

# Hindrances to Spiritual Growth

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon addresses the various hindrances to spiritual growth and emphasizes the necessity of repentance and being filled with the Holy Spirit for true transformation.*

**Duration:** 51:36

**Scripture:** Proverbs 28:14, Matthew 11:28, Acts 2:46, Acts 3:6, Acts 3:16, Acts 4:12, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 Corinthians 8:13

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Unity"

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## Description

This sermon focuses on hindrances to spiritual growth, emphasizing the importance of unity, forgiveness, and looking to Jesus for salvation, spiritual growth, and rest. It highlights the need to address distractions, excess, disunity, and lack of surrender to God in order to experience true growth and transformation.

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## Transcript

If you ever Bibles turn to Acts, we left off at Acts, I believe it was chapter two, we haven't got to Acts three yet, I forgot to put the chapter heading other than just the verses, verse 14. And the message this morning is hindrances to spiritual growth, hindrances to spiritual growth. And I'm assuming all of you want to grow spiritually, don't you? Okay, good.

That's a good spot to start. But once we set on a course to go, well, that's all right, I just have to watch, don't walk back that way. Once we set a course to go in a spiritual direction and grow spiritually, the enemy comes in and brings in distractions, setbacks, roadblocks, all different kinds of things.

And to grow spiritually, it's going to hurt. And often we want to avoid the hurt, but it's often in the hurt, and getting through the challenges of life that we grow spiritually. Also, I forgot to put this down to we are praying about a second service, talking about growth here.

So but we need more children's ministry workers, if we want to keep that going, I think we're going to try to open up to four or five classes now for kids. So that means we need almost 10 teachers, if we're going to have that at the at the earlier service. So we're praying about all those things.

I'll keep you posted on that. But I do want to let you know that we need help with worship team, if you want to participate in worship, if you're gifted in that area, see Brandt afterwards, I've talked about that before, you know, just wanting to be on the worship team and being gifted are, are two different things, because I want to be on that worship team. And it's not going to happen on this side of heaven, it will not happen.

Okay, hindrances to spiritual growth, hindrances to spiritual growth. And we actually read a sermon last week that Peter preached. So if you want an idea on what a good sermon is, read this portion of Acts, Acts chapter two.

If if you have your Bibles, you can look at that this evening. But preaching can hinder spiritual growth, or it can help spiritual growth. And the way it hinders spiritual growth is if it's not challenging the people enough.

And it can also hinder spiritual growth if it's too legalistic. And if you're just beating up on the people versus encouraging them, if you're just constantly condemning and condemning and condemning and never measuring up, they're not going to measure up and they'll die spiritually. So preaching has to find an interesting balance between convicting and loving between challenging and God's grace.

And Peter gives a wonderful example here. I'm just going to briefly review a few things. So if you want to look at the perfect sermon, this is it.

The first thing he does is he has personal application, and he references God's word, you'll always find those in a good sermon, you have to have God's word. And how does it apply? Verse 14, Peter standing up with the 11, he raised his voice and said to the men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it's only the third hour of the day.

But this is what spoke what was spoken of by the prophet Joel. So he looked at God's word. He said, here's what's happening.

He gave practical application or practical reasons for what was happening. And many of you know what was happening, right? It was going to be weird to some people. Oh, they're just drunk there.

The spirit has been poured out in this place, the building shook, it's like tongues of fire, and they spoke in another language. And if you want more on that, go back to last few sermons, I'm not going to take time and uncover that today. But obviously, they did it.

If you take the Bible literal, obviously, it was a good thing if you take the Bible literal. And what now is happening is people who are not used to the moving of the Holy Spirit have a problem with it. They're drunk, they're out of their mind.

Now, I wish I could have did a whole series on the Holy Spirit. Because this is an interesting area. And I've talked about it before.

We want to make sure that we're open to what God wants to do through the work of the Holy Spirit, but at the same time putting the same constraints on it that the Bible does, making sure that it's proper order, making sure that it's the right spirit leading. And, and that's why you'll see different denominations, you'll have Pentecostals and Charismatics who do a lot of things saying that they're filled with the Spirit, it's much more emotional, much more engaging and much more liberty in uncertain areas. It doesn't mean it's all right.

And then you have very conservative churches who you're not going to see anything going on at all. I remember one church that will remain nameless where a person started to raise their hand during worship, and they said, we don't do that here. Ma'am, please put your hand down.

We don't do that here. And so you can see the quenching of the Holy Spirit on both sides, can't you? And a lot of things are done in the name of the Holy Spirit that really isn't God's Spirit. Here's what happens when God's Spirit truly visits a place.

Men and women are on their faces before God, crying out to God, weeping before God. Their sin is magnified, repentance is taking place, a genuine move of the Holy Spirit. Now, I love reading about revivals.

