

Hope for the Prodigal

by Shane Idleman

The sermon offers hope for those who have drifted from God, emphasizing the importance of fear of the Lord and parental influence in spiritual development.

Duration: 57:50

Scripture: Luke 15:11

Topics: "Repentance And Restoration", "Gods Compassion"

Description

This sermon is a personal testimony focusing on the journey of the speaker, highlighting the struggles, brokenness, and redirection by God in his life. It emphasizes the importance of repentance, humility, and surrender to God, showcasing the hope found in returning to Him. The speaker shares about the prodigal son story, urging individuals to come home to God and experience His compassion and restoration.

Transcript

What many of you are aware of and why I'm speaking today is on this whole area of my testimony. And I titled the message, Hope for the Prodigal. Hope for the prodigal son.

Hope for the wayward daughter. Hope for those who have drifted from God. And it was challenging.

If you could see my notes, I would probably redo this sermon. Because there's lines, there's squiggle marks, there's this, and a two hour testimony turned into 30 minutes, and then I wanted to add this and I don't need to talk about this. And what I also want to do though is not just talk about shame, but what God has done in my life and pull in Scripture references and get back to why we're here.

The God's Word and how it applied to my life. But at the same time, I want to give people a better understanding of who I am and where we came from with our church, with the churches considering the churches coming together and who exactly am I? And how has God worked in my life? And I want to just define first the definition of a prodigal. If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 15.

That's a wonderful passage. Luke 15.11. I'm actually going to read it. But a definition given by Clovis Chapel really sums up what a prodigal is.

It says this, whenever you make up your mind to refuse to go where God wants you to go and to do what God wants you to do, you must make up your mind at the same time to renounce the friendship of God. You cannot walk with Him and at the same time be in rebellion against Him. It is mockery to say, Lord,

Lord, and then refuse to do the things that He has commanded you to do.

Isn't that true? A good definition of a prodigal is knowing what's right and then turning from what is right. And as I was putting this together, it dawned on me that the church in America is in a prodigal state. Our nation is in a prodigal state.

Haven't we not wandered from the truth? And I don't mean to offend, but when you can have Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton running for the highest office in our nation, and then have Lady Gaga do the national anthem, we are in an interesting place where we've drifted from God's truth. We've drifted from what it was built on. We've drifted from the fear of the Lord and preaching the righteousness in our pulpits again.

I was reminded also, actually this morning, I saw a quote that I forgot all about. And it's a very interesting quote. For some reason, it goes deep into my spirit, and I feel that there's hope for this nation sometimes when I read quotes like this.

I can't pronounce his name, so I'm not going to attempt to do it, but he wrote a book called Democracy in America. He was a Frenchman in the 1800s. It's not really found in any of his work, so it's hard to point where the quote came from.

But he actually set out to find out why America was so great, even in the 1800s. Why this huge military, this force to be reckoned with. And he said that he sought for America's greatness across her fertile prairies and her boundless fields, and it was not there.

He sought for greatness in her shorelines and in her gold mines, and it wasn't there. He said, it was not until I went to the churches of America and I heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness that I understood why America was great. And if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.

And that's a powerful truth that when God's pulpits were aflame with righteousness, not anger, with God's holy righteousness, that you could actually turn that nation, turn that people back to God. And God would bring revival. He would bring awakening.

I can take you to the first great awakenings in the 1700s with people like George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards. And one of the sermons that sparked revival was titled Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. And it was okay to proclaim God's truth and get people to turn back to Him.

And that's really where my heart is and a passion for returning back to Him. There's nothing wrong with that. That's our hope.

Our hope is God's truth, a healthy fear of the Lord. And that's another thing we don't want to mention much. Fear of the Lord.

But the Bible says it's the beginning of wisdom. It's the beginning of knowledge. It's the beginning of understanding.

The fear of the Lord is very healthy. So with that said, let me read Luke 15, 11. Then he said, a certain man had two sons and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.

And so he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together. He journeyed to a far country and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

That's where we get the word prodigal child. What's happened? The son is due to get his inheritance. Probably later on in his life, he asked for it now.

He took everything he had and what would be compared today, your dad gives you 500,000 and you say thank you, I'm moving to Las Vegas. And that's basically what is going on here. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in the land and he began to be in want.

And then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into the fields to feed the swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate. And no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself, that's a very important part of this text. But when he came to himself, there has to come a point in every prodigal's life where they come to themselves. They realize that they are going in a wrong direction.

They basically repent in their heart and they say, God, I've drifted from You. They come to their self. They come to the realization that they are far from God.

And he said, how many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare? And I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before You. That's a very healthy thing to do.

That's how you get back on track with God. I have sinned against heaven and before You and I am no longer worthy to be called Your son. Make me like one of Your hired servants.

And he arose and he came to his father, but when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him. And he ran and he fell on his neck and he kissed him. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Your sight.

And I am no longer worthy to be called Your son. But the father said to his servants, bring out the best robe and put it on him and put on a ring. A ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

And bring the fatted calf here and kill it and let us eat and be merry. For my son who was dead is alive again and he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry.

And that's a prodigal son story. We often see this vision of God that yeah, you go be my servant. You miserable person who did this.

But we see a loving father here actually waiting for his son to come home and waiting for that repentance to take place. So that's the introduction. That's the theme.

That's the foundation on which I want to briefly just talk about my life, my testimony. And I have to break it up into the year. So I want to first talk about the years just being born and up to 12 years old.

