all the information.

And when he withholds it, it causes us to walk in a certain direction. Well, he's not, oh, I need to walk. And he'll withhold the information to get us to move in a certain direction.

He said, Abraham, just go out. I will show you. I will guide you.

Okay, well, I'm going to start walking. And God will guide him. That's a very healthy thing.

Lord, I don't know what you're going to do in my life with employment, retirement. Lord, you know, I've got events coming up. I got plans aren't coming together.

Everything's not working, Lord. I don't know, but you do. So all I'm going to do is walk as if you're in control, because he is.

You might as well just admit it now. He's in control either way. No matter what we do, he's in control.

He'll guide us. And we say, okay, Lord, I'm going to walk out and trust that you're going to guide me. I don't think he's going, oh, why did they do that? I wish they would just stayed in disobedience.

I wish they would just got mad at me. Why are they walking out in faith? The reason is you can't move a vessel and direct a vessel that's not already moving. Remember I told that story before when I was little, I used to sit out on the lake with my dad in the boat, and I'd steer it, you know, just sitting there fishing.

He's like, what are you doing? Like, I'm trying. Why is the boat not going? It's not moving anywhere, Dad, because you can't steer it until it's moving. It has to be moving.

Then you steer it. Same thing with us, God. By faith, we walk.

By faith, you don't sit on the couch and prop up your feet and watch TV. You won't find any support for that. You will.

By faith, you'll take a rest and Sabbath. Okay, I got it. But by faith, you're moving out.

You're moving, you're ministering to others, you're helping, and then God directs us as we move. One of the best ways to know what God's will is for your life is to step out and serve. Step out and serve.

You know what I was doing exactly 14 years ago? Exactly 14 years ago, I was right back there ushering, looking at the parking lot, and cleaning the bathrooms after the service. But Lord, I feel called to preach. Serve me.

I'll guide you through humility. Humble yourself. And when you step out and serve, that's all I did.

The pastor said, hey, you want to give your testimony sometime? Sure, I'll try it out. And boom, the rest is history. But stepping out and serving.

I've seen people start ministries by just, how can I serve at the church? And they start, because then your giftings become evident. This whole sermon, and none of this in my notes, I'm hoping it's helping somebody. But when you step out and you begin to serve, God will direct you through that service.

Well, I don't like helping in children's ministry. Well, God can direct you through that. That's a little, you know, promotion right there.

We need children's ministry helpers. Basically, we need helpers in all areas, ushering, sound, media, children's ministry. We've got a big church, but not many helpers.

Why is that? Well, let's just be honest. Because I remember why I didn't do it. When I was, I was in church one day.

You knew that, right? Four years ago, I sat in the pews. I don't want to. Come and feed me.

Come and feed me. I feel, oh, I'm just leaving high on the Holy Spirit, and I'll just, oh, yeah, I definitely don't want to work with kids. My gift's not children's ministry.

So I said, I'm not working with kids. And we run from the things that God wants us to help in. Think about it.

When we're serving, we're happier. When we're serving, God leads us. When we're serving, it's not about us.

Everything, joy comes, peace. But when we don't serve, when we just get a lot of scripture, and we like to tell people off and come to church, that's not biblical Christianity. Biblical Christianity was, this would penetrate their heart, and then they would go out and serve and help.

It's an outlet. You got to have an outlet for that. By faith, Sarah, by faith, Sarah also received strength to conceive a seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age.

Faith falters when we fail to enforce, reinforce the promises of God. You constantly have to reinforce the promises of God up here. You want to know why? Because the world's doing the opposite.

That's why you need a spiritual shower as often as possible. You've got to reinforce who God is, and how do you do that? That's why I promote this so much, reading the Word of God with worship and prayer. That's a powerful combination.

That's a trinity of the Bible. The power of the Holy Spirit, the power of prayer, the Bible, and worship, working together. This is how you find out the promises of God.

Spend time in Psalms and Proverbs. But most people, that's the hardest part for me, is I tell people this, and they're like, oh, that sounds good, but it doesn't happen. And then they want to get on this pill, or they want to try this, or they want to try this, or they want counseling.

Well, try this. No, I don't want to try that too. I don't want to do that.

But that's how faith is built, by reinforcing the promises of God. Just because you read it last week, or last month, or last year, we've got to keep reinforcing those promises. Why? Because the mind just wants, you know, we'll forget about it.

It'll just drift, it will drift away from God, and we have to keep reinforcing those things. And there's so many things I could cover. Many people say, how do I know the promises of God? Well, how do I know the promises of God? What are they? Well, here's a verse I want you to try to memorize sometimes.

