

His Presence Is My Pursuit

by Shane Idleman

The pursuit of God's presence is a lifelong journey of seeking a deeper relationship with Him, marked by humility, brokenness, and desperation for His presence.

Duration: 45:56

Scripture: Psalm 42:1

Topics: "Humility and Brokenness", "Pursuing God's Presence"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of pursuing God's presence with humility and desperation, sharing his personal journey of surrendering to God and experiencing the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. He highlights that true intimacy with God requires brokenness and a willingness to seek Him diligently, even when feelings of His presence are absent. Idleman warns against the dangers of pride, which can hinder our relationship with God, and encourages believers to embrace a lifestyle of worship and prayer, as well as to recognize the urgency of spiritual awakening in today's world. He draws parallels between the biblical accounts of seeking God's presence and the need for modern believers to cultivate a deep, personal relationship with Christ, ultimately leading to spiritual revival.

Transcript

We can discuss, the title is His Presence is My Pursuit. His Presence is My Pursuit. I don't know if you have screens here like we do where I'm from, so I might say things that aren't, sometimes I say good evening when we have an evening service, or good morning.

And so just bear with me, it's fun to preach in new environments, and just wanna thank the elders for trusting me to do this, because we take the word of God seriously, and I know you do too. And just allowing someone to speak to the congregation is not only a privilege, it's an honor. But this topic, His Presence is My Pursuit.

And when he mentioned the introduction, all of this I'm gonna share right now is not in any of my notes, I don't know if it's gonna help anybody. But it was when I decided to fully surrender my life to the Lord, that he filled me with his spirit. And I began to pursue him like never before.

And so that's where the books come from, and the articles, and the speaking, it's not me. I actually barely graduated high school. Dyslexia, learning disability, a speech impediment, came from the hardworking construction background.

But God has to break a man before he uses him. And out of that poured the books, and articles, and the speaking, and the messages I feel that God puts on my heart. The reason why that is so significant is because you'd be amazed at what God does with humility.

You plus God is the majority. And you have to become a pursuer of his presence, seeking the presence of God. And we're actually coming up on Halloween night, we are having church every single night of the week, where I'm at, where I pastor, and we're gonna stop when God tells us to stop.

We're that hungry to hear from God. Guys, in these dire times, our only hope is another spiritual awakening. That's our only hope.

And so when times are dark, I actually get a little excited because God usually breathes his breath of revival and spiritual awakening on those who are hungry, and thirsty, and desperate for more of him. So this topic, his presence, his presence is my pursuit. And maybe I should clarify it because someone with a conservative background, I have the MacArthur Study Bible, but the power of the spirit has changed my life.

And so I'd want to rightly divide the word of truth, but also be open to the fire of the spirit. Because you can be straight as a gun barrel theologically and just as empty. I believe you have all of the Holy Spirit at conversion.

But does he have all of you? That's the difference. That's the defining moment. And that's why many people years later, D.L. Moody, Oswald Chambers, John Bunyan, John Wesley, me, they received a mighty filling of the Holy Spirit years later after full surrender took place.

Because if we're not fully surrendering, we're quenching and grieving the spirit of God. Somebody by the name of John Owen, he was a Puritan, he was a theologian. He would come and listen to John Bunyan who was what they would consider a tinker.

What was a tinker? He would work on metal. Today, construction worker. Kind of the same thing.

And you have this astute John Owen, this incredible professor, this Bible teacher, PhD in divinity and very knowledgeable. Actually the works of John Owens, I have them. You can read them.

This guy's mind is amazing. But I think it was Charles II came to him, the king, and said, why, John Owen, do you go and listen to this tinker? And he said, oh, king, I would give up all of my education if I could preach with the fire of God that that man has. That God would lay a hold of my heart like he has laid a hold of his heart.

The passion and the fire of God, I would give up everything to have that. And those things set the tone for our nation. Getting the pulpits aflame again with the righteousness of Christ.

