

I Might Follow Him

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman challenges the church to embrace the true cost of discipleship, emphasizing the need for radical commitment and sacrifice in following Christ.

Duration: 50:06

Scripture: Deuteronomy 30:19, Matthew 16:24, John 13:34-35, Hebrews 3:15, Revelation 2:4-5

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

The sermon emphasizes the importance of true discipleship, challenging believers to die to self, carry their cross, and follow Christ unconditionally. It highlights the need for a baptism of love, urging individuals to return to their first love for God and to prioritize loving one another. The speaker addresses the dangers of drifting from God's love, the perils of hypocrisy versus struggling in faith, and the critical choice between the way of life and the way of death.

Transcript

The title of it is, I might follow Him. I might follow Him. You say, Shane, what do you mean by that? Well, this is going to be the cost that many will not pay.

What I'm talking about tonight is a very serious issue. It can change your life. It can radically change your life.

But it's not the cost that many cannot pay. It's the price that many will not pay. And I know already up front that many of you will hear this tonight, and nothing will change.

Nothing will change. So you're not fooling me, and you're not fooling God. But for those who want to change, those who are tired of the mediocrity, are tired of this being distant from God and this lukewarm lifestyle, I want to challenge you tonight to think about this issue.

And what I'm talking about, in a nutshell, is discipleship. Is it not? Following Christ is about discipleship. We're following Christ.

And what happens is Christ says, come and follow me. Die to yourself. Carry your cross.

But the American church says, live it up. Jesus is going to bless you. Everything's going to go well.

Christ says, no, no, no, no, no. That's not the case. Come and follow me.

But we hear the opposite. And so what happens? When things don't go very well, it's Christ's fault. I didn't sign up for this, Shane.

I didn't sign up for this. But he's up front here. He says, come and die to self.

Die to yourself. Follow me. Pick up your cross and follow me.

And if we would paint the correct picture of Jesus, it wouldn't be difficult. Because as sinners, here we go, I'm going to get upset. I'm going to get people upset again.

But as sinners, it's OK to say that word. We're all sinners in this room. Nobody's being fooled here.

We're under the wrath and condemnation of God. I don't like that. Well, it doesn't mean it's not true still.

But God. But he said, but I sent my son. Listen, we all know the story, right? But it goes in one ear and out the next.

So if God came and he died for me, and I can't follow him? Unconditionally? I can't pick up my cross and follow him? Die to self? So what happens is you'll hear many pulpits saying the opposite of what I'm saying. They'll come up, and it's God just cheerleading all the time. And there's no dying to self and following Christ.

There's no crucifixion to the world. And what the Bible talks about, being genuine discipleship, is difficult to hear. But it must be said.

And I believe this will help this topic. Do any of you want to know God's will for your life? Man, I don't know if I should do this, if I should do that. Should I marry this person? Should I not marry this person? Should I go here? Should I move? Should I buy? Should I sell? What should I do? Knowing God's will, a lot of times, is all about choices.

We make certain choices. And when a person is sold out for Christ, and let me put a big disclaimer in there, I've never mastered this yet, and I'm not going to master it. I'm not talking about perfection.

I'm talking about faithfulness. So in this area, we'll never follow Him unconditionally, fully surrender, everything's on high alert, 100% perfectly. But we can be very faithful to that calling.

And God's will, God says, come, die to yourself, follow me, let me guide you, let me be your anchor, let me sustain you. But we say, no, no, no, I got to build this, and I got to do this, and I want the trophy wife, and I need this car and this house, and Jesus, I want you when it's time to go to heaven, but I don't want you right now. So we wonder why we're confused about life.

When you're following Christ, you're saying, I don't care if this happens or that, well, I care, but if this happens or that happens or what, I'm following Him. So I might lose my job next week, but He's still my anchor. I might lose my 401k, but He's still my anchor.

And many people, as we're following Christ, once you begin to serve others and follow Him, God's will begins to just flow, because you're walking in the wills and ways of God. If not, there's competing forces. The Bible says, love not the things of the world, for all that's in the world, the lust of flesh, the lust of the

eye, the pride of life, is not of the Father, it's of the world.

So if we're loving these things, and we're not able to follow Christ, we don't have the love of the Father in us. It's gonna be very hard to determine God's will. This is why many people are frustrated, because you'll never keep up with the Joneses.

Nobody's ever caught up. Just one dollar more, just one this, and in America, our blessing has become our curse. God has blessed us so that we can bless others.

