

Identify Strongholds and Clean House

by Shane Idleman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of identifying strongholds in our lives and the power of confession and repentance to achieve spiritual freedom and healing.

Duration: 56:48

Scripture: Leviticus 6:12, Psalm 32:1

Topics: "Strongholds", "Confession and Repentance"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of identifying strongholds in our lives and cleaning house spiritually. He draws parallels between the fire on the altar in Leviticus, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit's presence, and the need for believers to maintain that spiritual fire in their hearts. Shane discusses how unconfessed sin can create strongholds that allow demonic influence, urging the congregation to confess and repent to experience true freedom and joy in their relationship with God. He highlights the importance of practical application in sermons, encouraging believers to confront their struggles and seek healing through confession and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

Before I get to this message though, it was interesting, last night I spoke about the topic of keep the fire from heaven burning. Keep the fire from heaven burning and it comes from Leviticus 6.12, and the fire on the altar shall never go out. It shall always keep burning.

Isn't that interesting? In the tabernacle there of the holies of holies and where they would make a sacrifice for the sins of the people, that fire could never go out and it was started by God. God came down and consumed the sacrifice and said, keep that fire of my spirit going. Basically, I'm paraphrasing there, but the fire on the altar was to keep going and our application, I believe today, can be that fire of the Holy Spirit to keep that going in our hearts.

And people comment, even on Facebook or they'll tell me, but Shane, fire always had to do with judgment. No, when you have the fire of God, it has to do with a very good thing for the believer. If you're not a believer, yeah, be worried about the fire.

But if you're a believer, the fire of God can be very good because that's where boldness comes from. That's where passion comes from. That's where wanting to do, I have a holy, righteous indignation, a fire of the Holy Spirit in my heart.

That's why we sing songs, Holy Spirit, fill me. That's actually biblical. Paul said, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

It's biblical to say, God, I want more of you, more of your spirit. I need that fire. John said, when he comes, he's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

There's that fire of God. So conviction alert, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep. Here it comes.

The people who have a problem with that have never experienced it. If you don't like talking about the fire of God and the Holy Spirit, that's because you've never experienced it. Because once you've experienced that, you can never go back.

You can never go back. And people say, well, you talk about the Holy Spirit too much. Well, we talk about him just as much as scripture does.

It's God, the Father, the Holy Spirit, his son, the triune nature of God. Sometimes there are times to talk about. When I'm going through the Bible in Genesis, that's going to start when the stadium is over.

I'm going to go through the whole Bible. I want to encourage you to be here. I'm excited about that.

We're going to learn about the Old Testament, minor prophets, major prophets, Levitical priesthood, and the sacrificial system. What does that mean for us today? It's going to be very relevant. We're going to talk about it.

We can probably talk about all kinds of things from critical race theory to creation to all types of political hot buttons, gay pride month and LGBT agendas. And how does that fit into scripture? Now, I'm already in Facebook jail, so I'm not going to be sure how long we can put that out there. Their YouTube channels are just shut down.

Eric Metaxas, I don't know if you follow him, his YouTube channel was just shut down. A friend of mine knows him. They're going after people, but we cannot capitulate and back away just because they're going to take down videos.

And God is doing something here, but keep that fire burning. If you don't have that fire, ask God for it. Lord, I want that fire.

I want to be able to sing and feel it. People say, well, you can't trust feelings. No, you don't.

You can't. But God-given feelings are good and God-given. Thank God for feelings.

Can you imagine just having no feelings? Your baby's born. Here's your new baby boy. Oh, thank you.

Put him there. What's for dinner? I pronounce you husband and wife. Well, all right.

Big deal. I don't want to go on a honeymoon. Let's go home and watch sports.

There's no feeling. So we just come in here. It's like a cemetery.

You're created to experience God. As long as those feelings line up with scripture, you're on very good ground. So what I'm doing now this morning, the title is identifying strongholds and cleaning house.

Identify strongholds and clean house. This is do not demonize the demonized we're talking about the demonic realm, what they call an aspect of theology is studying the demonic realm. And you don't want to put too much emphasis in it, but you also don't want to ignore it.

So this is part two. What does it look like? And if you didn't hear part one, please do, because this will make a lot more sense. If you listened to last week's message, where I talked about how demonic influence works and we believe in a demonic realm because Jesus did.

When you believe on me, Jesus said, you will cast out demons. How does that work? Shane? Well, you're gonna have to grab a CD on the way out because we talked about that a little bit last week, and I'll talk about it more probably today, of course, but identifying strongholds and cleaning house has to do with the demonic realm as well, because how demons will work is they will look for open doors in your life. And once you open that door, now they have a stronghold into your heart.

So what might be an issue for you might not be an issue for me. I've always told people this. You can line up marijuana, Xanax, whatever on my kitchen sink, and I'll throw in the trash in a month.

But don't put a cold six pack of IPA in my refrigerator where I have to look at it every single day, right? That's gonna be a different... Come on, let's be honest. You guys don't play church with me this morning. You all have that little... I mean, you can put... Honestly, you could fill our pantry with Oreos and donuts and Captain Crunch.