Oh, I'm gonna step on a lot of toes. I'm just getting started here. But in a nice way, speaking the truth in love, correct? Because I love God's people.

I love pastors. I might be speaking at a large pastor's event next year. And my heart is for God's people to pursue his presence.

And we know, and people get a little confused on this topic. We know that God is everywhere. What theologians call omnipresence of God, clearly.

He's at a rock concert in Hollywood. I mean, the manifest presence of God. Who God is, where he's at, there's not any place.

David said, where can I go to flee his presence? If I descend into hell, behold, he is there. If I make my bed in hell, if I go to the uttermost parts of the ends of the world, he is there. But there is something incredible and life-changing when the presence of God wrecks you and fills you.

I've been in services where I couldn't keep preaching because the tangible presence of God was real. Just even Sunday, people started coming to the altar before I was even done with the message. The power of God, folks, we need that like never before.

We need the presence of God and we need to pursue that presence of God, not in arrogance, but in humility and brokenness. And it was Moses who said, show me your glory. I don't know about you, but that doesn't scare me.

God, show me your glory. Come down and visit your people again. Isaiah cried, oh God, would you rend the heavens and rip them open and come down and visit your people again that the mountains might shake at your presence.

And if the prophet cried it then, I can cry it now. The presence of God. I love studying revivals, 17, 1600s, 1700s in Wales and Scotland, Duncan Campbell, New Hebrides, First Great Awakening, Whitefield, Edwards, Wesley, my heart beats with them.

And every time God would bring a powerful move of his spirit it's because men and women were humble and broken and prayed up. And dare I say it, they fasted. King's stomach didn't sit on the throne.

They would seek the heart of God. There was a desperation to hear from God. And then God would honor.

He'd say, is that the cries of my children? Is that the cries of my children? They are humble. If my people, not Hollywood, not Washington, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and cry out and seek my face. See, there is a cure to what's going on.

I was on a couple of radio interviews this week and they said, how can you live in California? Or they're amazed I'm in California, I guess. But I'm like, hey, God still loves all the states. And I warned my friends as California goes, so goes the nation.

So you better get on your face before God now. And God puts us in those dark areas to make the brightest light shine. Joshua, I love Joshua.

He lingered in the presence of God in the tent. It was incredible. Isaiah, many of you know the story of Isaiah.

When God called him, he said it was in the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up. And the train of his row filled the entire temple. He said, I can't even see, I'm a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips, but my eyes have seen the King.

I've experienced the presence and power of God. And God says, now I can use you. See, the reason sometimes church seems boring and dead is because we've quenched and grieved the spirit of God.

Now, let me just give you a caveat before I get into Mark 14. Pursuing God's presence doesn't always mean filling his presence. Pursuing God's presence doesn't mean like you're always gonna fill it.

And there's a big, there's the debates out there. I don't wanna get into a lot of this, but for some reason, they think when you experience God or emotionally engaged worship is bad. But God designed us with emotions.

When I hold my little baby, my firstborn that's here, I'm like, oh, well, that's great. What's next? There was emotions engaged. When you get married, when you experience God, it's God given emotions.

But as D. Martin Lloyd-Jones says, you don't interpret Scripture by your emotions, but you interpret your emotions through Scripture. They are the caboose, not the train. And so you're not always gonna fill the presence and power of God.

I've gotta pursue him and persevere. He is a rewarder of those who half-heartedly seek him. Anyone catch that? He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

And that word there in the Greek is like a little water hitting a rock. That diligence over time begins to wear it down. And God says, I'm a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

Even when you don't feel like it, I'm gonna get up and come to church. I'm gonna worship you. I'm gonna turn off social junk tonight and get on my face before you and open your word.

Lord, I know you're gonna answer because you honor your word above anything else. So it's not about feelings, it's about persevering. And so that's the backdrop that we find ourself in Mark 14.

His presence is my pursuit. It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And I have to be careful, I found myself camping out here for about 15 minutes just on that one sentence.