Many of you know, a lot of you know that I was born here in Lancaster, California. 1969, back when there was almond orchards at the bottom of Goat Hill. And Rancho Vista was a desert area.

Did a lot of dove hunting in Rancho Vista. And we had one first stoplight was on K and 15th by the freeway. And growing up in this area.

My dad was very instrumental in working and building Quartz Hill Little League Field. And it's named after us. Half of the name there.

And in the 50s, 60s, I believe, and building the other field in the 80s. And just playing baseball. That was my passion.

We had a batting machine before anybody had batting machines and nets. And my dad would really just emphasize that many times. And as I've shared before, I came from a hard home, as far as from my dad's side, angry a lot.

He was from the farms of Oklahoma. And if you know anybody on the farms, it's a hard life. And it was a hard walking on eggshells kind of childhood.

You didn't know if it was gonna be anger or joy. And so I have compassion for people that have to deal with that. So obviously after much practice, I did very well in baseball.

And they brought out the gauge of miles per hour. And I was throwing in the mid and low 60s in Little League. And just everybody was, oh, he's gonna play professional or college or something.

But then this happened. Arm surgery. I had elbow chips that were floating around, a lot of pain I couldn't throw anymore when I was 12.

And I still can't straighten my arm all the way because of it. And went down to surgery. And when you lose a year of athletic ability at that age, there's no catching up, really.

So I never really caught up. It was humbling. It was humiliating, for sure.

One to 12 was hard because of my dad and pressuring us and getting this injury and gaining weight from it. And that, I think, what started an early childhood problem with gaining weight and fighting that and being in crutches and different things as I got older in my teen years. But I wanted to just stop on this point and remind the parents that these are the formative years.

Formative means having a profound and lasting impact and having influence on a person's development. So during, those who are blessed with little children, between zero and 12, even sooner, they say zero to six or seven, you are actually forming that child. In many ways, how they'll think, how they'll act, how they'll treat their father, how they'll treat their mother, how they'll treat God, how they'll look at God.

These are very important years. And the Bible says in Proverbs 22, six, to train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he is old, he will not depart from it.

In Ephesians 6, four, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. That we're provoked there is like you would take, well, you know up here, you see rattlesnakes sometimes, and you take a shovel, and you just keep, what's gonna happen? You're provoking that snake. You're provoking that trouble.

And many times, Scripture warns the father, train up the children. Father, teach your children this way. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, because the father, as God designed it, is designed to

lead the home.

But all too often, it's the women who encourage Bible study, it's the women who encourage church attendance, while men are sitting on the sidelines and watching the game. And God calls the men to lead and lead their families. That's why I often tell men, stop the silly video games.

Get off Facebook and kill your porn habit. Start leading your family and dying for your children and raising them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We're the reason the country's in the moral collapse it's in.

Oh, that gets people upset, but it's the truth. The spiritual health of the nation is the direct result of the spiritual health of the family. And it falls directly upon our shoulders.

But instead of repenting, we blame everything from God to the government. That's our excuse. That's our way out.

And men need to be challenged. They need to be hit with a right punch and a left one. Because that's when we wake up.

That's when men, when they're confronted with the truth that we are not leading our families the way we should, that we need to wake up, that we need to repent, that we need to spend time on this altar, and we need to weep and we need to cry before God so we can go home and lead our families. That doesn't happen much anymore. They're hooked to everything but God and leading their families.

But there's hope in that because God can rebuild your family. He can rebuild your life. These types of messages aren't meant to leave you in a negative state.

They're meant to awaken so that change takes place. So the hope there, hope for the prodigal. At this age, I'm really offering hope to the parents that you can reestablish that connection.

And as parents, you need to remember and remind your children what God did for you. You were blind and lame and He opened your eyes. He cleansed you from your sins.

He redeemed you. He paid the price for you. Let your children know that.

See, it's interesting. They should want to desire the Christ they see in us. What I talked about last Sunday.

They should desire the Christ they see in us. Does our character push them away from Christ or closer to Him? There's not a middle ground there. And then once I got up into the teen years, year 13 to 17, my teenage years, it's interesting, I want to side note.

I go back and forth on this often, but I believe, and then sometimes I'll say I'm not sure. But at 12 years old, I went to a Christian camp and was mightily impacted by God. I believe repented, filled with His Spirit.

And then I often wonder, where did that go when I got back and drifted? And that's why I believe I was in that prodigal state because even though I had that relationship with the Lord, I drifted from Him. And I believe that's why I was convicted about the sin I was in for so many years is because of what God began to do in my heart at a young age at 12. And then high school, obviously I went into high school.

Believe it or not, I went to Periclete High School, Catholic High School. And now when a lot of my friends find out I'm a Protestant pastor, they kind of don't appreciate that because once you're Catholic, you stay

Catholic. And that would be a whole other sermon if you're interested on the difference there.

But the short definition is Protestant comes from the word protest. And you have men like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland, John Calvin in Geneva, John Knox in Scotland. And they were taking the people back to the Word of God.

They were not saying that the papacy is in control, that the Pope is the final authority. They were putting Christ back on the throne. They were putting the inerrancy in the Word of God back in its rightful place.

That is all you need for church doctrine and conduct. And there's not something underneath that that changes that. And they would bring this back to the people.