I go back to the 1700s in Welsh, the Welsh revivals, people you've never heard of like Griffin-Jones. And there's a four-part series on different men in the Welsh revival 1700s, of course, George Whitefield and Wesley, and you get to the modern day Welsh revival of 1904. You have other, all these, you have the holiness movement, and there are Methodist circuit riders who would ride across our landscape in America, and they would deliver these messages at camp meetings.

Hell is hot and heaven is sweet, and you better be holy and right before God. And these powerful messages and all these accounts of revival are not conservative. I can't find one account of revival that is conservative in nature, because it's God's people bearing their heart.

I mean, you look at the, you look at the Dodger game yesterday, and the crowd is, I don't even know who won, just you can tell me afterwards. I think it was the Cubs, right? I don't, and, but the crowd, that's amazing. I'm watching, and they are high-fiving, you've got beer flying, you've got people painted, you've got, they're so excited.

But when it comes to God, if you get excited, you're just emotional. I've never really understood that. You're just, well, you're just emotional.

Well, you can go and act like a drunken fool down in LA at a stadium, but we here at church, God forbid, that people get a little bit excited. Now with that can come hysteria, with that can come things that are not spirit-led, because if you're just open for anything, anything might happen. The devil loves to work.

Whenever you see the God working, like in the Bible, you'll see false doctrine at church, down the street. You'll see God perverting, the devil perverting that truth. Whenever you see a genuine move of the Holy Spirit, you'll see the devil come in and try to pervert that move.

He always wants to mimic and falsify what God is doing. So suffice it to say, that was a rabbit trail, but I think it's needed because what a lot of these people saw was a genuine move of God. And they thought that people were drunk.

Fast, or actually rewind to Jesus's ministry, they were actually attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan, the religious leaders. And if you look at, closely read through the passage on blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is when you attribute the works of God to Satan. And you're not open for what God wants to do.

Now that doesn't mean acting weird. It doesn't mean doing certain things. It just means when God gets hold of a person's heart, you might hear sobbing throughout the room.

You might hear people getting their lives right with God. And that's God's Spirit moving on a body of believers. And that's what genuine revival is.

Wilt thou not revive us again so we can rejoice in you? God reviving his people. And that's what was taking place here. And then Peter expounded.

He taught the people. Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you. And then here we go.

He convicted them. He convicted them. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

So he brought conviction. Why did he bring conviction? So they would, it's like a slap in the face. We killed him.

What must we do to be saved? That's the whole point of conviction is to bring the magnitude of God's word to our hearts so that we do grow spiritually. Because you won't grow spiritually unless you say, I was wrong. I have a problem in this area.

I am this or this or this or this. God, I need deep repentance to take place. I am so convicted by what your word says.

And that's why the challenging thing right now is, I don't know how many of you follow a lot of the bigger churches out there. They're pastors, and there's a lot of good churches. If you look at James McDonald's, John MacArthur has a large church.

There's some Southern Baptist churches, Charles Stanley, Chuck Swindoll. But a lot of the bigger ones that are relating to the culture now are very careful not to convict. We don't want to go there, Shane, in that area of whatever that is.

We're just here to encourage and show God's love and grace. Okay, well, so is Peter, right? Because many times in order to show God's love and grace, you have to say, hey, here's what we're wrong. And because of God's love and grace, he wants you to turn back to what is right.

And that's why you won't see a lot of people changing if they're never convicted. Now, you don't come into a church and just beat them up either. In most churches, it's hard to find that balance.

Either you're going to have a lot of truth and no love, or a lot of no truth and trying to seek that balance. And that's what Peter did here is perfect. He said, you put Christ on the cross, you crucified him.

Now today, I thought about that he might say, you know what, well, there's a group of you and there's a group of people and they just didn't know what they're doing. They want to have a conversation with Jesus and he didn't listen. And it wasn't really a good thing.

But if we're just going to sing Kumbaya after this is over, and we're going to, you know, go out and minister to their neighborhoods, and we're going to, you know, and everybody's okay, that sounds good. Well, they, they would have missed the whole point that repentance needed to take place at a very deep level. They put Christ on the cross.

So then, but here's the good thing about the sermon, he gives the answer even when it hurts. So they heard him and they said, Peter, what must we do to be saved? Then he said, repent, let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you will receive, you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises to you and to your children and to all who are far off as many as the Lord our God will call. So here you have a wonderful verse about God's sovereignty, whoever

he calls, but also a wonderful verse about whosoever will.