Because if you talk about the Passover and how significant it is, you know, 1300 years later from the original Passover, here's Jesus, the final Passover lamb. And it's just mind-boggling when you look at it theologically. And I'll get to that a little bit at the end.

But this was a time, the Passover, when they would remember their deliverance from Egypt. They were in bondage, bondage, and they were delivered by God. And the final nail in the coffin is when God said, make sure you take the blood of the lamb and put it over the doorpost.

And when the death angel goes by, he will pass over your home. And then of course we see the application with Jesus. Whoever puts the blood on it, whoever puts the blood on it, the Passover, that's the final sacrifice, the final Passover lamb that was shed for our sins.

But there's interesting here, and I'm careful with Scripture, because I don't like to just, oh, let me just pull something out of this that's not really revelant. It's called eisegesis, not exegesis. You're speaking something in a text that's not there.

I don't want to do that, but I don't want to miss this point either. When we're talking about his presence and pursuing God, and they are remembering their deliverance from their bondage, let me tell you, I know there's bondage deep in this room. There's bondage, people listening, strongholds, addictions.

The opiate crisis is out of control. The alcoholism, sense of COVID, all the addictions to strongholds. Pursuing his presence can lead to victory.

Who can break every chain? Who can defeat every stronghold? It might be a struggle. It might be challenging. But the more you begin to pursue God, you're filled with the spirit of God.

And that begins to push out the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Pursuing God can break those strongholds, break the strongholds of addiction and bondage. Intimacy with Christ can break that.

And then of course we keep reading, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him. For they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people. Now this is interesting.

Obviously they knew they couldn't take him during the feast. The people loved Jesus. And they said, we need to do this in the silent time of the day.

Not when people are paying attention. And why were they so upset? Why were they so upset? Well, it's a good reminder for us as well. The truth offends.

The truth offends. Remember that in our culture today. Everybody's worried, I don't want to offend.

I don't want to offend. I don't want to offend. Listen, many years ago I decided I don't care who I offend as long as I don't offend God.

We're so worried about not offending and upsetting, but have we talked to consider that we might be offending God? Now your attitude shouldn't offend, correct? But the truth of God, the absolute truth of God is offensive. And when Jesus said, I am the way, the life, the truth, nobody comes to the Father except through me. He said so many things that were so true and yet it offended the religious leaders.

It exposed their hypocrisy. And so on this topic of pursuing his presence, remember this, real intimacy is always, if you want to have a real intimate, passionate relationship with God, doesn't mean you're free of challenges. Hello? Sometimes it brings more challenges.

I know I got, the enemy has got an AR-15 on my heart ready to take this guy out. I got it. I live like that.

That's the life I have to live, staying close to the Savior to keep the enemy at bay. But to real intimacy, the one true and living God, your relationship has to be anchored in the truth. You have to come to realization that there is only one truth.

There is no plan B. And that is where your intimacy with God is anchored because without the truth, what do we have? Theory, conjecture, a good idea, many different opinions. And I don't know where you're at this morning or where, maybe even listening to this where you're at, but at some point you got to wrestle, wrestle with the fact that God's word is truth and I embrace it today. Doesn't mean you understand everything.

I'm kind of glad I don't. Could you imagine if we understood everything? Why did God do this? Why this? Why this? But just, it's called faith. And we agree on the essentials.

And it's so important. This is so important. I don't know, how many of you have ever heard the name Charles Templeton? Any hands? Oh, there's a few.

Okay. Well, they said he was going to be a better preacher than Billy Graham. Youth for a Mission, I believe it was, or YWAM or one of those.

And he began to drift away into moral, into actually liberalism. Began to question God's word. And that influence began to make Billy question his faith.

And he finally got to a point, said, Lord, I can't keep doing this. I'm double-minded. I have no passion.

I don't want to preach. And he put his Bible, it says in his biography, on a tree stump and said, I believe this is the word of God. And that man was a changed man from that day forward.