So they protested the church, Protestantism, and that's where it grew, and that's where the flames of the fire of the Reformation actually sparked revival. Because anytime you get the church back to the Word of God and away from man-made authority, you're in a very good spot. So once I became a pastor, now going to the school reunions is definitely funny, but they're not real open, because once you're caught in that, well, I'll be careful there, because some people listen to this, to my testimonies too.

Let's just say this, do your research. Do your research, and you'll see that Mary worship and indulgence and confessional and all those things and a priest is not biblical. It's just not, there's no scriptural support for any of that, and I would carry that to my grave, looking at the Bible.

High school was very difficult. If any of you have had a learning disability, like dyslexia, or things where, I mean, I couldn't get through geometry, I couldn't get through hardly anything. Even reading that prodigal son story was difficult.

I had to focus on every word and make sure in numbers, remembering numbers, it's very hard. So I almost had to cheat my way through. And graduate high school with a 1.8, pretty good, right? Didn't get through, didn't make it much through college, and people, don't tell people that.

We want kids to go to college. Yes, get an education, yes. Increase your knowledge as much as you can.

But God used those years of humiliating me and that brokenness, and it's funny, because people often will, barely graduate high school, how can you be pastoring? Well, you have to remember that I'd rather have a degree from the master than a master's degree. There's a big difference. Now, am I minimizing any of that? Of course not.

I think it's very important. But sometimes we get so focused on the degree and not what God is doing in the heart that we forget really who puts us up here. It's not the PhD on the business card, it's God saying, I've called you.

I've anointed you to be a voice for my people. I've put my spirit upon you. That's when God calls a person.

This also was a time that, because high school was very difficult, didn't fit in, gained some weight. I remember that I still have my yearbook, and I'm on crutches, and underneath it says stuffed pig. It's like, why would you do that to a kid? Now you see why I've got all this emotional pain, right? No, I've got through that, because now when I go to the reunions, everybody else is out of shape, and you can just throw that in there for no good reason.

So high school is when I was introduced to everything from alcohol, to crystal meth, to cocaine, to the party lifestyle. You could get away from my house, my parents. I think, Rita, you're here.

You live right down the street from us during those years. And that was very difficult, because I should have died numerous times, just rolling vehicles, not knowing how I got home. I remember I went to Vegas with a drug dealer who was, and I was 17, I didn't come home for two days, and didn't sleep, and just, I don't even know how I got home.

I didn't know where, just this whole life. But the reason drugs and alcohol are so prevalent is because there's so much brokenness in the home. And that's our outlet.

Now the big thing is heroin, and injecting heroin and different things. And as I moved out of high school, and I started to get into the gym industry, and working out, and that's when steroids was introduced to me. And here, take these little blue pills and white pills.

And then, wow, now I can, I'm getting bigger, I'm getting stronger. And then they started introducing the testosterone. They've called it testosterone cypionate, propionate, suspension, all these different testosterones that aren't good, because you already produce testosterone.

So you don't wanna, that's why men are more aggressive. That's why men are more upset. And that's why they lose their hair often, is because of the receptor sites and testosterone, how it binds to those.

And that's a whole nother thing. But I would actually start taking shots. You can get right in the glute in a 21-inch gauge needle, doesn't hurt too bad.

And you start, and just this, so I see this body just dying. I mean, everybody thought it was great physically, right? You're bench pressing 400 pounds, you can beat up everybody. And just, but they call it roid rage for a reason.

You're out of control. And so this is that season that this happened. And I would actually, it struck me, because last night, the message last night was, save me from myself.

And if you go online, we should have it on our website pretty soon. Save me from myself. And I was reminded, and I was talking about the story of where God throws this huge banquet.

And He invites all the guests, come, come to this banquet, come to the wedding feast. And people say, no, we don't wanna go. They just made light of it.

They made light of eternity. And that's what happens through our younger years. Often, people, teenagers in high school, or even in my younger years, I made light of the invitation of the gospel.

And that's what our culture does. Every Saturday night live skit that makes mockery of the Christianity, every Hollywood play, every movie, everything that makes light of the gospel will someday stand before God and they will be silenced. And we can't make mockery, we can't take lightly these things that have eternal value.

I mean, think about that. Right now, when we fear something, we say, oh God, help me. But what do you do when you stand before Almighty God and there's fear and trepidation unlike anything you've felt before? Who do you call on then? You've just rejected Him all of your life.

There's nobody to call on. It's too late. That's why they call it the judgment seat, the great white throne judgment where all of our life will be bare before God and everything we mocked, everything we ridiculed.

These guys on late night TV, they mock Christians. This is some weak, limp-wristed, this person, this person. Look how they treat.

And they just mock what God has done. And that's not biblical. So the point I can take away from my teen years is this.

The hope is this. Don't delay, get your heart right today. I didn't mean for that to rhyme, but it did.

Don't delay. And that's why I tell young adults all the time, don't delay, get your heart right today. Don't delay.

There's no, we always say, oh, there's no for sure tomorrow. And oh yeah, that's true. And you might die in a car accident.

Oh yeah, that's true. But that's the truth. There's no reason a person should delay.

And I opened up, I think, a few weeks ago here. A couple years ago, we had two young adults die of a heroin overdose. And another young mom who OD'd on pain meds in a hotel on Sierra Highway.

And we had to go there and grab her three-year-old out of the room and have her three-year-old playing in the grass while the mom lays dead waiting for the coroner. And I'm sitting here going, we are playing with life and death, heaven and hell. This is reality.