I'll never even touch it. But you put a nice big dark chocolate on the sink with a little thing of peanut butter by it, that's gonna get tough. And so the enemy knows, and that's why when we talk about maybe what is what is in your family history, it's because there could be that same type of predisposition.

So if you ever hear that, my dad struggled with, and my grandpa struggled with, and you can look at where there might be strongholds in your life that you have to identify and pull down and not give the enemy a foothold into that area of life. And that's why with young kids, even as they get older, we want to guard them in the area of sexual purity and what they're exposed to at a young age, because you can open that door and that door is ugly, especially where things are going. And I talked to someone as well this week who knows somebody that has embraced transgenderism.

And we often wonder, where did that come from? I mean, it was never, you know, people struggle when I was younger, but this huge push, and I believe we can open a door to that demonic realm. We start to watch Hollywood and these superstars and the kids, if they don't have the spirit of God in them, they're going to be drawn to, oh, this is cool. This is the next thing.

This is kind of rebellious. I like it. And they begin to open their door by their mind thinking, well, what is this about? Maybe I should consider it.

And that's how the demonic realm works is there are strongholds in our life. So if you struggle with anger, guess where he's going to shoot some fiery darts? In this area of anger and upsetting that area. If you struggle with, you name it.

I mean, I could sit up here for the next 10 minutes and fill in the blank of different types of sins that are out there. And what I decided to do this week is list some questions. And I'm hoping I can get through it where if we answer them correctly, it can identify strongholds in our life.

And I went to the top 10 questions and I said, oh, we need to talk about the top 15. And now I'm at the top 22. So I'm hoping, hoping I can get to these because when we can identify these areas and confess and repent, you'll see tremendous healing take place.

Do you know what's often the difference between you see, let's say someone at the altar weeping over their sin and being set free rather than someone in the back or the, or the balcony or over here, over there that has not been set free confession. It's often confession and repentance. It sets them free.

And the scripture I want to look at this morning before we take a spiritual assessment, that's going to be very helpful. Really a spiritual assessment is this. Here's what went wrong.

Here's how we fix it. Here's what went wrong. And here's how we fix it.

And as a pastor, that should be a goal of every sermon is to point people back to Christ. Of course, Spurgeon was a master at this. And at the same time, here's what went wrong.

Here's how to fix it. They call it practical application. And if you ever go to churches that seem dead sometimes, or that you're, you say, oh, I'm not getting much out of that.

It's often I, because they don't give you practical application. You know, I've, I've heard pastors spend a month in Leviticus and I leave there going, boy, that's great that the 12 tribes were camped out here and this happened and the holies of holies was this and the brazen altar. And that's wonderful.

But how's it going to help me get through my marriage issues? Oh, dead silent. Shane, you have marriage issues? Who doesn't? Who doesn't? You have two sinners trying to get together. Praise God.

We're doing great. But the first year we were going to re we were ready for, I don't know, divorce court that first year. Cause you know, I'm single.

She's single. Like, oh, we're just so humble. And you get married and all that is thrown out the door.

You realize just how sinful you actually are. I like to go to bed early. Why don't? Oh, well, how's this going to work? She makes a big thing of birthdays.

I never did. And so it's just this trying to work together. And the enemy will use those things also in your life.

He wants the marriage to fall apart. So if you understand his tactics that he wants, he's going after the man often in the family. That's why you don't see a lot of men leading in the prayer meetings or men at the altar or men at early morning worship.

You see men getting so distracted by other things because they're called to be that spiritual leader. So he's going to go after them many times. He's also going to go after those who are in ministry and knowing, and then he wants to go after your marriage.

Can you imagine if I can get the men not following God, if I can get the marriages falling apart, you might have a nation like we see today. The condition we're in now is directly related to the health of the family. That's why we're, we're experiencing everything we're experiencing is because the family unit was destroyed long ago.

And that's why his attack is still on there. I mean, it was amazing to see some of the things that came out in father's day. People were offended because we can't call it father's day.

Why not some binary name? It's not offensive. I'm starting to get a pretty offended myself. So if this is about being offended, then we need to change some things and get back to what God's word says.

Oh, I'm offended. I'm offended. Get over it.

The gospel will offend you. It will cut to the heart. God says, my word is like a hammer.

It's like a fire. It's like a sword. All of those things are meant to destroy something and hurt.

And then ultimately to build back up. And, but we shifted. Well, who's going to get offended when, when we need to stop and say, am I offending God? Because once you can align that up and fix that problem, everything else will fall into place.

And so identifying these strongholds, we're going to look at Psalm 32 very quickly. Psalm 32, beginning in verse one, I usually use the new King James version and I put the bullet points here. I'll look at blessed.

Now here's what you need to maybe retrain your mind. Because we hear that word. We think of bling, bling for the young adults, the older ones.