We hear of him because of that decision he made. And it's not too far, about an hour up in those mountains that that decision was made. I believe over by Lake Arrowhead, rightward area.

And we see the absolute necessity, especially right now in our culture, the absolute necessity of standing on the word of God and God's word alone. I better hurry. I'm going to be here a while if I don't put on the fast forward version here.

And verse three, and while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at a table, a woman came with an alabaster flax of ointment of pure nard, very costly. And she broke the flax and poured it over his head. The Bible talked about it preparing his body for burial with his crucifixion coming up and the burial and the resurrection coming up.

But I was reminded on this point that intimacy has a cost. Intimacy has a cost, a year's worth of salary. There's a cost to follow Christ.

You're not going to look the same. You're not going to be able to hang out with the boys all the time and not talk about Jesus. There's a cost.

Things have got to go in order that God can be on the center stage. God has got to be put on the front burner, not the back burner. There's a cost to knowing God.

And I gave a message a while back titled the blessing of brokenness. The blessing of brokenness. It's interesting, the flax had to be broken in order for that oil to flow out.

And I will submit to you that needs to happen in our nation today. Much more brokenness, much more humility. A.W. Tozer said, it's doubtful that God will use a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply, until he has broken him.

Also why this is so important is the cost. This cost a great deal. The cost reveals our desperation, correct? What I'm willing to pay or what I'm willing to do in this case reveals my desperation.

Could you imagine if we got desperate again for God? Desperate for his presence. Oh, let's have an all night prayer meeting. Let's get here at 6 a.m. Sunday morning.

Let's cry out to God. Let's fast for a day or two. I'm so desperate, Lord.

I'm gonna turn off social media and begin to bury my face into your word. I'm desperate to hear from you. God says, that's the type of sacrifice I will not cast away.

He who has a broken and contrite heart. And there were some there. Oh, this has not changed.

Verse four and five. There were some there who said to themselves, indignantly, sorry, I gave you a warning up front. Speech is not my, my brain reads three sentences down already, but there were some who said to themselves, why was this ointment? I think God keeps me humble that way too.

Why was this ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than 300 denarii and given to the poor and they scolded her. There is, they scolded her. Let me tell you today, if I just came here for no other reason, it would be safe to say this.

There is no such thing as wasted worship. There is no such thing as wasted worship. You're saying, I'm praying for my son.

I'm praying for my daughter. I'm praying for my marriage. I'm praying for this church.

And it seems like God is not hearing. Oh, be careful. God is not on your timetable.

God says, if you seek me, you will find me. If you search for me for all of your heart, waiting time is not wasted time. There is no such thing as wasted worship.

But what really stood out to me is the fact that this offended people. Did you know his presence offends people? One of the greatest lessons I've ever learned planning the church 12 years ago is that the main critics, this is gonna blow your mind. The main, are you ready for this one? The main critics, the main critics, I'm gonna get them after this message too.

Who don't like this concept of the deeper life or pressing in or God's presence are always Christians. This Sunday while I'm gone to third, he's here from England. We've had an atheist at our service for three weeks in a row.

He said, there's something just draws me here. These services are nice. There's something, I'm hungry.

There's something here. Atheist, proud of it. What is that? It's the spirit of God drawing.

But then if we're not careful, the critics say, you know what? That music is too emotional. They just sang that lyric for four minutes. Isn't that brainwashing? The angels cry, holy, holy, holy is our God.

I'm sure more than just once, folks. See, we've missed seeking the presence of God. Sometimes we'll go an hour in worship just seeking the presence of God.

The altar full, desperate people do desperate things, don't we? We're desperate. Listen, unless God comes, our nation, the Titanic's been hit. And our nation is in turmoil.

Our state is in turmoil. And God says, just if my people humble themselves and come in, they get desperate. That means removing the things that are pulling us away from God.