There's no delay. There's no delay. Whenever you can turn your heart back to God, you should.

It's by the sheer grace of God that a person is allowed to continue in their sin and mock God, that's His sheer grace. That's His loving grace to allow a person to continue to do that. So there's always an urgency in my preaching if you haven't figured that out yet.

There's always an urgency. Always an urgency. And I remember reading D.L. Moody's biography.

It said that he preaches in this auditorium and he didn't give a message, an invitation for people to repent. And that night, the Chicago fires took over and devastated and killed, I don't even know how many people, thousands of people. And he said, I will never, ever again not give an invitation for people to repent and believe in the gospel.

The urgency. I mean, if you think about it, there is no way in this room, no way in the world that I will speak to everybody in this room again. Some of you will not be here next week.

Some things will not happen. Now I see there's a lot of people on the balcony now. And you up there, I won't see you again as well.

There's an urgency there. Anytime we hear God convicting us and drawing us and wanting us to make changes, don't wait. Don't wait, because God doesn't say, oh, He's not gonna change, all right, forget it.

He'll keep pressing and convicting and orchestrating circumstances until it gets so bad, you're eating with the pigs. And then you'll come to yourself and turn to Him There's hope in that, though. Don't delay, get your heart right today.

And that's one of the things, if you do any studies on young adults nowadays, I don't know how they get, I compare it to when I was a young adult, I can't even imagine. The internet, the bullying, the sexual perversions that are out there. They're calling teen suicide an epidemic.

Why doesn't that break our hearts? I mean, that should break our hearts. I remember two years ago or so, I don't know exactly when it was, but there was a man up at the front. There was a whole group of people up at the front and he was just, he was weeping.

I was in the back. And this really woke me up to the fact of not judging people. You know, because sometimes, well, gee, I would never do that.

I mean, poor guy, what's wrong with him? And the guy, his friend who brought him said, hey, can you go pray with him? Said, sure, we're gonna do. And he said he found his son hanging in the garage and I couldn't pray with him. I just cried with him.

See, that's, folks, that's what we deal with. This is life. Where's the seriousness? Where's the heart of God to help save these kids? I couldn't even imagine that.

That wouldn't even cross my mind. How do you go and cut your son down? Lord, is this happening? Wake me up from this nightmare. But this is what's happening in the church.

In the church, and as young adults are feeding their mind with witchcraft and the occult and darkness and seances and the devil is going, yay, great, and they're filling their minds with all this darkness when we should be letting the light of the gospel penetrate their hearts and giving them hope. That's all they need to know. They need to know their love and appreciate it.

And here's the hope. Don't look at your friends who are bullying you. They are lost.

Get off Facebook. Get a healthy environment in your homes. But if you think of all the top movies and things that kids are watching, it has to do with witchcraft, vampires, the occult, and we wonder why.

Has anybody made a connection? I see a connection here. Vampires, the occult, witchcraft. I live loosey or a little house in the prairie.

What's going on? Because when you feed darkness, that's what's going to rain. And that's why they're cutting. They'll actually just take razors and cut their arms because it's self-humiliation.

They just feel so bad. Nobody loves me. When they don't realize that there's a God who died for them, why don't we tell them? Why don't we tell them the truth? Are we ashamed of the gospel? Listen, I can show you the hope.

Here's the hope. And then you pick one to mentor and you lead them in the right direction. And they want to prescribe everything from Xanax to this to that.

And here's what they need. No, they need to get their mind out of that filth and garbage and get their mind back into the word of God. That's where real change takes place.

And I get psychologists mad at me all the time. Well, no, there's predisposition. There's cognitive learning to behavioral patterns.

Well, the word of God changes and renews the mind. You are body, soul, and spirit. As a man thinketh, so is he in his heart.

What you put in here is what you're getting out. You actually can renew your mind and you can re-change your focus. You can give up addictions.

You can change bitterness. Everything by renewing your mind through the word of God. I mean, either we believe it's living and powerful as God says, or we don't.

And it does. It changes the mind. It refocuses us.

And then years 18 to 28. This is when I said, give me my inheritance. I'm spending it.

I'm living in righteous living. It's interesting, the Puritans used to say that the same sun that melts the wax will harden the clay. And the same word of God that should melt us sometimes hardens us.

And I would get harder and harder. Because my mom at this point was a praying woman. She was fasting.

She was praying for me. She put the Bible on top of my ACDC albums and Motley Crue and Metallica and all those. She just claimed the blood.

This is not allowed in my house. And she would just plead. And it actually got me harder and harder.

I didn't want anything to do with God. Let me have fun. Mom, don't pray for me.

Let me have fun tonight. I want to have fun. But then you wake up hungover and miserable not even knowing where you're at.

That's not fun. That's depression. And then you go through this cycle because the enemy keeps deceiving and deceiving.

So finally at age 18, got into construction right when I left high school. Learned to operate heavy equipment. My dad would seek me out in the desert and say, here, dig a hole for the next three hours.

And so I learned heavy equipment. I worked underground, trenching, miles of trenching, pipeline, utilities. And it's very hard work.

And I thank my dad for that because that kind of hard work can instill very hard work ethics. And that's one thing I'm concerned for with our kids growing up on this or this. There's no, I mean, give my son a shove.