You're like, what's he talking about? Bread dough. You know, if you're older that the money bless, oh, I'm going to be blessed. But really the Bible says that you are happy.

You're a favorite. You're filled with joy when you're blessed of God. So some of you, let me encourage you this morning.

You might not ever have a big savings account and you can still be blessed of God. Because if you take a survey of most Christians in, let's say underground church in China, the middle East, they're not wealthy, but they are blessed. And so we have to remember blessed is favored, filled with joy.

So blessed is that person filled with joy, whose transgression is forgiven. As far as the East is from the West, God forgives those sins. And not only is it forgiven, whose sin is covered.

We have to remember this. When God covers our sin, why do we keep bringing it up? Meaning our past. And that happens a lot in marriage.

Well, remember five years ago, this and this, and God has covered up our sin. Blessed is the man whom the Lord does not impute iniquity. That word means guilty.

God does not call you guilty anymore. If you know Jesus Christ, you've confessed him as Lord and Savior. Truly have.

And not just trusting in your parents or you go to a good school or you own a Bible, but if truly confessed him as Lord and Savior, and he has saved you, you are no longer guilty before God because of what Jesus Christ did. It's very freeing. It's very, you get very emotional when you sing those worship songs, understanding what he has done for you and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Meaning once that confession takes place, there's no area of deceit in your heart because those sins have been forgiven. But here's the contrast. But when I kept silent, moving on in the chapter, but when I kept

silent, isn't that interesting? When I kept silent about my sin, silent about my transgression, when I didn't deal with it, and what the enemy wants to do is often keep that sin covered up.

But when you bring it to the light, when you expose it, it loses its power in a very significant way. When I have kept silent, my bones grew old through my groanings all day long. Have you ever been in such a pain where your body hurts? It's like you feel it in your bones or there's a groaning, there's a desperation, there's a pain that is hard to explain because we're keeping silent with our sin.

For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. So sometimes people feel the heaviness of God. Instead of running to him, they run from him.

They can't get away from that heaviness as they live in disobedience. And you know, friends and family member, as they're living in that disobedience, they feel the heaviness of God. They feel the pressure of life.

That sin is a burden you weren't designed to carry. It's a very heaviness that rests on your shoulders. And that's why you're not joy-filled, filled with joy.

That's why there's not that excitement about the things of God, because you're carrying that burden. And pride tells us to just keep it in. And God says, let it go, bring it to me.

My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Vitality is energy. There's energy and there's an enthusiasm about the things of God.

And all that though is turned into a drought. And we're actually going through a very big drought right now. I don't know if you've been watching what's going on in the different dams and the different lakes.

And you realize we are so reliant on God that people have no idea. I mean, if you have another dry winter is what they call it, you're going to start replacing your grass with decomposed granite. You're going to start draining your pools and making them look like flower gardens when it starts to get the drought.

And he said here that all of my passion, my energy, my zeal feels like I'm in a drought, thirsty, and don't know how to satisfy that thirst. But he said here, I acknowledged my sin. I acknowledge my sin to you, God, and my iniquity, I have not hidden.

So I'm not necessarily telling you to go tell everyone. Sometimes you have to be careful. You have to be strategic because you don't want the gossipers and the back biters to take that and then to hurt you with it or to use that against you.

But there has to be a confession of sin to God and even to those who you have wronged, probably maybe your spouse or someone. And when that confession is acknowledged and it's no longer hidden, he said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. And then he puts on there, *selah*, that's like an agreement with God that let this be done.

And so there's a tremendous burden that is lifted when that confession takes place and you bring something to the light. You say, hey, I'm struggling with this. Would you pray for me? And there's something lifted because that demonic realm no longer has that power on you because it's keeping the dark hidden things in secret.

And it grows, it strengthens. Something about sin is it never remains static. You know what that word means? It's never neutral.

Sin is never neutral in your life. Did you know that? It's either growing or it's withering depending on whether you're feeding or starving it. And so if a person is dealing with the sin and they keep it hidden and they keep it hidden, it'll just keep growing and growing.

And that's why the Bible talks about removing even a root of bitterness because that root, what happens when a root starts? And that's where I believe a lot of things come from problems in churches and marriages and relationships is that root of bitterness. And it's not confessed because pride won't let us confess it because we're bitter. And if we're bitter, I'm not going to confess this.

It's their problem. It's their problem or unconfessed sexual sin. You talk to people like, I'll just, you know, at some point I'll just get over this.

God will set me free. Well, you also have to do something on your end or other types of sins. If they're constantly pushed down and not brought to the surface, it will eventually cause a very, very dark thing to happen in your life because sin grows in darkness and repentance leads to freedom, freedom.

And so I wanted you to know this morning how we open up the side room often. The prayer team would love to pray for you. Even if you're a child, a teenager, a young adult, we want to, and you don't have to confess specifically.

You can just say, I need to confess something in my heart to God. Would you pray for me? And I believe we can just set people free this morning because once confession takes place, you leave here and there's a new joy. There's a new, there's a new excitement about life.