The invitation is thrown out there to everybody, whosoever will, and a crowd this size, I want to throw that out there. If you haven't, what Peter says, if you've never repented, if you've just been coming to church, you've kind of been getting by, you've been struggling through life, but you've never repented and said, Lord, you are my Savior, Christ, you are my Savior, and you are my Lord, I would encourage you, we're not even guaranteed tomorrow, you need to get your life right in this area, you need to repent and say, I've been a phony, I've been a fake, God already knows, that's what cracks me up, God already knows who's the phony, who's the fake, who's not really saying, but we go through life trying to, I'm gonna fool everybody, you're fooling everybody but the one who it really matters to. So God, if he knows your heart, this is the time this morning, say, okay, I'm done playing games, I don't care who knows, I'm coming to the Lord and I'm repenting of my sin.

That's why Paul says, do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor liars, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor all these different lifestyles where sin can manifest. If it's an area of unrepentant sin, the Bible calls us to repent, to turn our mind, which then leads to a change of action. Now, this last phrase is interesting, you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And I've talked about this before, so you can go back the last two messages. But what he's talking about here is you are, you repent, you acknowledge God is Lord and you're not, I'm done trying to be the master of my own ship and the you know, the captain of my own ship, the master of my own destiny, I'm tired of all that, Lord, you are now ruling and reigning, I'm repenting, and I'm going to be baptized, I'm going to give an outer profession of my faith to a group of people and show them that I'm sincere in my faith. And then he says, then you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now this gift here is the abiding presence of Christ, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, Christ, Godhead, everything at conversion. So when a person is converted, and they receive the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Holy Spirit is this abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, sorry, should have drank some water, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit at conversion. That's what we get this, we get this wonderful gift at conversion.

But what we've talked about before, and I want to read something because I came across it this week, but not all believers receive the fullness of the Spirit. See there's this gift of the Holy Spirit at conversion, but many people are lacking the fullness of the Spirit. They're trying to do and do and do, they're not abiding in Christ, they're, they think there's something missing, but they don't know what it is.

And I came across this Charles Stanley just released a new book, I would recommend it, Courageous Faith. And I didn't want to spend a lot of time, but I wanted to reference something he said, because he was, his ministry, his life was dull. And he didn't know what was wrong.

And he read a book I actually recommended before they found the secret. He read that book many, many years ago, 1964, I believe it was, and he realized that all of his shortcomings, he was toiling, he was burdened, he didn't have rest of soul, he was struggling in his Christian faith, nothing was vibrant, nothing was really alive, it was just this burden he was carrying. He couldn't understand why, it's because he didn't surrender his life fully to the work of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, you have a lot of, I should say we now right, we have a lot of cherry trees out here in this area, or you do that live out here. Now how hard does that branch work to produce a cherry? It doesn't

work at all. It just abides in the tree.

That's what this abiding in Christ looks like. It's not this toiling and working and sure you've got to obey, sure you've got to be filled with the Spirit and lead a certain life. But it's all about abiding in Christ.

And once you say Christ, you take over, fill me with your Spirit, I'm going to produce fruit, because I'm abiding in you. That's when the fullness of the Spirit takes place. Because many people, including himself, including Adrian Rogers, if you remember him, he's the president of the Southern Baptist Convention, including D.L. Moody, I can go down the list.

All these people were in ministry, but they weren't full of the Spirit. A.W. Tozer, Oswald Chambers, ministry, they're in ministry. And they said ministry was dead.

It was lifeless. I knew something was missing. People talk about the Holy Spirit, the fire of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Word of God.

And I love God, but I had this tremendous burden. I had this toiling. I couldn't make the connection.

And it was, in all cases, because they were resting in their own strength on what they did, on what they built, the way they were going to do it. And until they released that, they were not filled mightily with the Holy Spirit. So it makes you wonder how many people today are struggling under that same burden of toiling and trying to do better.

And Shane, I try to read the Bible, but it's boring. I try to get in worship, but give me clean hands. You should have seen what my hands were doing this week.

I was just, I was a mess. I was mean to people. I was doing all these things.

I don't know how to sing these songs. I don't want to be here really, but I know I need to be here. I love the Lord, but I don't know what's going on in my walk.

It's probably because you're not filled with the Spirit. And that's meant to be convicting. That's meant to be convicting.

I want some people to get so mad that they leave here and say, I don't like what that guy said, but Lord, that's what I need. I need it, because that's what finally does it. We'll get emails from people.

There's people here I can introduce you to. I'm never going back to hear that guy again. I just don't like what he's saying.

And then next week, they find themselves here. Next week, they find themselves here. I just don't like, and it's because they're struggling.

They're fighting what God wants and what they want for themselves until it finally comes. Now you know why I talk about full surrender all the time and brokenness, because this is so important. I can preach my heart out for the next five years, and it won't even matter if you're not filled with the Spirit, if you're not being that empty well that wants to be filled with God's Spirit.