He's like, what's this for? I mean, they would say, here's a shove on a digging bar. I'll be back at lunch with blisters. And you, I mean, you worked hard and you felt good about it.

You would go home exhausted. A day's hard work, that's what that meant. And so I was raised in that construction environment.

And then around 1990, I think it was 1990, well, whenever the economy collapsed. What was that, 1990? One or two, right in there. And that's where I was pretty much out of work.

And I went to college. It lasted about a month. And at the same, I just couldn't focus.

And really, I didn't have a passion for it. Now I read all the time because I have a passion for God's Word. But I started because I was working out.

I started working at 24 Hour Fitness in Lancaster in 1992. And took that work ethic in. And obviously, you can sell a lot of memberships when you look the part.

And just God used that time to propel me up into management very early. And then they gave me multiple clubs. Back then, it was called Family Fitness Centers.

And we were managing partners. And you were actually, you're a partner in the profit shareholding. So it was very good income.

The people above me were making 25, 30,000 a month. And that was our goal to retire at 40. And they paint this picture.

And then 24 Hour Fitness, many of you heard it, they came and they took over. And I stayed with that. But during this time, it was not satisfying.

I was still drinking. I was still arrogant. I was angry.

I was, money was my God. And in that time, I got married, 1994. I was married.

Both of us not walking with the Lord. It lasted about four years. And what happened was adultery and abandonment.

And God used that season in 1998 to bring the prodigal son home. So when I read that he was in want, this is the point where I cried out to God. And God used this time to redirect my entire life.

And throughout the next 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, those were the years that I just sought him. I fasted, I prayed. I even, I contended for my marriage back then.

I got, God changed my heart. And I was praying for three years. And this is an interesting topic because every, there's not a month that goes by.

Last week I got one. The email said I'm on my way to hell. I need to repent because I'm living in sexual sin.

Because Jesus said there's no grounds for adultery. And there's a group, I'm sorry, there's no grounds for remarriage. There's a group that believes, say John Piper, that remarriage is never allowed except when your spouse dies.

And then you have people like John MacArthur and others who see that in Jesus' statement there that whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality. In that word there's pornea. It's not actually adultery.

In the Greek it's pornea. It's any sexual activity that happens outside the context of marriage. And what I believe, what I teach, and what other men of God teach, and I know there's division here, but is that there is biblical grounds for divorce if adultery takes place.

And there's always hope too. I've just talked to a couple recently who just went through this and there's hope for building your marriage. That's ultimately what God does.

He hates divorce. He loves restoration. So people think ultimately that I'm for divorce.

I'm not for divorce. If you've read my books, if you've heard my sermons, I am for making it work and sticking it out. But I believe there's a provision when God says that a person cheats and cheats and cheats and they abandoned you, Paul would talk about in Corinthians, that a believer's not under bondage in such cases and they abandon that covenant relationship that there are biblical grounds to move forward.

Actually they're very slim biblical grounds. And I don't throw any of the responsibility off on the other party. I take full responsibility.

I was a jerk husband. It makes, I know exactly why this happened. Because when, happy wife, happy life, right? So if that's not the case, we weren't walking with the Lord, there's scriptural release there.

And that's what people don't understand. They think that you can't remarry ever again. But two things, God I believe during that season began to call me to the pastorate.

Because I don't know any single pastors. Maybe there are, but I don't know any single pastors. So God was calling me to the pastorate.

I used three years of praying and contending for my marriage. I felt a release because of adultery, abandonment, it was ongoing. And there was a complete release there scripturally speaking.

If you look at the scriptural course in that case. So it's hard to talk about this because you do walk around like you have a big D on your forehead. And people don't realize that divorce is devastating.

It's painful. And people haven't been through it, can't relate. And there is hope for the hurting.

With that said though, we are in a no fault divorce crisis. Everybody's leaving for this reason or that reason. So we are at Westside are big proponents of marriage and restoration.

God hates divorce, we know that. And when people email me and say, I'm going to hell, I need to repent. I said, brother, I repented for three years.

I sought God, I fasted, I'm convicted if I run a red light. I was not convicted to not move forward in my relationship. Well, the word of God says this.

Well, it also says that a person is released when sexual morality takes place. You can look at John MacArthur, Chuck Smith, wonderful Bible teachers believe that. So I just want to emphasize that so in case there's any confusion on what is going on in that area.

Led to divorce 1998. And that's what God used to redirect me. I confessed because the prodigal son state is very difficult.

The Bible says no one will strengthen himself who lives in iniquity. And hard is the way of the transgressor. So hope is found in returning to God.

The Bible says return to me and I will return to you. See, that's a promise you can take God to the bank on. When you return to him, he will return to you.

There's no question there. No question, no gray area at all. So God used this time.

He used this time in my life to redirect me back to him and I thank God for him doing that. But back to the prodigal son story. The sentence here, but when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in the land and he began to be in want.

Thank God for famines. Because that's when a person comes back to God. It's often during that famine time and that God begins to strip things away from them.

Then they come back to him. Listen, I didn't come here this morning to play patty cake with the devil. I came here to pull down those unfruitful works of darkness.

And the way you pull them down is by exposing them. He wants, sometimes he keeps people into that, that blessings and righteous living in that lucrative lifestyle so they don't turn to God. But we thank God for the famines, at least I do in my life.