What happens when He blesses us, we have abundance, we just hold on to it. I'm not gonna let it go. And that's really what this thing about discipleship is.

It's very difficult. How blessed we are in this nation, but how have we become so unthankful? How have we become so cynical and so judgmental? In a nation that is blessed of God, our abundance, do you realize all of you, even if you don't have a job, you would be considered almost a millionaire in third world countries? I don't have a car, I don't have a job. You've got clothes on your back, you're sitting in this facility, you're gonna eat a hot meal tonight.

You've got a lot more than most people have. So this cost of following Christ is gonna be difficult, but it must be heard, and we need to sometimes wake up the church. You've heard me say that you cannot awaken the sleeping church with bedtime stories.

The church needs to be awakened, and you can't, lay me down to sleep, rock-a-bye baby in the tree. And they're not awakened. That's why I put my baby to sleep, not the church.

So sometimes we need to be rattled. Our cage needs to be shook. Our world needs to be rocked so we can say, Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I? And this realization hit me hard this week.

On Thursday, some of you saw the Christian Post. They picked up the article that I wrote. It's in your bulletins.

It's entitled, In an Indictment Against America, God Help Us. And they picked it up, but then above that is the Christian pastor in Iran, Saeed. Who's been beat.

They chained him down. They wouldn't allow hospital care. He's suffering for the very thing I'm preaching.

I can proclaim it. He's suffering for it. Look at the parallels there.

You saw the recent news clip. I think we have it up here of North Korea, what's happening there. And this guy who thinks he's God, he's gonna have to answer to God someday.

He's not God, but they think he's God in that country. He's gonna execute, they wanna execute 33 Christians. Why? Because of this, the truth.

Following Christ has a cost. And the sooner we realize that, thanks Fred, the sooner we realize that, the better. Because Jesus never said, you'll be liked.

He actually said, woe be to you when all men speak well of you. Jesus, I want a great life. He said, it might be a difficult life.

It might be challenging. Carry your cross, follow me. And that's what we're talking about tonight.

Many don't continue with Christ because they're expecting a party and not a battle. They're expecting wealth and not dying to self. Did you catch that? Many do not continue with Christ because they're expecting a party, not a battle.

I mean, think about it. We watch TV and the guys say, you're gonna be healthy and wealthy and do this, and God's gonna bless you, you're gonna own a hundred million dollars. You're gonna have 100,000 cattle on 100,000 hills.

And like, okay, well, that's not happening. What's happening? I just lost my job. Where's the Christ you told me about? My spouse just walked out.

Where's the Christ you told me about? My child is still sick. Where's the Christ you told me about? And then what happens? That's why the Bible says, when the cares of this world begin to choke us and tribulation comes, they fall away. So counting the cost is very, very important.

And a sense of pride and entitlement in our country, especially in the church in America, our blessings have become our curse for this very reason. See, God has blessed us to be a blessing to others. That's the whole point.

Anytime you hoard something and begin to build and build and build, that's what the message is coming against. You remember the man in the Bible where his barns were full? And he said, I'll tear them down and build bigger barns and store more and more and more. Did the Bible say, great job? He said, you fool.

Tonight, your very soul will be required of you. And I find it interesting that the man had plenty. His barns were full.

How did you say, Lord, what do you want me to do with what you've blessed me with? You would have read that story entirely differently. And the reason I want to preach on this topic is because things aren't wrong, but when things have us, that's where the damage comes. It's a competing force, loving the things of the world more than the things of God.

We're pulled, we're gravitating towards these things. Don't get me wrong, comforts are good. God-given entertainment's good.

God blesses His people with certain things. We should thank Him for that. But when it becomes to inhibit our walk, that's why Paul would say, remove away every way and I hate to believe the writer of Hebrews, who probably could have been Paul, remove every weight and every sin that ensnares us.

And as Christians, we're in battle. This is a battlefield. Life is not a playground, it's a battlefield.

So as we're going into battle, he says, remove every sin, every snare, every weight that entangles you and follow Christ unconditionally. And this will be very easy to hear, but very difficult to do. Will it not? Very difficult to do.

So with that said, we're in Matthew chapter eight, verse 18. I'll read it here if you don't have a Bible, unless you have a real Bible. Matthew chapter eight, verse 18.

When Jesus saw the crowd around Him, He gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. Then a teacher of the law came to Him and said, Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus replied, foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.