Now, now, see, now you're going to want to come to Wednesday nights or Sunday mornings or whenever we do things. And there's a passion. I've got to get to the house of God.

I've got to experience God because I've been cleansed. I've been set free. And like David said, after a year, can you imagine committing adultery and then killing the spouse? That's what David lived under that guilt for theologians are somewhat divided, but probably a year, probably a year.

And he was confronted and he finally confessed and he said, Oh God, would you return to me the joy of my salvation? My bones have been broken and God created me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me. God, I am broken before you and I confess before almighty God. And now some beautiful words come out in the Psalms that David is now writing from a broken contrite heart that has confessed its sin.

And you compare that with the other Psalms that he's where he's living in darkness and depravity and the full weight of a sin is on him. It's like, Oh my, even the bones are hurting and the tears, my tears on my, on my, on my bed have not stopped. They're like a river.

And, and you see the contrast from being set free from the bondage of sin. Now, it doesn't mean that now you will live perfectly, but it does mean that you expose what is going on that work of Satan and now healing can take place. And I have to encourage people once a week on this.

Sometimes there's so many different varieties of how this could apply, but let's say somebody is, is, is being defeated on a stronghold time and time again. Well, let's just say marijuana, throw it out there

because that's very prevalent prevalent today. As soon as they legalize it, I knew, watch out, here we go.

And now you see what they're dealing with the valley, removing cartels and different things. But let's just take that for example. And, but I talked to another person who's been set free.

So I've never had a desire. I've never touched it again. I can't believe this is amazing.

This person hears it and they get discouraged. And I don't know how this works. I just know that God doesn't always set people free.

Sometimes he does, but sometimes that stronghold has to come down one brick at a time. That wall has to come down one brick at a time. Sometimes God brings the, the demolisher and you just demolish that, that brick wall.

But sometimes it's one brick at a time, one right choice at a time. And you begin to remove that stronghold by prayer and fasting this kind cometh not out, except by prayer and fasting and petitioning God and a pressuring the demonic realm and pressuring and working it. And then the whole thing begins to come down and unravel, but he keeps you discouraged because you can't, you can't relate to the other person who's just been set free.

But sometimes it's a fight for some people. It's a struggle. God, wouldn't you deliver me from this? But sometimes through that journey, God becomes even more real to you.

And that relationship becomes deeper and stronger. I'm reading a small booklet. Actually, I just finished.

It's called hunger for revival by Oswald J. Smith. He said, it's a very common experience to find souls kneeling at the altar and calling upon God with great anguish, but who failed to receive anything. Their prayer is not answered.

So he says, what is the trouble? The trouble is what the prophets used to say. Your iniquities have separated you and me. God is saying your, your iniquities, your sin has separated you from, from me and you.

And I cannot hear. He said, my arm is not too long that I cannot save my ear. Not too heavy that I cannot hear, but your sins, your iniquities have separated me from you so that I, I cannot hear because of that separation.

And it's an interesting concept, but when we hold on confessed sin in it blocks that line of communication with God. And I've seen so many people over the years. That's why it breaks my heart.

They're coming in and they're even sometimes at the altar, they're praying, God, please set me free. What is going on? What is going on? Their prayers are not being answered it's because they're not going to let that go. Isn't interesting.

The living water is just a step away and people don't want to drink of it. And so I want to just give you some questions to think about. I can even post these or share them, but these are areas where the enemy will come in and gain access and allow you and allow you to be in his clutches.

If you, as it were, or gripped by fear, gripped by anxiety, not seeing God move in your life because of these areas. So number one, have we forgiven? Have we forgiven? Do we cherish grudges in our heart and

refuse reconciliation? And so many Christians hear that in one ear out the next. But if you really study forgiveness, it's an amazing concept because God says you forgive others as Christ.

I've forgiven you in Jesus. It's pretty, it's a big deal. Who are we to say, no, I'm not going to forgive.

And then he gives that parable of the person who was forgiven a little bit. And then he went and got this actually forgiven a lot. And then he went and got this guy, rang his throat, was going to throw him in jail because he owed him a little.

And that master said, you foolish, you wicked servant, I'm going to send you to the tortures because you didn't forgive in your own heart. And so that unforgiveness can stifle prayer like nothing else that we know of because it's a wrong heart. It's holding animosity in.

So are there any grudges that you cherish? Are you refusing to reconcile with someone? That can be a stronghold. Number two, if you're saying praise God for number two, let's get off number one. You fill in the blank.

Do we get angry and impatient and irritated with others? Are these uprisings happening often within us? Now, who doesn't struggle with these things from time to time? And I hope you realize that if you're struggling with something, that's a lot different than a lifestyle of unconfessed sin and unrepentant sin where you actually enjoy these things or these things are a mark of who you are and you're not going to repent of it. And I've talked to over the years, it was one of the most shocking things to me. I would talk to men at conferences, you know, let's say about anger.

Instead of repenting, the excuses were endless. Well, you don't know my spouse. No, I don't.