And then what happened at 29 years old, from about 29 to current, I call it the coming home years. In 1999, repented, but it still took about a year because you still have all those old influences that are knocking at the door, wanting it. Well, no, no, I'm trying to serve God and I remember I'd have Christian music on and it was this time of finally severing everything and giving my heart to the Lord.

Once you do that, a big thing happens. All your desires, all your interests, all your, everything changes. So instead of country music television that would make me very depressed, I knew all the George Strait songs, right? Or about getting drunk and mama got out of prison and all those, and just fill my mind with this stuff.

It turned, I don't want to watch that anymore, I want to put on worship, I want to put on, I want to read the word of God and there was this fire and this hunger I couldn't contain. I just couldn't get through the Bible enough, I couldn't, that's when I started reading books on systematic theology and church history and pneumatology, which is a study of the Holy Spirit, and soteriology, which is a study of salvation and hermeneutics, how to study the Bible, homiletics, how to preach, all these things that people tease me because I don't have a degree, I actually went and read all the books that many people don't actually read. So, but God gave me that hunger, I was just getting through tons of books, tons of biographies and I love books on prayer and revival and bringing that old time religion back to the church, following those old paths again.

So in 1999, about 2000 is when all this started to take place, I eventually resigned from 24 hour fitness and gave my notice and that was very difficult because it went from a very good income to moving back in with my mom. And you know, at 30 years old, that's not fun. It's humiliating, I'm driving the new Dodge truck with the V10, I just built a custom home, I had to sell everything, move back with her is very humiliating.

I told you before, that's when I went and worked with my brother, digging up septic tanks, any type of construction work I could get, I was a laborer, hard work, here's \$100 for the day, I'm like, I would make that an hour. It's just, you know, working, it's just so much humiliating but I was reminded and I like what A.W. Tozer said, it is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply. It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has hurt him deeply.

Here's why, hurt and humility begins to remove all the self from our life. When you are so humbled, and people who've been there are going, amen, people aren't there saying, what's he talking about? Well, I

would just encourage you, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and in due time, he will exalt you because if you don't humble yourself, God will. And humiliating, I would walk out there and I'd be in these work clothes and they, what are you doing here working at my house? Don't you, what happened here? People asking me, humiliating, you went through a divorce, what happened? And just God was humiliating, so I would go back and I would just cry out to God and say, God, I don't know what's going on but you need to rebuild me, you need to restore me.

And from that time, in his word, he would give me a fire, unlike anything I felt before, there was this, I was actually giving fitness seminars during that time too. I'd speak on weight loss to groups like this and I would just feel this, where's this coming from? I just wanted to preach to the people and like, I can't do this, they're wanting me to talk about carbohydrates and exercise and they're losing weight and getting their body in shape and I'm just, repent! And I feel this desire coming up and I said, God, if this is you, you've gotta redirect me, you've gotta show me because I don't wanna keep doing this either. Now granted, I saw and I still see a huge parallel between our physical health and our spiritual health.

I think that we should try to take care of this wonderful gift that God has given us and not continue to treat it as garbage and fill it with a bunch of junk because the better you feel physically, the better you'll serve God physically as well. So I see tremendous parallels. I see people going through difficulty, anxiety, panic attacks, I'm like, well it might be the thousand milligrams of caffeine you're on or there's cancer and they're fighting the body and so you gotta stop McDonald's and Burger King every day.

These foods actually kill you. There's no nutritional life, there's nothing because it's interesting, God created to where the life of the food is to be deposited into the body. You eat an apple that's dying, you get the life.

You eat a banana that's dying, you get the life. The nuts, that's when people say, what do you eat? Anything that God created. God, because it brings life to the body.

You eat things that are designed in a factory where a McDonald's burger can look the same 10 years later, you're in trouble. It doesn't give anything to you so we wonder why we're dealing with diabetes. We wonder why childhood obesity's on the rise and that concerns me because that's the fault of the parent.

That's the fault of the parent. Well, what about genetics and predisposition? Oh sure, there's things working against you and me. If it were up to me, I'd weigh 300 pounds but you have to bring that body into subjection.

I think somebody by the name of Paul said that. I discipline my body daily and I bring it into subjection. To study that reference, he's talking about beating your body up.

I beat up my body black and blue, I bring it into subjection. Part of the Christian life that we forgot about is we tell the body no, it doesn't lead us. We tell the flesh no, that's part of fasting is you kill the flesh, you crucify it but we're led around by the flesh.

Oh, I get up in the morning, I want a donut and a coffee, better go get it. I'm led by the flesh, I want to sit down and relax. I'm led by the flesh, I want to go eat and we're just led by the flesh all day long but the Christian life is one where we bring the flesh into submission so that's where God put that desire on my heart to start preaching right then and I worked on it in my first book, What Works When Diets Don't and it was interesting, I met with a publisher in 2001 or two, I think it was and they wanted to take it and I said,

no, I'll just want to do it myself, I'm not really into fitness and the next book they took that year was The Maker's Diet and as many of you know now, it's national bestseller, millions of copies.