Another disciple said to Him, Lord, first let me go and bury my father. But Jesus told him, follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead. This is a high call to following Christ.

And a couple things I gleaned from this passage where we're at is it won't be easy. I'll just tell you up front, it won't be easy. We've got to reprogram our mind, thinking everything is easy and comfortable.

Following Christ is difficult, it won't be easy. I told the first service, we have a four o'clock service, by the way, for those of you who can't make the 5.30 sometimes. I opened up maybe too much.

I told a lot about my own personal testimony in this area. But I hope, I think it helped a lot of people. I kind of want to still keep doing this.

Because when I talk about, this struggle is just as real for me as it is anyone else. And it won't be easy. And I talked about a time where we qualify, we recently bought a house and we qualify for a certain amount.

And we wanted that house, but we had to come down to get our payments down, five, \$600 less a month. I just paid off my truck, and now what do you want to do when you do that? You want to go buy another used truck, right? I mean, that's what Americans do. So I had to fight against it, no, Lord, that payment, and we have to structure our life.

Not as many vacations, not as many this, and it hurts, there's a cost to it. It's not easy. It's not easy to give these things, live on less and let it go, because the God of materialism will hold you as long as you allow him.

He'll hold you, how do you let him go? You say, go, get away from me. Let me give up some of my stuff. And pastors, it's hard to preach on this because people think, well, the church just wants my money.

We don't want your money, we don't need your money. But what all giving is, giving to organizations, giving to different things, giving in a way, it's you release the God of materialism. And you're following Christ more easily because you're not worried about the 401k and your gold and all these things and your real estate and all.

I'm holding on to all these things. I've got Christ as my backup plan, right? I mean, I gotta go to heaven, I know that, but I'm not gonna follow him because I have all that. Jesus says, you've gotta begin to remove some things from your life that's pulling you away from me.

And we all know what those things are, right? The thing that it is is the thing we're making excuses for right now in our mind already. Yeah, but, yeah, but it's a tax write-off. I used to do that all the time.

I'd go spend \$30,000 on a car, but it's a tax write-off. Oh yeah, sure, about 4% of that. So we justify, we make excuses.

And this is a difficult sermon because on one hand, we live in a very blessed country. I don't know if you know that or not. Read some of the books I have on the mission field, and we are very blessed, and God has blessed us.

And sometimes we can feel bad about that, but I don't think we need to feel bad. I think we need to feel good about what God has done. Now, Lord, how can I be a blessing? How can I structure my life in such a way that these things don't have me? I have them, and I can give.

The more you give me, the more I wanna help others. And we structure our life in that way, that we're counting the cost. So it's not easy.

It's not easy following Christ. It will cost us friends. It will cost us family.

Sometimes it'll cost us comfort, and it'll cost us business deals because sometimes we make decisions based on the almighty dollar and not on what God knows is best for us. I gave this example earlier today, and I'll do it again. I've never talked about this, but about a year ago, I got an email from a large publishing company, from the vice president of a big publishing house, like Zondervan, Bethany House, Random House.

They emailed me and said, hey, we wanna publish your next book. I'm like, oh, wow, that's wonderful. So I spent two months pouring my heart out.

Basically, everything you see in the sermons and the articles, everything, condense it down. Here it is. And he's like, oh, I love your title, but that's not gonna work.

We need something that pops. We need something that's marketable. We need to hit the reader's felt need, and we need to be able to sell it for \$15.

Like, I just, I can't, people are, the name of the book is Desperate for More of God, and we have titles, actually. We have copies here. If you wanna ask an usher on your way out, you can, we'll just give you free copies of Desperate for More of God.

And I finally was able to do it, but the whole time is he's wanting to me to change everything to make it more marketable. And I said, Lord, if this is what you, for people to be truly desperate for more of you, here's what it takes. I can't remove that.

It was a very depressing week. But the year prior, I'd been praying for at least a year or two, Lord, motivate me. If you want me to write another book, you're gonna have to motivate me, because I'm not gonna take the time.

It's way too much work. I've gotta edit, I've gotta, you know, you've gotta motivate me. And he used that, and then got that out of the way, and now the resource is done.

So that was, my point was that following Christ and not compromising. See, the money looks good, right? But the message is hindered. What's the point? So there's a cost involved.

And we have to tell people that. Listen, I wanna tell my kids, following Jesus Christ will not be easy. They will mock you at school.