You don't know my situation. Well, you're angry. You don't know what I'm going through.

You don't know what I put up with. You don't know what I give. You don't know.

And always the excuse. Always the excuse. That's what the lifestyle of anger is.

Or my favorite. I'm just German. It's in my blood.

I'm just Irish. The fighting Irish Shane. It's in me and they're proud of it.

They're proud of it. And there's nothing to be proud of when it comes to anger. The wrong type of anger.

It is something that will destroy your family. It will destroy your marriages. And it has to be confessed of and saying, I'm an angry man or I'm an angry woman.

I struggle with anger. I lash out. I hurt people with my tone or with my.

And once that confession takes place, there's a cleansing that also takes place. Number three, are there any feelings of jealousy? Are there any feelings of jealousy when another person is preferred before you? And that can often turn into a bitterness, animosity, and jealousy comes in often in many different forms, many different ways. We can start to become jealous of other people.

And then number four, are we offended easily? There's a spirit of offense happening in our culture today, especially among young, young people. Everything offends them. And are we offended easily? Because what that is, is they don't want to be convicted.

I'm offended by that. I'm offended by this. I'm offended.

It's all about them. Number five, have you been dishonest? Have we been dishonest? Is your business above reproach? How you handle things? Is it above reproach? Is there any shenanigans going on in finances? Are we dishonest in this area? Number six, have we been gossiping about people? Gossip, slander, the devil loves it, God hates it. And maybe to give you the definition, gossip is telling someone something that's true, they just don't need to know.

Slander is saying something that's not true, and you're slandering them and hurting them, usually to put them down to elevate you. And some of you might be saying, I'm dealing with a lot of stuff on this list. And who doesn't struggle with a lot of these things? Do we criticize others? Are we unloving, harsh, and severe in our tone? Basically a fault finder? Boy, I've never heard it this quiet in this church in a long time.

Where's a pen? But guys, be encouraged, we're digging deep. We're digging deep. To experience the wells of revival and change, we've got to dig deep.

You've got to dig deep to get to the water. I don't know what it is out here, but when I used to be in construction, you can find water maybe at 30, 40, 50 feet, sometimes 300 feet, because you have to dig down to find that. The golden things that God wants for us sometimes take a lot of digging.

So are we unloving? Are we harsh in our tones? Number eight, do we rob God? Have we stolen time or things that belong to him? Have we robbed God? And I thought about that a lot this week, like what exactly would that look like? Maybe because if God calls us to be a good steward and we're not stewarding ourselves or our resources wisely, we could be robbing God. And Malachi the prophet talked about that. How have we robbed you, God? They said, how have we robbed you? And God says, with giving, not giving of yourself, but also your money.

And if you've been coming here, even in a short amount of time, you know, we don't talk about this topic often. It's usually because of what people think with the money in church. So we said from the get go, we're not even going to mention it.

The true givers will give. But what I struggle with, I'll just tell you, here's one of my faults as a pastor. You guys ready for this? Is because I don't like this subject so much in the church, I don't talk about it much.

And it's doing you a disservice. It is actually doing you a disservice because when you start to give back to God, what they call tithe, when you start to give back to God, it really is a heart check. We see what really owns us by our pocketbook, by our checkbook and our calendar.

You look at those two things. So I've had to struggle with that over the years to make sure I'm talking enough about this. And that's why I'm glad when I go through the Bible, I'll be able to bring it up more.

But because of the, just maybe growing up, the money aspect of church, you know, it's every service. Come on, there's, I know there's 10 of you that give \$1,000 today. Come on, we got to get those kids some air conditioning.

Those little sneakers are hot over there. And if you could just find it in your heart to give a little bit. Oh, and then after the service, I'm going to do another collection and we're going to do a giving fund and we're going to have a big thermometer or whatever they call a big thing here.

Here, we're going to hit our goal up here every week. What can you commit to before you leave? Could you fill out a commitment card? And they spend 30 minutes. You want me what? Yeah, we do.

Oh yeah, we do have air conditioning, by the way. But the irony, the funny thing about that is it's a swamp cooler that doesn't work too good in the summer. So we are getting quotes on putting a good air conditioning unit in that building next door.

So if anyone's convicted, I, you know, just sharing that with you. And I, I, I personally never liked passing the plate. It's kind of, you know, some churches do it.

I'm not saying it's not good to do my, my, I might get to heaven and God say, you really missed it on the passing plate thing, but it's just the way it makes people feel and, and, and the things like that. But giving can also be a form of worship to God. So when you, when you, when you give to God, giving is a form of worship, time, money, resources, energy, all those things.

And if we'd never talk about it, you miss a very important biblical principle about giving back to God. And even the tie that is when, you know, 10% is where that number comes from. And I love how the, the, the people who are convicted about this topic always come up and say, pastor, you know, we don't live under that anymore.

Well, God loves a cheerful giver. It actually might be 10, more than 10%. How do you know? But see, they use it as an excuse because most people generally speaking will give about 1%.