I actually met the author last week when he was in town and told him, hey, you can thank me for turning down my manuscript and they chose yours and people ask, do you regret that? Not at all, I don't want to be the guy on TBN selling vitamins. I'm glad that God's called me to do this but God began to put that desire to right so I wrote a book on what works for young adults, men's book, a relationship book, One Nation Above God that shows where our nation was and where we're going now, the latest book is Desperate for More of God and I don't promote those things at all, it's things that God has put on my heart, I don't know why. I mean, the last person who should be writing a book is a person who barely graduated high school who needs his mom to edit everything but God says the foolishness to confound the wise because then when I get up here and when the books do well, I say, but God, well, how do you do, but God, He's done everything because through that brokenness and humility and that dependent relationship, we begin to rely on Him, it's all His work and that's what happened during those years and then obviously, I met Morgan in 2001, I would encourage you to meet her on your way out, what a wonderful wife that God has blessed me with, I'm so thankful and it's hard to try to be the husband that she needs because I don't feel I measure up often because of that brokenness in my family, we've talked about that before, the fractured relationship with my father, not knowing how to be a father, not knowing how to lead a family and God brought that together, we have four kids that we're just so thankful for and then in 2010, after much confirmation and running from a call to plant the church, no, there's no way because I pictured pastors as wearing glasses and smiling all the time and just these nice, oh, let's turn to here and what do we have and I wasn't that type of preacher, I would travel and I would preach and people would be saved into the altar and this fire I feel in my, I didn't think that was a pastor, I thought that was more of a preacher and so I was wrestling with God about this and I don't wanna do it, I don't wanna do it, I kept ignoring it and then finally, I think it was, I don't know when it was, she took the kids on a three hour drive and took me all three hours right to the end to finally say, okay Lord, if you're doing this, if you wanna plant a church, I will, I just couldn't get it out.

It was like, because once you tell God that, you're, you just redirected your destiny and your career and everything and I said, I will do it, okay, I will do it. End of story, told my wife, she goes, okay, well, we'll see and we tried a few buildings and nothing was available and said, okay, well, I tried it and went to lunch with the pastor of the current church we're renting out on Saturdays and he said, hey, just use our building free on Saturday nights. Man, how do you, how do you say no to that? But then I would tell people like, Saturday nights, nobody starts a church on Saturday nights.

Are you Seventh Day Adventist? No, it's an open building, but nobody church, saying nobody starts a church on, I've never even heard of that. I haven't either, but God. So we start with 10 people and God just grows it, we're two services now and God grows the church and the most miraculous thing I think he has ever done is he took this, I listen to myself on the radio and sometimes I just turn it off because I, it's like, I don't, it's hard to listen to myself because I see the insecurities, I see the messing up and I see, I said tonight instead of this morning, but God's used that to where the radio reaches tens of thousands of people each week and the internet, we hear from people from Australia to Uganda to Africa to Switzerland, Canada, emails all the time of people being transformed by his word.

So we just look at all that and say, God, I can't believe that you're doing this and that's what I meant by that state of humility and brokenness and people say, oh, so you're humble? I say, no, I'll tell you right now, I am a prideful man, working on humility by the grace of God, quoting a man by the name of C.J.

Mahaney. That's a true story, every man should say that. I am a prideful man, working on humility on a daily basis because nobody's a humble person because pride wants to come back up and take us down.

So we planted the church, we've looked for buildings in Lancaster, but God's closed those doors and then fast forward to now where we're here, talking with Leona Valley and just praying about what God has for us. We're fully content on whatever his will is and at first, like I shared before, the first few weeks this idea came up, I was fighting it because I never thought, I never even pictured this, I pictured buildings in Lancaster, I have a background in real estate too, I should have added that. God put me into real estate for a while after 24 Hour Fitness and before, kind of planning the church and that happened at the same time and so I was looking for buildings and then this kind of opened up, opportunity wise, for both churches to benefit and the first two weeks, I'm like, that doesn't make any sense.

But then I told my wife, well if God's in it, if he's doing this, then I just need to step out of the way because I do not want to be fighting against God and he will direct one way or the other. So that really calmed my heart. I saw that God could be doing something like this.

I saw Pastor Steve put his house up for sale, it sold really quickly, he was able to move and you see, so I'm watching all these pieces on how God works and the response and the growth and the people, I mean, really how you gauge God's will, the biggest way for me is God being honored. Are people being saved and are the captives being set free? Are people on fire for God? Is the church raising up the next generation of leaders? That screams God. That has God written all over it.

So we look for these kind of things. So that's where we are here. So that's 46 years in 30 minutes.

And that's kind of my story in a nutshell. Of course, there's bits and pieces, I'd be happy to answer any questions. People do have questions on the marriage and remarriage, I'd be happy to answer.

I've written about it in my books, it's in my articles. Oh, I also write for the Christian Post each week, Charisma News, a lot of the major news organizations pick up the articles that are in your bulletin. So God's given us a national platform, West Side, in that area.

Again, it's God, I'm not trying to build a large ministry. Ask my wife, she'll tell you, I don't like it. I just, I don't like the limelight, I don't like to go into Trader Joe's and know everybody everywhere I go.

But I just, I like that, I like to go up in the high Sierras and go camping and hiking and fly fishing and just to kind of get away. But I feel that, I see that also God has given us this ability to help lead a church with West Side Christian Fellowship. And it's a blessing.

I'm just sharing some of my personal struggles. I'm not, you know, I'm not trying, I'm not a, like the word is, I'm more of an introvert. And my wife's an extrovert, and it's hard to find that balance.

But as a closing note, I wanted to just encourage you that hope is found in God's faithfulness. God is, hope is found in God's faithfulness. This is interesting, back to the prodigal son story, his father saw him and had compassion on him.