And there's a pursuit. There's a hunger for God more than the things of this world. Isn't it true? Pride prevents intimacy.

Pride prevents intimacy. Hope this helps someone, because it's not in my notes again. A lot of stuff, not in my notes.

So I usually have a skeleton. I let just God put things on my heart. Hoping it's Him.

Obviously praying. But I want to share with you 2005. I came back to the Lord, 1999.

My testimonies online. And just started to pour into God's word. I couldn't stop reading.

I went from, I can't read. I wasn't a good reader. I didn't like reading.

I like magazines with pictures. To now devouring, you know, systematic theology, Wayne Grudem, Spurgeon, the Puritans, you name it. I was just reading.

And guess what came from that? Lots of humility? No. Lots of arrogance. My mom said, Shane, your family doesn't even want to be around you.

And I was mad. And then I began to just weep a week later. What happened? Knowledge puffed up.

Oh, I can break down pneumatology, eschatology, soteriology. My inductive and deductive and my media approach to sermon preparation. Let me tell you about my hermeneutics and my homiletics.

I was not a broken man. And God begins to break you. About that time, I stumbled upon my wife's journal.

Come to find out she left it open on purpose. And said, I married a controlling man who knows a lot, but he's not loving. I was so mad that after a three hour drive, I got back and I repented.

I said, I apologized. And God began to break me and break me. Oh, he wasn't done.

A couple of years later, I was in the prayer room and an 18 year old girl's crying. I said, how can I help you? He goes, I struggle with same sex attraction, but the way you preach made me feel so bad. I said, I'm so sorry.

And I began to understand loving the person, but fighting the agenda. And God began to break me. See, where does the perfume come from in a flower? It's gotta be broken and crushed.

Where does the olive oil come in? Ask the olive, how it feels. The breaking and the crushing and pride prevents intimacy. You see, I had head knowledge.

I could quote famous Puritans. I could break down all these things. You have a really good memory.

People don't like that. So much theology, but no brokenness. That's why I said straight as a gun barrel, but just as empty.

And I thank God I didn't pastor a church then, because I would have hurt a lot of people. Pride prevents intimacy, folks. This is the big problem in America.

I think it's November 5th. On a Saturday, we have a sister, Sarah, coming from the persecuted church in China, six years in a Chinese prison. Last time there wasn't a dry eye in the place.

It's just amazing. She said, I'm praying for you. She said, Shane, I'm praying for you.

America is so arrogant, so filled with pride. You see, our blessing has become our curse. And pride prevents intimacy.

Folks, you have to humble yourself. Pride can't be corrected. Did you know that? Pride can't be corrected.

Pride elevates itself instead of lowers itself. Pride boasts instead of breaks. And that's why I told him, I don't want to know.

You don't have to say what Shane Ilam has done, because I actually haven't done anything, the Holy Spirit of God, through a broken person says, Lord, whatever you want to do, whatever you want to do, I'll do it. I don't want to know church attendance. I don't want to know.

I just want God to fill me with the Spirit. And I want that fire to be contagious and hit the pew. Pride is the greatest hindrance to a spiritual breakthrough.

And I see that in our nation. So many people are angry, right? And rightly so, but they're not broken. They're ticked off, but they're not humble.

Big difference, big difference. I'm gonna have to just hurry through this a little bit, but I want to tell you the story I told last Sunday. I hadn't heard it for a long time.

It's so important on this issue of pride. A man by the name of W.P. Nicholson. Any Presbyterians in here? By the way, it's all one body.

So Presbyterians, he was a very well-known Presbyterian, I think a hundred years ago. And there was another man named Daft Jimmy. And that word daft was not a good word.

Just, you know, good old Jimmy. And so W.P. Nicholson was high up in the Presbyterian church. And oh, they would bow to him.

What a great teacher. He had the five points of Calvinism down. He could quote, toll depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, perseverance of the saints.

And let me tell you exactly how this works. And such a great theologian, but he knew he was missing the power and presence of God in his life. He knew it.