That empty well that says, Lord, you fill me. And that's what we see here. You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So the first hindrance is not overwhelmingly filled with the Holy Spirit. So you will not grow spiritually. How are you supposed to grow spiritually if you're not filled with the Spirit that grows you? That's how we grow spiritually.

When God convicts me, go and apologize. No, I'm not going to apologize. Not going to apologize.

And then guess what happens? Funny situation I'll tell you about. Me and my wife took just a few days to get away, and there's somebody at this hotel. They're by the pool, and I'm in too trying to read Charles Stanley's book, and it comes up who they're voting for.

And it's not who I'm voting for. And in about 15 minutes, she goes, I don't have to sit here and take this anymore. I'm going, I'm leaving.

Her husband goes, yeah, you can go preach to your papa, but don't preach to us. And he walked away. I'm like, well, see, there you go.

You don't want to hear about murdering children in the womb. You don't want to know all these things. But the next day I saw them, so I went and apologized.

I didn't mean to even go that direction. Oh, no problem. I understand.

But I knew God was convicting me, because you know when you're supposed to pull back a little bit? Don't put on the fuel. Put on the brakes. And instead of drawing questions out of them, I was forcing them.

So was that humiliating? Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Now they have this image of right-wing, fundamentalist, Republican, whatever they have this image of.

And again, I'm not party this or that. I'm biblical principles. What does God's Word say? And who are we going to put the best person in a position of leadership in there? Who are we going to choose? And on Facebook, it's getting ugly.

Sometimes we have to remove certain posts and unfriend certain people. And I didn't realize that it's bad. And that's what's concerning me, is where we're going and the direction of our nation.

I don't know if you've read the news, but I think Putin in Russia has asked that all of his high-ranking officials and their families now begin to leave America and come back to the motherland. And I've checked a few different sites to make sure, and that's not a very good sign. There's in China and different things is going on, and that should put a church on their knees to pray.

Those things should propel us to the prayer closet to make a difference and to be filled with the Spirit. So a few other things, I want to keep reading Acts 240. And with many other words, he testified and exhorted them.

So Peter up there preaching Acts 240. And with many other words, he testified and exhorted them saying, be saved from this perverse generation. Be saved from this perverse generation.

So be saved from this perverse generation means this. Be saved from this generation right now. We live in a perverted generation.

Can you hear me up there in the balcony? Okay, good. Do you know we live in a very perverted generation? Perversion is just taking something straight and perverting it. Taking what God says is wonderful and beautiful and perverting it.

It's a perversion, and that's where the word pervert comes from. That they pervert something that is good for their own desires. It's a perversion.

So this whole generation, here's how you're saved. You come out of that generation. Now this isn't something you physically do at first.

It's a repentance. It's a thought that occurs in the mind that this is a perverse generation. I am part of that perversion.

God, I'm a sinner. I'm repenting. I'm coming out of that generation first here.

That's why the Bible says he who loves the world does not love the Father. And that word is cosmos. It loves the world's mindset.

So if I love the world's mindset. I love all the music. I love all the movies.

I can't wait to get Lady Gaga bumping in my truck when I leave here. This worship was not that great. You need to listen to Lady Gaga, and you need to listen to Craig Perry.

See, if I love those things, I don't have the love of the Father in me. They can't coexist. For some reason, I will not share with you.

I've never been in Halloween City until yesterday. I had to pick up something. How quick can I get out of this place? Nothing resonated with me.

There's nothing redeeming about this horror and this death and this glorifying of this. I felt dirty. I've got to get out of here.

How can you celebrate this wickedness and this ungodliness? How is it possible? There was something in me that was detesting it. Where does that come from? The perverse generation loved it. People had their little four-year-olds showing them things.

I was like, I can't believe this. What's the difference? Light and darkness, right and wrong, truth and error, good and evil. They can't dwell together.

So to come out of this perverted generation. Now, I better hang out there for a minute. If you put up a pumpkin in your front yard, I'm not coming against you.

Because what I'm, you can, there's something about, and I'll probably write an article on this. I have, I'll give it to you guys as well. We can redeem sometimes the theme of certain things.

Christmas at its roots, probably not good. Easter from the goddess of Esthar. Bunny eggs.

Fertility God, worshiping. Now, I'm not going to let them pervert Easter. I'm not going to let them pervert Christmas.

When my kids want a pumpkin and roast pumpkin seeds, I talk about Christ overcoming hell, death and the grave. Darkness celebrates it. We celebrate us overcoming the darkness.

So there's a way to redeem certain things without getting so involved in them. Now, some people choose, don't have anything to do with it. And that is wonderful.

That's fine. That's a good thing. But don't try to put your opinions on others that are trying to redeem a certain thing.

And they're not celebrating the evil. And they're not celebrating the darkness. But they have a pumpkin on their front porch.