So as the prodigal son was coming home, it's this vision of the father waiting for his son. He had compassion on him, and he came and he embraced him. The father was waiting for the son to come home.

I think we forget about that with God. God's not like up in the universe doing something or hiding from us. He's actually waiting for the prodigal son to come home.

So if there's anybody in here that'll hear this or later on the radio or wherever, if you're in that state of that prodigal state, wondering God's gonna hate me, I've done too much damage. No, you haven't, all you have to do is come home. It's a loving father saying, come home.

Would you just come home? And the people say, no, I can't, I've done too much damage. I'm stupid, I've been beat up, I have no self-esteem. God, no, no, you need to realize something.

Somebody died for you. Somebody died for you. If you can get people to understand that God came down from eternity, took on the sinful human flesh in the form of a child and grew, born to die.

That baby was born to die for the sins of the world. That's why we call it imputed righteousness. It's a big theological term.

It just means that we take on the righteousness of Christ. So somebody who feels heartbroken and they're lost in drugs, they've lost their child to Department of Social Services and, Shane, I'm gone. No, you haven't.

All you have to do is cry out to God and let him restore you and rebuild you and come home. That's the message of the prodigal. Come home.

Come home. And that's what I would just wanna leave you with. If you're in that prodigal state, come home.

But if you're a believer and you just need to be encouraged, let me encourage you. Allow brokenness and humility to run its course because there's too much pride in the church, folks. There's too much pride.

When people, people should not be arguing and fighting each other. They should be spirit-filled believers on fire for God. And I would just encourage you, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

And as I closed last night's message, I thought it might be relevant this morning too. I'm not gonna read the whole passage, but many of you know it's that story where a rich man dies and a poor man dies and the rich man is saying, I'm in torment. I'm in hell.

And the poor man was in Abraham's bosom and he was enjoying eternal security now with God. And the rich man was, it's so hot in this place. Can he just dip his finger and give me water? And he said, no, he can't.

What about going and warning my family? Can you tell my family not to come to this place? And Abraham said, they have Moses and the prophets. Let them minister to them. Let them convict them.

And the man said, no, but if you go back from the dead, and Abraham said, not even if a man raises from the dead, will they listen? And it just dawned on me, can you imagine being in this place of eternal torment and saying, oh my God, I misled my family this whole time. I've got children that are on the broad road to destruction or a mom sitting there. I've got children.

I brought new age philosophy into my home. I never talked about God. Oh God, please go back.

Please go back and warn my children. God, please. And it won't because the door's been shut.

That's why this has eternal consequences. Do you realize that Jesus Christ spoke more about hell than heaven? Jesus spoke more about hell than heaven. So why do we avoid it? Why don't we tell people there are eternal consequences.

You won't be able to stand before God and give a sales pitch. You won't be able to stand before God and say, well, what about this person? Don't let this person. No, this life we live, there is eternal consequences.

There's heaven, there's hell, there's good, there's bad, there's evil, and there's good. And we have to, we have to get our hearts right with God. And people say, Shane, you're scaring me.

And I want to say, no, I'm preparing you. It's okay to wake people up sometimes and say this is the end result. This is what's going to happen.

So I would just encourage you, like D.L. Moody, I don't want to not give the opportunity, but if you're here today, here in the balcony up there, if you don't know, if you don't know, I'm talking about really having a relationship with Jesus Christ. Because a lot of people in church say, oh, I know Jesus, he died on the cross, but they've never repented. And they've never confessed him as Savior and Lord.

And you have to do both. There's something, a big debate a while back called the Lordship Salvation, John MacArthur was, and people would say, well, you can have him as your Savior, but not your Lord. No, I don't read that anywhere.

If he's not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all. They would call him Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord. He's Savior because he saved me, and then as a result, he's Lord of my life.

And there's people in the church, there might be people here, you've never repented, you've never given your heart to the Lord. Don't wait until the day of judgment and say it's too late. You can do that this morning.

All you have to do, the Bible says, if you confess with your mouth that Christ is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Not you might be saved, not God will consider it, not he'll put you on a lottery like we said last week. You will be saved.

Because you're banking on a God that never lies. And I'm not gonna embarrass you or have you come up front or raise your hand, but you do have to, you have to be sincere. And you have to say, Lord, I repent.

God, I need you. And you know what, that's very healthy for the prodigal to say as well. If you're in a prodigal state, if you've drifted from God, all you have to say is, God, I'm sorry.

I repent. Can I come home? I've never ever heard him say no. I never.

This is a loving father who's waiting. Actually, he's waiting for you more than you're waiting for him. Think about that.

The Bible says, if you seek me, you will find me. Who does that rest on? The person. God's not hiding.

If there's distance, it's not God, it's the person. God says, if you seek me, you will find me. If you do this, you will do that.

If, if, if, if, it's all conditional. If my people who are called by my name, right? One of my favorite verses, if you haven't figured that out. If my people who are called by my name, because that's a formula for revival.

Anytime that somebody wants to fix their marriage, they wanna be revived again with the passion of God, that's a wonderful verse. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and don't forget about number four, turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will heal their land. I wish I could put that all over Christian television.

Go on CNN, Fox News. Who are you voting for, God? A return to him? And I would just encourage you, no matter where you're at, that you just, you just turn to him afresh. What I mean by that is we have to be continually filled with the spirit.

It's a daily, a daily area of surrender. The more you surrender, the more he fills you. The more you surrender, the more he fills you.

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