Proverbs 16.3, commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established. Once you commit your works to the Lord, I mean everything, commit your life to Him, fully surrender. Lord, my life is surrendered to you.

I commit everything to you. It's yours. Do with it what you will, and you better be ready to answer that prayer.

The bank account might go down instead of up. Friendships might go down instead of up. Difficulties might come instead of go away.

Commit your works to the mind of godly desires of what He wants you to do, because you're aligning your will with His. I would just give two closing thoughts before I close this. There's no such thing as half, as a halfway Christian, or a mediocre Christian, or a part-time Christian.

There's no such thing. Much of scripture is applicable to the fully surrendered life. The problem is many people live as dual agents.

Who they are on Facebook is not who they are in the church. Who they are in the church is definitely not who they are on Facebook. Think about that.

They're dual agency. We love the things in the world, but also we want to come to church now and then. When it comes to this issue of faith, if you want your faith to be built, it's built on the fully surrendered life.

That's why I make that such a vital point. That's where true faith comes from, finally, in fully surrendering everything. That's why it's so hard, because we always want to hold on to things, don't we? Oh, I can't give that up.

I can't give that up. The Bible knows nothing about halfway Christianity, halfway coming to God. It's fully surrendered life to build faith.

Faith withers when He is not at the center of your life. That's basically what it boils down to. When God is not at the center of your life, faith will falter.

But without faith, it's impossible to please God. Without faith, it's impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. That's a powerful scripture.

But without faith, it's impossible to please God, and He is a rewarder of those, keep this in mind, of those who diligently seek Him. It's in that diligence. It's not like I tried it for five minutes, Shane, it doesn't work.

You know, if you ever say, I tried God out and it doesn't work, I tried Jesus out, it doesn't work, you've got the wrong attitude. You don't try Him out as if He's a choice in a menu. You bow to Him because He's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you diligently seek Him with all of your heart, with all of your mind, with all of your strength. And that comes to this final point. Faith falters when we fail to trust God.

Faith falters when we fail to trust God. I'm reminded of that story of that guy who has a 10-story building, and he crossed to the other building. It was 10 stories high on a tightrope.

He just walked all the way across, and he said, tomorrow, I'm going to push a wheelbarrow across this tightrope. He said, oh, that's going to be hard. And he went and had lunch, and one guy said, I believe you can do it.

I've got faith you can do that. I'm convinced you're going to do it. And the guy said, well, good, I need somebody to sit in the wheelbarrow tomorrow when I push it over.

You think the guy did it? But don't we do that to God? Oh, God, I know you can do it, but I'm not going to step in the wheelbarrow. I'm not going to take the risk. No, I know you can, but I'm not going there.

So faith is really about trusting God. No matter what happens. If I could boil this message down to a quick bullet point, no matter what happens, trust in God.

No matter what happens, as the song says, it is well with my soul. Well, it's easy for him to say, right? It's well with my soul. Remember what I talked about two weeks ago, the story behind that? I actually did a little research on it I want to share with you about the guy who wrote that song.

In 1871, the great Chicago fire virtually ruined Horatio Spafford. It's his name. It was almost the biggest trial of his life, but not the biggest.

Two years later, 1873, he puts his wife and four daughters on a ship that sailed for England, and the ship runs into another ship and sinks very quickly, and all four girls died. 11-year-old Tenetta, nine-year-old Elizabeth, five-year-old Margaret, and two-year-old Anna, and his wife barely escaped. He hears about the

accident and receives a telegram from his wife with these two crushing words, saved alone.

That's all it said. He gets on a ship and heads to be with his grieving wife, and as he passes over the part of the ocean where the girls went down and were at the bottom, he wrote, what peace like a river attendeth my way, or sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul. So the next time you sing that song, why don't you put a little context behind it? And we look at the guy who wrote it.

I want to look at the wife, her four daughters on the same ship. She couldn't save them, but you have to look to God. Lord, it is well with my soul, because we look to him.

You can't look to circumstances. The circumstances will destroy you. If you look at your circumstances, it will destroy you.

I believe that's where a majority of fear and anxiety and depression comes in, because we're looking here instead of looking here. Not to mention two years later, lost his son to scarlet fever, eight months old, I think. So when we sing these worship songs, guys, listen, this isn't some, oh, yeah, look at that.

These guys went through the pain and agony. Actually, that's where real worship comes from, through that pain and agony and brokenness. The heart cries out and breaks and cries out to God, and that's worship.

An arrogant heart can't worship God. A pain-free heart knows nothing about the power of God. Only a broken and contrite heart that cries out to God can say, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul. I feel like hell. I feel like I've been ran over by a train, but Lord, it is well with my soul, because you are in control.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/32/SID32155.mp3>

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