So be careful in this area because that's going to start to happen. All the little things are going to come out on Facebook and different things. And allow people the freedom.

Also realize that not everybody is where you're at spiritually. It takes a little time to get caught up maybe where some of us are at. So allow them that freedom to grow in their faith.

So that's what hinders spiritual growth. Now, on this issue of coming out from the perversion for somebody who's not saved, do you realize that applies to us as well? Come out from among them and be separate. To be filled with the Holy Spirit, to remove hindrances to your spiritual growth, there will have to come a point in your day and in your time, how you spend your time, where you come out from the mindset of the world.

If you're constantly and I'm constantly inside the world's mindset, the culture, everything about it, it will prevent spiritual growth. We can't grow spiritually and be involved in the world just like our friends are, that we're so jealous about because they get to do all these things. Well, they're miserable.

Don't trust a Facebook post. Oh, I love my life. I'm so happy.

No, you're miserable. But we're not going to say that, right? So this is an area that's, and I've talked about so much, I don't want to belabor the point, but it fits here. Come out from the perversion.

Paul says, come out from among them, be separate. So there's a separation that has to take place in order to grow spiritually. Verse 41, then those who gladly received his word were baptized.

That tells me not everybody received his word. They weren't glad about it. They rejected his word.

But those who received Peter's word, to repent and believe, they received his word and they were baptized. And about 3,000 souls were added to the church. 3,000.

See, that's how you grow a church. That's church growth strategies, right there. That's how you grow a church is you're filled with the Spirit of God, you obey God, and you let God grow the church.

That's the best church model for growth you'll ever find. Because you can get in all these demographic surveys where you're surveying this, and what do the people want, and what do we do this, and it's all about growing the church, and we've got to make sure they like the music, and we've got to make sure the message is about 30 minutes. Anything above that, you lose the attention span.

Are we getting our sermon from pop psychology and the latest fad? This is how you grow a church. God would say, no. That's not how you grow a church.

How you grow a church is men and women surrender to God and let Him grow the church. But it also says, and they were baptized. They believed and were baptized.

You know how many people are coming up to me who are not yet baptized? Guess what? That's a good thing. I opened up, and I think that opened the floodgates that I got baptized over at the old location when I was 30. Christmas 2000, I was like, no, I'm not going to do this.

I've been a Christian since I was 12, and I think I got baptized in a pool somewhere, and God was convicting me. I said, no, this is embarrassing. Now I'm writing a book.

I speak sometimes. I'm going to get baptized, but God was working on my heart because it says believe and be baptized. So once I went and did that, I was baptized.

I could tell my walk with the Lord was much better because I wasn't holding that away. I wasn't, you know, I'm not going to be baptized, and I truly believe that failure to obey anything, but failure to obedience, failure to obey being baptized can also hinder spiritual growth. If God is saying, listen, believe and be baptized, we say, no, I did that when I was a little baby.

A Catholic church sprinkled some water on me. I don't need to do that. Well, I would probably differ with you on that belief because although baptism doesn't save us, it's a sign of a step of obedience saying, I'm going to go before others and profess my faith in Jesus Christ and be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

So the list is growing for next weekend, the 23rd. We've got a lot of baptisms taking place. Make sure you talk to us afterwards if you want to get baptized.

It's not a bad thing. It's a very good thing. God knows.

Back to that question. God knows. And people come in and are getting baptized.

They've been in church a long time, and you think we're going, oh, I can't believe that. And we're saying, praise God. Who cares? Who cares? They're taking that step of obedience.

And so that's what he said here. Gladly receive the word. We're baptized.

So failure to obey in general. If there's an area, let me just springboard off of baptism. If there's an area in your life that God is convicting you on and showing you things on and wanting you to move on, and you don't do it, you will not grow spiritually.

What about if you're a grumbler and a complainer and a gossip and a backbiter? And you know it, and God's working on you in that area. And you just sit there, and you think you're going to grow? Well, when you get to heaven, you can interview about 1.5 million Israelites out in the desert area and ask how they felt about wandering in the wilderness. Now, the theologians are going, that number is not quite accurate.

1.75 million. We don't know exactly, but we know that they were led and continue to be led in the wilderness back and forth for 40 years because they would not stop complaining and backbiting and bickering and all these things. And that will stifle spiritual growth.

Stifle spiritual growth. Let me say this just lovingly. There are people I know have been Christians or Christian longer than I have.

And they're still at that same level 25 years ago. Still the same. There's no spiritual growth at all.

And this is why. God wants us to work on those areas that are detrimental to our spiritual health. And you might say, but Shane, I'm trying.

But see, that's it. You abide in Christ. You don't keep trying and willpower and rules and checklists.

You say, this is not right. God, I'm repenting. I'm bringing it to the light.