And one day he's walking down the street and here comes Daft Jimmy with the Salvation Army. Tambourines. And W.P. saw them.

He said, oh, how can I get away from you? And they said, W.P. we know you. You're that great teacher. Would you come and pray with us? So he's always praying.

He's got one eye open. You ever done that? You know, looking around, he's embarrassed. And he knew God was convicting him.

God was convicting him. The prayer was over. He's like, okay.

Made it through that. Daft Jimmy said, here's a tambourine. Would you walk with us down the street, praising our Lord? And at that moment, he had to make a decision.

Do I humble myself and stop thinking more highly of myself than I should? Or should I continue to live in my pride? He humbled himself. And it's an incredible story. He was then called the Thunder of the Pulpit.

God, see, God flows in and fills broken vessels, humble vessels that say, Lord, I need you. I meditate on this sermon so much this week. Lord, I need you.

I don't wanna just go there and give my opinion. I wanna hear from God. It's been said that God has to break a man and cleanse a man before he can fill a man.

The power, isn't that what our pulpits need today? Let me just do a quick little detour. The pulpits of America need to be aflame with righteousness again, calling people to repentance, calling people to desperation on God. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and in due time, he will exalt you.

When we begin to exalt ourself, we actually, God abases us. He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Pride elevates.

It elevates self. It doesn't lower. You see, in God's kingdom, to go high, you gotta go low.

To go up, you gotta go down. And pride is deadly. Many of us love to quote the famous scripture in 2 Chronicles, if my people, what? Stay prideful.

I got you thinking now. If my people humble themselves, humble themselves, get on their face before me and say, God, I humble myself. I'm praying, I'm seeking you like never before.

That word seek in the Hebrew is actually bakash. It means to seek as if you lost your child. Now parallel that with seeking God.

I've lost my child. I brought my three-year-old. Where is it? You think I would keep speaking? You think I'd go to the bathroom? You think I'd say, hey, let me get something to eat, then I'll come back? No, I would end the service right now and I would find that child and that's the same type of seeking.

Oh, if you seek me with all of your heart, with all of your strength, I will be found by you. We need to get back to that kind of pursuing, that kind of seeking, that heart-wrenching pursuit of God. Is that not true? Anybody heard the name Alex de Tocqueville? He's credited with saying this.

They can't exactly find it, but he wanted to find out why America was so great in the 1800s. He's a Frenchman. And he came to America and he said, I searched her boundless prairies and her fertile fields and it was not there.

I looked in her vast world commerce and it was not there. He said, it was not until I went to the churches of America and I realized that her pulpits were aflame with righteousness. That's when I understood that America is great because she is good.

And if she ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great. When God can captivate, see the pulpit, I believe God has called pastors to be this thermostat and thermometer for the nation. Did you know that the pulpit used to give political sermons? You want to get controversial? They would speak about issues and candidates and things and the church used to be that voice of truth and say, this is wrong.

Now we've become so politically correct that we want to make sure our message doesn't offend the world, but in the meantime, it's offending God. Because when you get filled with the fire of God, you can be mild,

meek, whatever, but you will be bold. Being filled with the spirit is not weirdness, it's actually boldness.

The number one fruit of someone being filled with the spirit is boldness. Jesus said, go and wait until you receive power from on high and you will be my witness. They say, you're gonna do weird things.

You'll be witnesses. But Jesus said, leave her alone. He rebuked them, thank God.

Why do you trouble her? She's done a beautiful thing. And I was reminded that God is our defense. No matter what you're going through, God is your defense.

And he said, for you always have the poor with you and whenever you want, you can do good for them, but you will not always have me. And so what I glean from this is the urgency of intimacy. The urgency, did you know the Bible, throughout scripture, there's an urgency? It's never putting it off.

You ever read, next week is the day of salvation. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to pursue God like never before.