That doesn't hurt too much. But you start talking about 10%. That's a car payment.

See, that's where it hurts. And, but I think we should structure our life in such a way that God's bill is the first bill. If I can't pay God, if I can't pay God, if I can't pay God when I pay my car payment, we have a problem there.

So we've always, from the day we got married to make sure we live in such a way that the 10% right off the top before even taxes or we'll take home, however you want to do it. But that is to God. And if we can't make it based on that, then we need to live below our means even more so.

And it's been hard. It's not easy. So I feel like there's so many people that could be helped in the area of finances if they would put God first and they would begin to give back to God.

And it's not that the church needs it. What it is, it's a gauge to the heart. Because if we have a tight pocket book, that means we have a tight heart.

We don't, and what it boils down to also is, oh, I can't, I can't give God that much because I don't trust that he's going to see me through. It doesn't boil down to trust issue. We went through this, Morgan, I remember 2009, I stopped paying tithe for about, I don't know, a month until I was convicted.

And I realized that's not going to help because it was, it was a very low point in construction. We were pulling out of savings every month, all the time. And I realized, oh, wait a minute, I'm, I'm just not trusting God.

Thinking, oh, Shane, you got to, you got to hold this, you got to keep some because I can't help you now. And I don't trust you, God, to provide. So it has to do with the trust issue, financial issue, what's really got our heart because we should be able to give back to God.

And so I'm not a person who teaches you have to give the tithe, but I think it's a good place to start. The only thing you'll find in the new Testament is that God loves a cheerful giver. And if you want to get technical, if you go back, even in the old Testament, it was more than 10%.

It's probably upwards of what, 30%, I think by the time they gave us certain things and first fruits and all these, all these different things. So back to this point, that wasn't supposed to take so long. Do we rob God? Because if a person I believe, and I do believe this, if a person is coming to church, let's say this is your church, whatever the church, and they're not tithing, they're not giving there, there's some type of issue there.

There's something going on in the heart. And I've asked people and they'll be honest with me. They'll say, I, I just, I just don't feel good about giving to the church.

I, or, you know, I'm in a tight spot financially right now, or which is valid in our mind, Shane, I'm serving a lot of my time at the church, but that doesn't override monetary giving to God. And who's supposed to pay for the lights in the air? You know, it would cost money to run a facility that we all enjoy. So that's why we all invest into it.

Fortunately for this church, we have really good givers as far as people that give from their heart, the church from day one, when we first started the church, we've never, ever been in a financial crisis, even through COVID, we actually went up, not down. And we've, it's been God's blessing that, but just to be open with you, that's why we don't talk about it too. Now.

I don't think we're going to change much as far as we love the box in the back. It's, it's, it's encouraging. We're not going to change a lot, but when I get to portions of scripture about tithing, about giving, I'll definitely dial in on that a little bit, because I think many of you are missing the blessings of God because of this area.

And it's, it's not a, it's not a, at least what God is talking to people over the years. Often those who are hurting financially. Now this is a broad statement, so don't take this in the wrong way.

Often those who are always going through financial difficulties and things are often not givers, but we do know that God will bless those who blesses others, who give financially. And 10% is a good number. It hurts a little bit.

Like David said, I will not give God nothing, which costs me nothing. It was so, you read the old Testament, all these people here, you can take my lamb for the sacrifice, but the lamb has like two legs and is about ready to die. Well, it's like, I don't think it's anybody here, so don't worry.

But so, and I told, when we first moved out here, I told Susie in the office, let's just stop, stop drop-offs for a while. Cause people would drop off where they don't want to take to the dump. That's the church.

Hey, I've got this, this TV. It works great. I mean, it's from 1982, but it's, you know, would you take it? No, it's okay.

I've got this couch and I really think you would work great for the church. I mean, it's 28 years old, but you know, but see, why don't we ever want to drop off? I got a new couch. Could a family use it? It reminds me of that story of that farmer.

Both his cow had two baby calves and he told his wife, this one still makes me laugh. He says, Hey honey, we're giving one to the Lord. One cow is the Lord's and one is ours.

And she's, Oh, that is so spiritual. Thank you. Bless.

Thank you Lord for my husband's decision. And about a year later, one of the cows died unexpectedly. And the husband came home.

He said, honey, I've got some bad news. The Lord's cow died. The Lord's cow died.

I don't think poverty is a curse. I think that some people should, you know, God blesses either way. Paul says, I know how to obese.

I know how to abound. I know in all States, God wants us to be content no matter where we have. But I do believe that financial blessings can come on those who are good stewards of his resources that we shouldn't think that, well, just the poor you are, the more spiritual you are.

Now poverty has its challenges, but so does riches. And as I said, in the other countries and third world countries, they are living at very impoverished levels, Christians. And so we can never gauge it on that.

However, I believe that part of God blessing a person can deal. How much less stress do you have when finances are better than worse? Come on. It really affects us.

It really affects how we live. All right, I'll get off that one. Number nine, are we worldly? Are we worldly? Oh, I'm not going to get through all these questions, am I? Well, it makes part two easy.