God, if you go to end up in a university, not only will they mock you, they'll chastise you. Why? Because following Christ is not easy, at least the real Christ in the Bible. Even Madonna will have a cross on her necklace or something.

It reminds me of the story of the lady who went into a jewelry store. And she said, oh, I love that cross. Oh, man, I think I can afford that cross.

I've never seen anything quite like that. She said, but there's one problem. Is there a way you can take the little guy off of it? We gasp, but that's true.

Get Christ out of the way. I love the cross as a symbol, but don't tell me that I'm a sinner. I like Jesus if he was a good teacher.

If you say Jesus is just a good teacher, don't you think, oh, yeah, of course, we should all follow his teachings. But when you say that he's the son of God and that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord, now you're gonna upset people. When you live in such a way that you say, Christ beckons me, die and follow him, I have to do that, now you upset people.

When you challenge the moral culture of our decadent society and say that lifestyle's wrong, God calls an abomination. I don't care how many laws are passed, God calls it wrong. You're gonna upset people.

Christ upsets. Why? Because it's a light shining in the darkness. And those living in the darkness don't wanna hear the light.

I can tell. Often when I preach like this to unbelievers, they wanna get out of here as quick as they can. You can tell they start twitching and they're like, why, why do you wanna leave? If what I'm saying is wrong and I'm just some nutcase up here, why do you wanna leave? Why are you upset? Why are you offended? Why do you wanna leave if what I'm saying's wrong? It's because the truth of the gospel hurts.

Do you realize that? The message of the gospel is supposed to hurt. These types of messages are supposed to hurt to awaken the sleeping church. Awake, oh church, rise.

And the hardest people sometimes to preach to are young adults. Right, I was one. I know everything at 18.

My dad doesn't know anything. By 22, I got it down. They're just old, fuddy-duddies.

They don't know anything. And then when life chews you up and spits you out and you think you're all that and a bag of chips and you find out you're nothing. You're nothing.

Nothing, nothing. Then you'll stop saying, oh Christianity's just a crutch. You'll say it's a hospital and I'm sick and I need the Savior.

I need Him. So you don't understand that I need Him as much as I did 20 years ago. I need Him.

So when He says, I died for you, I know what's best for you. Cast all your cares upon me. I will guide you, I will lead you.

So when He says, come, die, carry your cross, I know what that means. And that's what we're trying to pull out from you. The final thing here on this point is know what you're signing up for.

Know what you're signing up for, not this. It's real simple. Jesus died for us.

When you embrace His gracious gift of forgiveness, He bled and died on the cross and said, listen, you have to follow me. Count the cost. I mean, surely if somebody dies for you, I don't know, now he's just an inconvenience.

Yeah, whatever. Think about that, how that affects our spiritual life. And the parallel we see is in Luke 14, 25.

This is kind of the same story. Now great multitudes went with Him and He turned and said to them, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, his own life, he cannot be my disciple. What's wrong with Jesus? He wants me to hate my mother? Hold on, let me get there.

Verse 27, and whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. If I had time, I'd show you the passion of the Christ that wonderfully articulates carrying that cross. And you see Him carrying that cross.

We're supposed to carry our cross. We're not carrying a money bag. We're not carrying a bunch of real estate.

We're carrying a cross. But the ironic thing is, true joy and peace come from carrying the cross. Stop fighting God.

Why are the most blessed people financially are usually the most miserable? I mean, I've read stories of Jim Carrey, all these people, they're so miserable, so depressed. I'm like, why? If success satisfies, why are they so miserable? Because true, genuine peace and joy comes from a right relationship with God as I'm following Him and carrying my cross. That's where true peace and joy come from.

Then he goes on to say, for which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost for whether he has enough to finish it, lest after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to mock at him. And they'll say, this man began to build and was not able to finish. You guys saw this, right? When the housing market crumbled.

You saw all these housing tracts. Cahovanian, Kaufman and Broad, all these housing tracts. You see a whole bunch of pads out there.

Concrete, sitting for years. What happened, guys? America's greed caught up. Who does these things without first counting the cost? Or what king goes to make war against another king and does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with 10,000 to meet who comes against him with 20,000? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace.

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple. What do we do with those two verses? Whoever hates his brother, mother, father more than me? Or needs to hate them? Let's read it, I'm gonna mess up now. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, brother and sister, yes, his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

And then he tells me to forsake everything. Well, I'm heading for the exit door, right? That's what most people say, I'm heading for the exit door. Forget this guy, you guys are whacked out.