I'm going to have other people help me. And with God's help, God's grace, I'm going to overcome this. And that's all God wants.

And not this perfect, perfect person that will never do that again, but a person who admits it and says, I need help in this area. God will fill that person mightily with his spirit. There's nobody in Christian ministry that is perfect.

But there's a lot of people that God's using that are humble and broken before him. It was funny. This is a side note.

I'm speaking this week to a group of pastors on abortion and getting involved in different things out of the area. And I'm researching. And I want to talk about pastors needing to be broken before the Lord humble.

Because a lot of people say, well, Shane, I'm not called to talk about those kind of things. Have you talked to God about that? You know? Or are you just trying to be politically correct? The problem is a lot of people aren't broken. And I was researching.

It takes like, I think it's, I don't want to misquote, but I'll come back to you if I ever find the right answer. But it was like six pounds of lavender, little flowers to make one little ounce. Or 50, 500 pounds, I think it was, of rose petals to make a little ounce of rose, the fragrance there.

But all that, the 500 pounds, it has to be crushed. And it has to be broken to get that little bit of ointment. And that's what God's trying to do in our lives.

Is to break that. Maybe not 500 pounds, but 250 pounds. Trying to break that out of us so that fragrance can come through.

And it's through that brokenness that that happens. And then they continued, verse 42. Steadfastly means they continued in that doctrine and that fellowship.

Let me encourage you. Church is not perfect. You will get discouraged.

You will get disgruntled. But God just calls us to follow that path. Not quit every time something gets difficult.

If that is the case, then I would have quitted five years and 11 months ago. One month into the church plant. So often God just says continue steadfastly.

Continue in the doctrine. Continue in fellowship regardless of the bumps that are taken along the way. And breaking of bread and in prayers.

So here is the model service. So everybody sits there and says, well, the church needs to do this. And the church needs to do that.

And the church, why is that church doing this? Why is that church doing this? Here is the model for the church. Is there teaching in the apostles doctrine? Is there fellowship? Iron sharpens iron. Is there communion taking place? Baptisms where we're remembering and we're thankful.

And is there praying? No doubt worshiping. So see, that's where we try to here at West Side Christian Fellowship. To take what God's word says.

We need to preach his word. We need to be in fellowship. Iron sharpens iron with communion, baptism, and praying and worshiping.

That's our focus. That's the focus. We don't want to get focused on all these other things and start to have different programs and different committees and different things that might be nice.

But what is the main purpose of the church? Here is the reason this is so important. Because when everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority. I've been at conferences where they'll tell pastors, listen, here's the attention span now.

You've got to get their program, their digital age. You've got to have PowerPoints. You've got to have digital things and keep people interested in doing this and keep your sermon under 30 minutes.

And worship, you want one song, do some quick announcements and a few songs. Don't lose their attention span. Now, all that might be true about the digital age, but what does God's word say? Because he will always honor his word.

If people are captivated, they'll listen to 40 minutes of worship. They'll listen to a 45-minute long message or an hour when I get too many rabbit trails or sometimes 30 minutes if God calls us to that. Because what I liken it to is putting hot water on a flame.

Sometimes that water is not ready for tea in five seconds. Leave it on that flame for five minutes, and it's hot, it's ready. You can feel the fire of God rising up in us through that worship, through the word, through the time of prayer.

And that's what the early church did. So this is the model service. Now, this is an interesting point on church.

Avoiding church, this won't offend some of you. It might, but this is going to offend people who listen to this message, I'm sure. Avoiding church hinders spiritual growth.

If you avoid church, it will hinder spiritual growth. We need to be here because iron sharpens iron. Think of the main reasons why we avoid church.

It's usually because if people are there that we don't want to see, or I'm tired, or something better came up that's not really better, or I don't feel like it today, well, welcome to my world. You will never live a life fully pleasing God if you think you're going to wake up every day just loving everything about church. It's

fighting the flesh many times.

Now, there are seasons where people I know, they're not going to church right now, they're trusting God, they're waiting, they're praying. Those are different seasons. Or if we're busy doing other things.

Billy Graham probably didn't make church every Sunday, right? There's things that might take the place of that. But overall, avoiding church will hinder spiritual growth. This is how iron sharpens iron.

But the person says, I don't need to go to church to be a Christian. No. But you won't grow spiritually either.

You're going to be a little five-year-old with this pacifier for the rest of your life, drinking formula. Because you won't sit at church. Many times people don't go to churches because they've been offended, or they're mad at people.

And God says, reconcile, forgive, have a spirit of unity, and move forward. They say, no, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that.

So they stay stuck, again, as a five-year-old. And that's really what it looks like. That's why the person who's not in church, who's not growing spiritually, for lack of a better word, they act like a spiritual baby.