But anyway, are these questions helping a little bit to gauge, you know, what's in our heart? So are you worldly? And let's say go real quick. Do you love the glitter of this life? So what he means by worldly and what the Bible means is, do I love the things of the world more than the things of God? Am I enamored by the things of the world? And like young adults, their music, they love this, they love, but they'll go to church now and then, but they're enamored by the things of the world. Or if you're older, they will call this carnal.

If you're carnal, it will kill your relationship with God. Do we take little things that do not belong to us? How many times have I left the church with something in my pocket? You know, you feel convicted about things that don't belong to us. And we have to be careful in this area as well.

Do we harbor a spirit of bitterness towards others? That word is interesting. If you, if you, the word harbor, you can picture the, the ocean parking a vessel in a harbor. So do we harbor, do we stay in port? Do we, do we hold on to it? Are we going to camp out here? That's where that term can come from too.

I'm going to, I'm going to hold this bitterness in my heart. Now, most of us struggle with this, don't you? Do you struggle with bitterness? I mean, if I were to be honest, I'd say weekly. I struggle with bitterness weekly, but what do you do with it? Even coming here, I was dealing with it a little bit.

I hope such and such isn't there today. Oh, it's going to be so difficult. Don't worry.

It's nobody here, right? You're off the hook. But coming in and saying, Lord, just take these thoughts captive. I love that person or this, or let me pray for them.

Let me pray with them. God changed my heart. I just confess that that is wrong.

And then the spirit of God begins to move my heart again. But if I hold that in and try to avoid them or try to this, and I'm going to deal with that, I'm going to live that way for the rest of my life if I don't deal with that now. And so these things we all struggle with, but what do we do with them? That's why that verse last week was so important.

Take your thoughts captive and confession takes place. And then when that confession takes place, now, now you just love everyone. There's no, I can, I can truly say, let me think about it before I say it, but I can truly say, I know I don't have a bitterness or root of bitterness with anybody at this church.

I can praise God. I can say that even the difficult people. Wait, hold on.

I can be difficult. I'm not naive. I can be difficult.

We all have cracks in the armor. We all have little inconsistencies. We all can get on each other's nerves.

And that's why even when people leave the church, sometimes they say, why are you leaving? Well, this will welcome to the family, grow up and stay and work through it. So you're supposed to work through the issues. Now, if a church is dying or they're going liberal, or they're not filled with the spirit of God, and you need to get out, get out and run for cover.

I agree. But most of the times we can work through issues. I would say easily 80% of the people who have left this church because of issues with other people didn't have to go because that's how you grow.

And if you notice when you talk about it, it's hard, but you talk about it, you come out stronger. Like I truly love that person. But what was that all about? But the enemy allows that root of bitterness to continue to grow into your heart and you never experienced freedom.

So some type of forgiveness needs to take place this morning. I would encourage you to do so. And don't get mad at me.

I just pulled this off a piece of paper from revival. And the reason I did that, this book on revival is so interesting because it talks about all the different revivals that were taking place in the early 1900s in Russia. And, um, uh, he just, this guy just traveled and it was like, they would fill, they would fill these auditoriums, three, 4,000 people, no advertisement, just the word of mouth getting out.

And he came back to America. He's American. They asked him, why isn't this happening here? And I know I, I, I highlighted, I might use it in a sermon sometime.

So, oh, well, here he goes now. But he said, there's no hunger. He said, there are people walking 20 miles or taking their, their horse and their, their, their buggy, whatever they, you know, you're talking a hundred years ago, 200 miles from here to Bishop.

And they would come and they would just be at the service all day. They'd stay for both services. Their kids would be there.

They would, they would eat together. And there was, there was a hunger for, I have to find God now. Hey, if I don't get done by an hour and a half, I'm hungry.

Tell King's stomach to be quiet and focus on the things of God. But there wasn't hunger. But he also said there wasn't confession.

The American church is very prideful. A hundred years ago, hopefully it doesn't happen today as much, right? Of course, it still does. But he said, nobody wants to confess anything.

They think they've got it all, all done right. They're doing church right. Oh, that other church is the problem.

We're the right denomination. We're very smart. We're very intelligent.

And, and we, we, we have it all down in this, this knowledge puffs up. Have we wronged anyone and fell to make it right? That's a biggie. Guys, what I'm trying to do is help you.

I'm trying to help you experience the power of a cleansed heart. I've had to deal with most of these things. Are you worried or anxious? Do we fail to trust God? Who's had to repent during that of COVID? Wow.

You look at CNN, you think the world is falling apart and it is, but who's your anchor? To you, the more I haven't looked, I haven't watched any of that stuff in months. I haven't followed any of that. And I feel 10 times better.

And they, you know what the critical heart tells me? But pastor, you got to know what's going on. You got to know what's going on to some degree. Yes, but not three hours a day.

What's going on in here and here and here and here and here and there and there and there are things that don't even apply to us here. And we get all worked up about things. So are you worried? Are you anxious? Repent of that this morning.