Jesus freaks. Well, hold tight. As with anything, let's look at what it's saying here.

The interesting thing about hate is, if you look at this up in the Greek, it's a Semitic meaning. You've heard the word antisemitism, right? Hatred against the Jews. Semitism, Semitic, is that Jewish, the Hebrew people.

So the Semitic meaning of this word, miso, means to love less, to prefer less. So it's saying, unless you love me more than your parents, more than your kids, more than your own life, you can't be my disciple.

Shane, are you saying that you love Jesus Christ more than your own children? Yeah.

Yeah. More than your spouse, yep. You'll tell them that? Oh, absolutely.

Because then they say, but then Daddy will love me more. That's powerful. Because see, Christ is the foundation.

Christ is the foundation of everything. So if I love him more, I don't wanna hit my spouse. If I love him more, I don't wanna hit my children.

I don't do that, just for you wondering that. But I'm saying, the more I love him, the more I'll seek him, the more I seek him, the more I'll love my family. They benefit as a result of me putting Christ first.

Christ has to be the foundation of everything. You go to school, you better have Christ as a foundation. You work somewhere, you better have Christ as a foundation.

He's the foundation of everything. Just a side note, to show you how far our nation has drifted, as Christ is the foundation on this theme, the 1642 rules of Harvard University. Have you guys heard of Harvard University? Did you know it was founded by the Reverend John Harvard? What I'm about to tell you right now, they would probably stone me in that place.

But if you look up the rules of Harvard in 1642, the rules say, let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life, which is to know God and Christ Jesus as the foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. Harvard, Gene, I can't believe you memorized that. I had to, I edited it to my book and I had to edit it 25 times.

We actually have that book available too, One Nation Above God. If you want a free copy, see one of the ushers. We wanna bless you guys with these resources.

But Christ was the foundation of Harvard. Do you know where the legal system came from in our nation? From Blackstone's commentaries on the laws of England based on the Bible, the Ten Commandments. You can't even run for office unless you profess a faith in God and the Son, Jesus Christ.

Now look how far we've drifted. I mean, again, my goal is not to glorify a nation. I don't like American pride, but I like a proud American who's proud of what God has done in his life.

There's nothing wrong with that. You'll see in the articles there, I talked about that Frenchman who came here in the 1800s. He said he wanted to know why America was so great, even back then.

Of course, it has its mistakes and its tragedies and its failures, but I'm talking about the remnant, the Christians, the true Christians, not the ones who said they were and did all these things, but those who truly were Christ's followers. The guy said he looked for America's success in her boundless prairies and her fertile fields, and it wasn't there. He looked on her shorelines and in her vast world commerce, 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 the secret to her success. She is good because she is great. If she ever ceases to be great, she will cease to be good.

Why? Because the pulpits were aflame with righteousness. Christ was the foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. That's still applicable today.

You realize that, right? Christ has to be the foundation, and if we're pursuing other things, see, he wasn't designed to be a savior to put in your back pocket. He's designed to be a savior, follow me. Carry your cross, it's everything.

Dying to self. Things we don't want to talk about, but we have to, because the human heart does not want to hear these things. So hate means to prefer someone above another or to love less.

What about forsake? So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake, all that he has cannot be my disciple. Well, the Bible also says, if I don't provide for my family, I'm worse than an unbeliever. So I can't go forsake everything, say, okay, kids and wife, good luck.

We're just gonna, you know, hopefully it all works out. We've got a sleeping bag and we'll sleep in the desert tonight. I mean, if you take this to extremes, right? Now, there are people who've sold everything, and God's in that, you know, for sure.

But this word forsake here means to abandon, to withdraw companionship, to withdraw protection, or to withdraw support from somebody. So Christ is saying, stop finding your support in the stock market and find your support in me. Stop finding your protection in your gun safe and start following me.

See, abandon, forsake everything. Sure, I've got to have some money. Sure, I own a few of those Smith & Wessons, Glocks, I got it.

But my protection's in Christ, in Christ alone. You realize that? See, that's the word forsake. It's not just give up everything.

It's to say, these things I'm using for the glory of God, but I'm forsaking, they don't hold me, they don't protect me, they don't sustain me, Christ does. Christ sustains me. So you've got to forsake those things and the parting must come.