Hebrew says three times, when you hear his heart, when you hear his conviction, when you hear him drawing you hard and not your heart, there's all pursue, there's a hunger for more of God. There's an urgency. And you know what? Maybe I should, people comment often like, man, Shane, you get a little too excited and interrupt the volume a little bit.

But shouldn't you be excited when the power of God is moving and filling and repairing marriages and bringing the prodigal sons home? I get up 22 years now by three, three, four in the morning. That's my time with God. This morning, 3.30, I have to hear from God.

I have to put on worship and say, God, break me in order to fill me, use me. The irony is when I came back to the Lord, I was a motivational speaker. I would get surveys like, how did you like our speaker? Rate from one to 10.

And my goal was not to upset anybody. And God just completely changed my plans on that one. He just wrecked it.

Because often, now when you're preaching, if you don't like what I'm saying, it's probably because you need to hear what I'm saying. She has done what she could. Listen to this, guys.

She has done what she could. Just do what you can. But Shane, I don't have a ministry like you.

But you know what? This started actually at the LAX Hilton in 2008. I'm in construction. I went and heard David Barton and a lot of people talk about things.

And I heard for the first time ever partial birth abortion. I went back and I cried myself to sleep. And I said, Lord, if you give me a voice, if you give me a voice, I will be bold, I will be loving.

And he took that commitment and he began to use that to honor my prayer. He'll take the least, as a matter of fact, he takes the least likely. I love meeting people.

What seminary did you go to? School of Hard Knocks? Wait a minute, you didn't graduate from the upper echelons of a university with a PhD in divinity? I know I don't have a master's degree, but I have a degree from the master. Can we, is, now, hold on, hold on. Big disclaimer, the master degree is in here and the

PhDs, if you can do it, do it.

I'm not against it. I'm just saying we have to be careful by how we measure success. And what we are counting on, that's incredible.

This lady chose worship over work. Guys, the more I seek Him, the more I find Him. The more you find Him, the more you'll seek Him.

There's a hunger. Oftentimes, you're not hungry for God. That's why repentance is so important.

Do you ever hear that word? If you just listen to radio or TV nowadays, you don't hear that word very much. Repentance is a beautiful thing. It means changing the way I'm going and realigning with God's word.

And that repentance can open the door. A lot of times, it's pressing in, pressing in, pressing in, even when you don't feel like it. We just, Amazon Prime, just you can put in my name and just put fasting movie.

Amazon Prime just picked up a 40-day documentary on fasting we did. I went on a 40-day fast and I didn't like it. But the fruit that follows is amazing.

I wanted to quit so many times. Say, Lord, sustain me, get me through this and through that broken dependent relationship, that you come out better on the other side. And then closing up here, verses 10 through 11, and then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the 12, went to the chief priest in order to betray him.

And when they heard it, they were glad. These religious leaders were glad and they promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

I mean, my heart breaks every time I think of this story with Judas. But I'm also reminded, people will let you down. Have you ever been let down? Church ever hurt you? I just confessed to my congregation a couple weeks ago, you know what, I would have left this church about 100 times in the last 12 years because I got hurt.

Now, sometimes I'm causing the hurt, right? But see, working through it and coming out better and stronger as a family, that is the key. People will always hurt you and I always say, look to Christ, don't look to me. Look to the cross, look to Christ.

Let him actually, there's a wonderful, blessing from brokenness. When I take my pain to the cross and I look to Jesus, he begins to fill me and rebuild me and shape me. And there goes animosity and bitterness and pride and anger.

It begins, the Holy Spirit begins to remove those things and you come out of the furnace of affliction, refined as gold because God has worked deep in your heart. Let pain turn into a pursuit of God. Now, Judas Iscariot, that's a whole, I mean, we could talk for a while, people are confused about it, but here's all you need to know.

Judas had a religion, not a relationship. He had formality, not intimacy, and he had form, but no fire. Our churches are filled with people who have religion, but no relationship.