Crying and whining and complaining and never, and there's just no growth in them. It's really sad to see. It's wonderful to see a one-year-old with a little binky, right? But not a 10-year-old.

Not a 10-year-old with something in their mouth. Not growing spiritually. Verse 43, Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

So fear came upon everybody. And many signs and wonders were done through the apostles. If you don't fear God, it will hinder spiritual growth.

Proverbs 28, 14 How blessed is the man who fears always! But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity. He will fulfill the desires of those who fear him. He will also hear their cry and will save them.

And I'm not too worried about this principle because it's absolutely true. We need to fear God again. Our nation needs to fear God.

The church needs to fear God. Before these pastors talk about getting their sermons down to 30 minutes and pleasing people, they need to spend time in the prayer closet seeking God and fearing Him. They should come up here and say, Lord, this is Your place.

This is Your Word. This is Your people. What I'm saying, I'm proclaiming Your truth.

God, You better be with me because I fear You. I fear that I might say the wrong thing. But how should that filter into our lives? How should it change the life of a husband? Or a wife? Or parents if they really feared God? How would we treat each other if we really feared God? How would we? Fast forward, I think it's Acts 5, with Sapphira and Ananias.

And what happened to them when they didn't fear God? Verse 44, Now all who believed were together and had all things in common, and they sold their possessions and their goods and then divided them among all as anyone had need. Did you catch that? Now all who believed were together and had all things

in common, and sold their possessions and their goods and divided them among all as anyone had need. Now, this is an interesting scripture because in my opinion, again in my opinion, this is not a proof text for go out and sell everything you have.

Go live in a tent over on the east side in the desert and just get rid of everything. Now God might call certain people to that, but what we see here is getting rid of all the excess. Everything that I don't need, I need to get rid of to help those people who are in hard positions.

And this is actually one of the concepts where the word communist comes from. Communal, to bring everything in and it's all equal. Now the pilgrims, I don't know if any of you have read a book by Bradford, William Bradford on Plymouth Plantation, I believe it was.

And the pilgrims tried this, but they failed. And they almost all died because of this. They realized that the hard workers were doing all this and the lazy people weren't doing anything.

So they all just came in. So now they went back to the biblical text and if you work hard, you are rewarded for that. So we see that also in the Bible.

If you don't work, you don't eat. So it's not just all things in common for lazy people. What he's saying here is get rid of your excess.

Two cars and houses and all these things. All the disciples did, they were so filled with the Spirit of God, they said, we don't need this, we don't need this, we don't need this. Let's get rid of these things and help those who don't have anything.

And here's a proof text for that, 2 Corinthians 8.13. Of course, I'm paraphrasing, of course, Paul says, I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others and hard for yourself. I only mean that there should be some equality. 1 Corinthians 16.1. Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so do I also to you.

On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there would be no collections when I come. In other words, Paul doesn't need to take collections. The church is already providing for it.

So that's what we see here. We fail in this area as well because we have way too much. Let's just throw it out there.

Most people live way beyond their means. They have too much, they have excess. And I will remind you that the more you own, the more owns you.

That's what he's getting to here. The best way to get rid of this type of heart is to give it away. Is to give some of those things away, this excess.

It's incredible, the excess we have. And that's what these people did. They're filled to spirit.

They said, we don't need this, and we don't need that, and we don't need this. We don't need all these things. We're going to sell it, and we're going to give to those who do need.

So does that make sense? There was an approach there. They saw a need, and they got rid of their excess. But the point here is, excess can prevent spiritual growth.

If we're living in excess, it can prevent spiritual growth. Shane, would you clarify that? Sure, I will. Glad you asked.

There's nothing wrong with when God blesses. There are people blessed with more things than others, obviously. But they usually, if it's done according to being filled with God's spirit, they give a lot of that back.

So there are those that are blessed with greater things and more priorities and more things. But those things don't own them. They're not saying, okay, now I need a bigger garage for my 12 cars, and I need a bigger house, and I need three over here, and I need Aspen, Colorado, and I need one there.

Why don't I get one up in Mammoth Lakes where I would love to have one, and why don't I get one over in Wisconsin at these wonderful lakes on the greens there. And all this, they're just getting all this stuff. Now, having some of those things, there's nothing wrong with that as long as those things don't have you.

See, it's not about keeping up with the Joneses. It's about giving away things as they come in. So those who God has blessed are often, if they're filled with the Spirit, they're generous givers.

So you see the difference there? If somebody is just taking excess, and they're building this portfolio, building that, and that's constantly excess, and getting the things of the world, they will not grow spiritually because we're not called to make those things our God. It's called idolatry. And that's what we do.