And all of you know right now, because I know I'm convicted of it. Right, you're convicted of these things. We know these things that are holding us back.

Christ didn't die so we can indulge and enjoy the fleeting pleasures of life. He died so that we could have eternal life. He beckons us.

He says, come, follow me. Do you realize that? I love that the Bible doesn't say, do you want to consider this? Would you think about it? God might, you know, do. He just says, here it is.

Here it is, here I stand. And come, I beckon you, follow me. Die to self.

We say, I don't want that. Then do we want God? If we say, I don't want that. See what I say is, I want that, but Lord, it's hard.

Can you help me? Because that's where true freedom is. That's where true peace and joy. Do you realize how much easier it is when you're not worried, I've got money in the bank or I don't? Now, I didn't say it's bad to have zero, right? I think we should get, but you're not up and down and up and down on the things.

Because we go, we watch the stock market up and down and we're so worried about these things that we forgot that Christ holds everything together. So there has to be a disconnect there. Okay, Lord, how can I bless people with these things and how can I bless my family? But Lord, my hope is in you.

My trust is in you. Listen, I love America just as much as anybody, but the American Christianity has perverted the gospel. My dad was from Oklahoma.

My mom was from Southern California. I love America. Believe it or not, my brother makes duck calls in Idaho.

Sometimes I still want to put on Hank Williams Jr. Country boy can't survive. I know, I love America, but it needs a severe rebuke from time to time. Pastors are not CEOs.

They're called to lead the people in complete surrender to Christ. See this, you got it wrong. This is not a glorified position.

Oh, Shane's church and he's a pastor. No, no, I'm supposed to point you to Christ, to the cross and get out of the way. I'll just be sitting down in this chair with you.

Can I just sit here with you and listen and worship Christ? It's not a glorified position. We're not CEOs. We're not professionals.

We're to point people to him. To him, can I get out of the way while they worship? Can I get out of the way? Just point to him. He did it.

He's your answer. He's your solution. That's where true change comes from.

We're not CEOs. We're supposed to point you to Christ. We don't give to receive all these telethons out there.

You don't give to receive. You give to kill the God of materialism. And we're feeding the very thing we're trying to destroy.

We give so I can receive. And Lord, if I don't receive, then you're not right. And we give with a false heart.

That's one of the things. They'll say, send us \$100. God's gonna bless you with 1,000.

Okay, you better do it, Lord. You better do it. We don't come to church to give God his due.

We come to church because we desperately need him. I sometimes wonder, do we walk into this place with enough awe and respect? I mean, I thought about this this week. You're walking into a worship service.

We are worshiping God. We are praying for God. We are looking to his word.

And some people just come in here like they're chewing gum and stamping this. And you know, well, I'll give God his favor. Here, I did it my week.

I can tell my mom I went to church. Right? Good people go to church. But we don't come to church to give God his due.

We come to church because we desperately need him. We don't have to apologize for the gospel. We just have to present it.

But American Christianity is perverting all of these things. Jesus is not a genie in a bottle. He's the Lord Jesus Christ.

See, be crystal clear on this, young adults, everybody who likes Jesus, turn your cheek. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord, period. You'll either bow to him now or you'll stand at the judgment seat saying, oh God, I wish I would have bowed to him then.

What's wrong with me? I'll tell you what's wrong. It's what's wrong with all of us. The sinful, prideful heart tells God no.

But he says every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord. The most godly person on the face of the planet, Kim Jong-whatever, Abed Jinnashat and Iraq, all these guys, I don't pronounce their names, they will bow their knee, acknowledge the one true and living God. They will bow their knee to Christ.

But folks, that's my concern. We tell people Jesus will make you rich and happy. But we fail to mention persecution, hatred, scorn, ridicule and disdain.

And I've been guilty of this myself. Many years ago, I'd tell people, oh, life's not going good. Man, just turn to, and there's truth in that.

Hear me out. Just turn to Jesus, he'll fix all your problems. But then life gets harder and more difficult.

Now they've upset the demonic realm. You believe in that, Shane? Of course, of course. I don't believe Satan's some image that people made up.

The Bible says that he's the prince of the air. That we wrestle not against flesh and blood, we wrestle against principalities, against powers of darkness. That's what we wrestle against.

So what's the solution? People say, what's the solution? I'll tell you in a nutshell. Here's the solution. We really need, I'm gonna use a word here that people are afraid of, but I'm not, let me explain it.