You know what, religion is going through the motions. I have to do this, I have to check this off and I went to church once a month and I'm doing these things. Relationship is God coming down, not man going up.

Coming down, having his son die upon that cross, a gruesome death to pay for the sin, our sin. And Judas did not have that relationship. And so the point I got to at the beginning, they were waiting probably 1300 years or so, depending on what you read from the actual Passover that happened in Egypt, where the children of Israel were free, to now here is the Passover lamb.

Is this amazing or what? Jesus is getting ready to be crucified. This is the Passover lamb for 1300 years. The blood of bulls and goats, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.

This temporary covering, temporary covering, temporary covering. The high priest would go into the holies of holies once a year to make atonement for the people. Now here comes on the scene, here comes the Passover, here comes the crucifixion.

They've been waiting 1300 years, have accommodated here and he comes and he's going through and you're gonna read next week, the garden of Gethsemane, where he just cries out, God, if there's any other way, oh father, if there's any other way, take this cup from me. I can almost say God saying, son, there's no other way. There's no other way.

One of the scriptures we can put up, Exodus 12, 23. What I talked about earlier, for the Lord will pass over and strike the Egyptians. And when he sees the blood, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your house.

And then you cross reference with 1 Corinthians 5, 7, for Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. Listen guys, this is key. When he saw that the blood was on it and the application is today, does God see that the blood of Christ is upon your life through repentance? Not going through the motions, but listen, I've applied the blood of Christ.

I have repented. It's a defining life changing moment where you go from death to life, light to darkness to light. And I remember, I just read it Friday.

I wanna share it with you and then I'll be done. Charles Spurgeon, most of us heard of that name. He was on his way to church.

Snowstorm stopped him. He had to turn into a different little Methodist, primitive Methodist church. 15 people were there and it was, I think one of the deacons who could barely give a message.

And he's reading from the prophets and he came across that verse, look and be saved, look and be saved. And he looked at Spurgeon and said, young man, look and be saved. You see, there has to come a point in your life when you put the blood on it.

When you say, I repent of my sin and I embrace Christ as Lord and Savior. I bow my knee to Jesus Christ. And so I don't know where you're at this morning, but I wanna just challenge two groups of people.

Number one, maybe you have religion, but no relationship. You've been going through the motions. Listen, I might never talk to you again, ever.

This is so important of a topic. Look in your heart and say, do I have that relationship? You do not wanna live your life with a question mark here like I did in my twenties. You do not wanna live your life with a question mark here.

And also wanna just encourage those Christians who the fire has faded. Anybody been there? I've been there before. I can relate when the fire fades, when the intimacy is gone.

That's why one of the churches, Jesus says, I see all these things, but one thing, you have sound doctrine. You can properly divide the word. Oh, you're very good at pointing out sin, but you have left your first love.

You've got to return to that first love. You've got to return to that intimacy. Remember when Christ was so special? The prayer time was incredible.

The worship came alive and your heart was engaged. And there's not a big checklist. All you have to do is repent.

Listen, in my twenties, I used to sit in that very back row. I would come in when worship was almost over, hope he would hurry up and get through this message so I could get out of here and get drunk. But if I knew then what I know now, I would have ran to this altar.

I wasted a lot of years in my life pursuing the wrong things. And in God's grace and mercy, he brought me home. It's grace that's brought me here thus far and it'll be grace that takes me home.

Do not let this moment escape you because here's what happens. You want it. You feel there's a desire.

I need to go forward. I need to get prayer. The enemy begins planting seeds.

Do it later. You can do that at home. And you don't give up those habits and those things that begin to draw you away and you fall back in to that lifestyle.

Not necessarily you're bad, just busy. Too busy for God. That should be a sermon title.

God forbid. Listen, this is a time to humble ourselves. Do you know I sometimes as a pastor come up for prayer? I go to the altar.

I kneel at the altar and say, God, I need you. My marriage needs you. Would you pray for my children? Would you pray for my kids? Lord, are we.

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