When we're so worried about the stock market instead of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When we're so amassing treasures, and this and that. Now, if God is blessing, and all this income is coming in, and we're giving it, we're blessing people, then that's different.

The things doesn't have a hold on you. So that's the best way to get rid of this kind of thing, if it has a hold on your life, is to start giving things away. And it's funny, with this concept, it's not necessarily rich people, even poor people, or what the world would consider poor, try to keep up with the Joneses, and try to keep every little excess, and they're not growing spiritually either, because their priorities are not right.

So it doesn't necessarily mean what you... In other words, it doesn't matter if you're a millionaire, if you spend 1.1 million a year. Right? You're still in debt. It doesn't matter what you make, it's what you spend.

So this has to do with things having a hold on our lives. So the bottom line is here, if something is holding you, and God is convicting you of it, you're to give it away, give it to those in need, and release that burden that the Holy Spirit has put on you. So that's what I see here.

I don't see here everybody just selling everything, and living, like I said, in a tent out in the desert. They're like what Paul said here. I don't mean your giving should make life easy for others, and hard for yourself, but only that there is equality.

You see somebody needing something, you help out. Verse 46. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Boy, I had a whole thing on this about the temple, and they met on the outer court. But suffice it to say they were all in one accord.

Disunity prevents growth. I've talked about that a few weeks ago, so I won't again. But disunity prevents spiritual growth.

If you're a fault finder, if you don't like unity, if you like all the little fighting, and complaining, and bickering, and you're looking for those things, you will not grow spiritually. It will hinder spiritual growth. God loves those who are wanting unity, and wanting reconciliation, spirit of reconciliation.

God was reconciling Himself through Christ Jesus. He was reconciling the whole world. So He's given us the ministry of reconciliation.

That's another important part. 1 Corinthians 1.10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say, and that there is no division among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and body. Now on that point, I don't want to just say it, and we all say, yay, that makes good sense.

I think we need to do that. But we search our hearts this morning. If there's areas of disunity, and there's not good fellowship, and there's an offense against us, or we have an offense against somebody, God asks.

It's clear in the Scripture that you go to them. You say, hey, listen, I just want to let this go. I apologize if I've been feeling a certain way.

I need to let this go. And that's how you grow spiritually. How do you develop forgiveness if you're never wronged? Is it, I'm just going to be a forgiving person.

No, somebody's going to wrong you. How do you develop or how do you love the unlovable? You can't unless you're faced with the unlovable right before you. So that's how you grow spiritually is by applying these things.

And then I'll probably have to tackle this next week, but it was in Acts 3. If you have your Bibles, Acts 3, the lame man is healed. I'm not going to read that account this morning. But this man was healed.

Peter said, silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Rise up and walk in the name of Jesus. See, there's no other name that seals you for redemption.

There's no other name that heals you. There's no other name that saves you. Nothing.

Nothing. We can get worried about Putin. We can get worried about the next election, but it doesn't matter.

Who's on the throne? God is on the throne. And what the enemy wants to do is sidetrack us, mainly through Facebook nowadays, is to sidetrack us off what's important and get us focused on all these things we're supposed to worry about. And he says, just look at me.

That's what Peter said. He said, I don't have anything, silver, gold. Nothing's going to help you, but you look at me.

Look at me and be saved. Look at Christ and be saved. That's so powerful that those this morning who are not saved, all you have to do to be saved is to look at Christ and accept His gracious offer of salvation.

Many of you have heard of Charles Spurgeon. When he was converted, he was a young man. He walked into this old church in the snow, and this deacon came up to speak, and he said, young man, just look to Christ.

Just look to Christ. Look to Him. And it pierced his heart so much that he bowed his knee to Christ that morning, and now we've heard of Him.

Everybody's heard of Him in the Christian community just about. Why? Because they looked at Christ. So there's three areas I want to leave you with.

Number one is look to Him this morning if you don't know Him. If you've had religion and not a relationship, if you've been going to church and you can't say that you have a relationship with God, you don't know Him, look to Him and be saved. The Bible says just look to Him and be saved.

And also the person who maybe you haven't been filled with the Spirit. Maybe this sermon upset you. Maybe you don't have all the abundant life that Christ spoke of.

Look to Him. Look to Christ. Stop trying to do it in work.

Stop trying to be rigid in all these areas. Just look to Him. Look to Him and be filled with the Spirit.

And the final person this morning is I want to remind all of us in here that if you're going through a challenge, there's people losing family members or have lost family members. They're tired. They're weak.

They're just done. I can't go through another thing, Shane, or I can't go through another thing, church. You look to Jesus.

Look to Him. Abide in Him. Rest in Him.

This is where you find perfect rest. Perfect rest is you remove all the doubts, all the fears, all the anxiety, all the drama, everything that's going on, and you just look to Him. You look to Christ and Him alone.

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