We need a baptism of love. Like the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you've heard of that, baptism of love, baptism of love just means an overwhelming sense and presence of God's love in our hearts. That's what changes a person.

When you realize, and one of the concerns I have for churches like this, your heresy won't get 10 feet from the front door, but critical hearts will. Critical, judgmental, arrogant heart, Bible-believing Pharisees that need the love of Christ in their life. They're too busy picking apart the service, or they're too busy picking apart somebody else instead of allowing the love of God to penetrate their hearts.

This is so vital that somebody told me this a few years before I started this church. Actually, a few months before I started this church. It was a fellow pastor, and I was considering the church, and he said, well, I don't think anybody should pastor until they're willing to die for their people.

Well, Lord, I think you got the wrong guy, because it bothered me. I'm not willing to die for the people. Don't get too upset.

Number one, the church wasn't started yet. I didn't know anybody. But why did it bother me? Why did it bother me? Well, let me show him.

I'll pastor without that. And now I can honestly say it, and it might happen someday. I'm aware of that.

But I could say that I would die for West Side Christian Fellowship, for the people. But God has done that in my heart. God has done that.

So, see, that removes a lot of gossip. That removes a lot of critical thinking. That removes a lot of criticism.

When you truly love, when you truly love, and the people who need to hear this message are the ones right now putting up walls and barriers as I'm giving it. Yeah, but you don't know what I went through. I don't, but I know a God that died for you.

And once you realize that love, it's like you melt. Think about that. Husbands, love your wives.

As Christ led the church, do you realize that often she's just a little girl inside who might have been beat up by her father, molested, raped, insecurity. She just needs someone to love them. And then that love changes everything.

The Bible says, wives, respect your husbands. Why is that? Because we've been beat up. Our fathers have told us we're nothing, we're worthless.

You'll never amount to anything. You don't do anything right. So when a spouse truly loves their husband, they say, I respect you, I love you, I thank you for what you're doing.

And our kids need our love more than our advice. You realize that? The reason many teenagers don't change is because their parents are too busy yelling at them and not spending enough time loving them. Well, Shane, give this message when your kids are teenagers.

Yeah, I know, it's difficult. Because I'm the advice giver. I love to give my kids advice.

My son had the ladder out yesterday, I think it was, up against the house, and he was getting ready to get up on the roof. And I came outside, I go, Dad, stay in the house. I go, no, what are you doing? He's gonna jump on the grass on a whole bunch of pillows.

Look how soft this is. I said, no, it doesn't work that way. It doesn't work that way.

It's soft from a foot. But when you're 10 or 11 feet up there and you miss it just a little bit, it's not, oh, Dad, you're no fun. That's right, I'm no fun.

I'm not called to be fun, I'm called to be your father and to protect you. But I have to love him more than I offer advice because it's from the love, they understand that the advice is coming from a loving heart. On this issue too, we need to love each other a lot more in the church.

You realize I need to love you, you need to love me more. We need to protect each other. When was the last time we started to protect instead of gossip against? I'm protecting you.

You realize as Christians, we're on the same team. You guys got that? We're on the same team. The guy we're fighting's down here, metaphorically speaking.

Why is brother shooting brother and sister shooting sister if we're on the same team? Because of the flesh. If I can pull you down, I'll look better, right? If I can pull them down, I'll look, but did you hear? Did you hear? That's not love. We wonder why we're growing bitter and cold because we need this baptism of love in our life.

And some of you need to see God's love and stop fighting him. Some of you are so beaten up, I believe tonight, God's up in heaven with a lightning bolt just ready to bap you on the head. You don't, you mister, you better not.

The picture I get, yeah, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess and Christ is gonna judge with a rod of iron. And there's a side of God that makes me fear him and that's very healthy. But I also picture a loving father saying, don't do that, come back.

Would you come back to me? Don't go in that direction, come back. He's drawing us back. So if you see the love of Christ compelling us, how many times have you blown it and let God down? Oh, a few hundreds and hundreds and hundreds.

It's still that loving father calling us back to him. Once you see the love of God, then your worship changes. You're not texting people, you're worshiping.

Once you see the love of God, you want, can the worship continue? Can the worship, it's already eight or nine or whatever, I don't care, I see the love of God in my heart. The problem is the church in America has this glamorized form of Christianity that bears no resemblance to Jesus' call to repentance and following him. So the hope would be to pray this prayer, Lord, I've been wrong, remove my carnality, crush my pride, draw me closer to you.

I repent of my sin and can turn completely and unconditionally to you. Let me tell you why this issue of love is so important, and I'm gonna end here shortly. Why are churches closing? Thousands of year, thousands of year, a year? Pastors resigning? Thousands? Church worship services that are dead as a doornail? There's no spiritual life there.

Why is that? In many cases, they've left their first love. It can happen here, you realize that? We can start going in that direction. Oh, oh, getting away, resting on our Lord, walking away from our first love.

And it gets farther and farther, and it gets harder and harder, and the more I go, the harder it is to come back. That's why it says return to your first love, return to me and I will return to you. Return to your first love.

I could preach on this for the next hour. Christ still comes, Christ still calls us, come and follow me. Christ is still saying what we read in Matthew, he's still saying to many of you tonight.

And I'll be in another point of transparency here, I didn't share with the first group. But one of the dangers I have with planting a church where I was raised is many people just say, oh, that's a shame. Oh, that's a shame.

I know him, I remember him. But you have to remember, God uses the foolish things to confound the wise. He uses the broken to break the prideful.

He uses the weak to crush the strong. He uses my past pain to heal your broken heart, and he uses my past to help your future. Jesus said a preacher is not without honor.

Accept. The actual word is prophet there, but I don't want to scare people. A preacher is not without honor.

Accept, accept. Here, among his own friends and family. We've got friends and family I've been praying for for decades, probably 10, 15 years now.

And that's one of the dangers. Many people say there's too many hypocrites in the church. I'm finding that's not the case.

There are, there's too many sick people. Be careful. The next time you say hypocrite, no, struggler.

See, a hypocrite would do this. I'm Shane over here, and now I'm this. I'm deceiving, hypocrite, with a mask.

Most people are saying, I don't have a mask. I need God, I need Christ. I'm not a hypocrite, I'm struggling.

I come to church because you'll help me. So the next time somebody says, there are a bunch of hypocrites in church, well, there's a few. But there's a bunch of struggling Christians who are relying on God.

Follow me around for a week, you'll see some inconsistencies. I get upset in traffic when I'm in a hurry. Time to go to church, and all hell breaks loose with four little kids.

Oh, I get a headache. It's hard, life is hard. We have to start telling people, it's hard, but I have the answer, I have the solution.

Jesus said, cast all your cares upon me. Just cast them all upon me. My yoke is light.

My yoke is light. So stop looking at the imperfect messenger and start looking at the perfect message. That's the key.

Listen, you guys don't have to clap. I don't like claps. I don't mind if you do, but I'm just saying you don't have to do that because guys, clap.

When you leave, people are emailing us now daily. Thank you, your message has tamed my life. What do I tell them? I'll look to him.

I'm just the messenger. I'm just the imperfect messenger pointing to a perfect message. There are a lot of people, hear me tonight, there are a lot of people who can preach the gospel better than me, but nobody can preach a better gospel.

Well, that'll sink you on your way home. Nobody can preach a better gospel, the gospel. Christ died for sinners.

Christ died for us. And as soon as you open up your heart and say, Lord, I want that, I need that, then you guys right now who could care less what I'm saying, you wanna get the heck out of here, you're running from the very thing you need. You think you're gonna get wake-up calls like this every week? You think so? Doubtful.

When you hear his voice, harden not your heart. Hebrews said three times, when you hear his voice, harden not your heart. When you hear his voice, harden not your heart.

Now what happens when you hear his voice? It's gone, that conviction's gone. Listen, I've preached at funerals, I've preached at services. I've seen people, they're gone within a month or two.

The same people who rejected the message, who mocked at this message. Listen, God doesn't play games. We need to stop acting as if God plays games.

Come on, I was only joking, come on, guys. It's God saying, here it is. I lay out before you the way of life and the way of death, choose life that you may live.

And he leaves it at that. He doesn't negotiate with, he doesn't bargain, he doesn't, I'm gonna upset somebody, he doesn't ask your opinion. He could care less what your opinion is, he could care less how sincere you are.

I know that's hard to hear, but this is God. This isn't a friend where you negotiate, this isn't a negotiation. This is God saying, I've laid it out.

It's been consistent for thousands of years. I laid out my truth, my truth cannot change. Choose the old path that you may live.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/32/SID32161.mp3>

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/ngXGMZGWX7g.mp4>

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