Are you guilty of immorality? Do we allow our minds to harbor sin, immorality, take thoughts captive, or do we entertain the thoughts and act it out? Are we true in our statements or do we exaggerate and convey false impressions? Have we lied? The exaggerator doesn't think they're lying and that is lying, exaggerating things. And God's really worked in our hearts, even in my heart too, with churches, you know, in America, how do we rate churches? What did they all, the number one question I get asked, no matter where I go, without a doubt, here it comes. I'm just waiting for the question.

Oh, how big is your church? What size is it? How many members go there? What's your annual budget? And we wonder why we're not experiencing revival. And so we try to actually downplay numbers and downplay things. And that's why I prayed this morning, God, don't let me preach from pride or anger this morning, because I've got a lot of those that can work against me.

And something I feel released to tell you because I prayed about it with God is, in this area of pride and numbers, is it's amazing how when you just shout up about those things, humble yourself, most churches are taking away services and we're going to be adding them because of what God is doing. And I think we can take pride in what God is doing because that's all Him. Paul said, if I boast, let me boast in what Jesus Christ has done.

We can boast in what God is doing. This is amazing what God is doing. The lives that are being changed, people talking about in different counties about what God is doing here.

And He just, it's just amazing what He was doing as a group of people who submit and surrender to Him. This is why I know it can't just be me because God looks at all of our hearts. This is a joint effort.

Remember, I'm just the loud mouth. We still need the hands and the feet and the heart to do it. The body of Christ, it's not the mouth.

It's not the ears. It's the whole body of Christ coming together and being united. Do you murmur and complain? That is a hard one, especially when we have certain leaders in office that might be removed here shortly.

Praise God. I have a guy that's still on me thinking, he told me a year ago, I need to run for governor. And I'm like, that is not in my wheelhouse.

And he said, I'm disobeying God because it's a prophetic word. I don't think so. I think you missed it.

I don't know where that came from, but it was just seemed to flow. Could you imagine the assault? I mean, it's not only that, but the different, there's different callings and we have to pray for this next person. And we can, there's a possibility.

There's a possibility that Bruce Jenner could be your next governor. He's conservative. And now this video is going to be banned because I didn't say she in the right name.

But folks, we need to be in prayer. These are big decisions, big issues. Are we neglecting reading and applying God's word? Are you neglecting reading and applying God's word? Have you failed to confess Christ openly? Have you failed to confess Christ openly? Have we lost our first love? Are we no longer on fire for God? Are we committing the sin of prayerlessness? Oh, see, here's the key.

I'm going to end here real shortly. If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. Did you know that the Bible talks about, and I'll get to that maybe at some point, but judgment starts in the house of God.

So if we judge ourselves, if we come clean, God would not have to judge us. And this is not in the sense of, of hell, but this is a type of judgment that God has to do on a disobedient people where Paul said actually they took communion in an unworthy manner. And many of them were sick and dead from among them because they did things in unworthy manner.

And Annias and Sapphira were Christians, were believers, but God struck them dead. There was a judgment on their lying heart and God will not put up with sin in the camp. Often, often like Achan, it's generally one sin in our life that is hindering things.

One major thing that we are not confessing that is hindering things. And you know who Achan was? He took of these, of the spoils of Jericho, I believe it was. And he hid these, what's wrong with this great robe and this gold or silver? And he hid these things.

One sin in the camp caused defeat in Israel's army. They're a sin in the camp, God said. And we have to deal with that.

We have to look at that. We have to confess it. Matthew Henry said, if God turns away our prayers, we have reason to suspect it is for some sin we are harboring in our hearts.

Now, this is not always the case. I know that. But you know, and I know, that often it is the case.

Did you know that God says, I won't even answer your prayers, husbands, if you're not treating your wives correctly? Who the Son sets free is free indeed. I might say that a half dozen times today because when you get that, you realize that I am no longer bound under the sin of shame and guilt. I don't have to walk defeated.

Yes, there is warfare. Yes, there is a battle. But I can strengthen myself in the Lord and get back up and fight again and get back up and fight again.

And who the Son sets free is free indeed. There's freedom in the confession of sin. God Almighty says, I will not answer your prayers unless you are right before your wife.

So we have to say like David, search me, oh God, search me and see, is there any wicked way in me? And that's why I love that song we sing sometimes, something has to break. Have you been hearing the newest? Something has to break. I don't know what it is, but something has to break.

It says, Holy Spirit, move. When you have your way, something has to break. So tear down every lie, set the wrong thing right.

And when you have your way, something's got to break. And that's where you're going to see the flames of revival coming up in your own heart again. The passion for God, the desire for God, the fire for God, more of God.

I have got to have more of God because I've been set free of the bondage of sin in my life that's been holding me captive. When you confess that before God Almighty, God sets you free. But I also want to throw that out there to those this morning who you don't truly know Jesus.

You've never repented of your sin and confessed Him as Christ and confess Him as Lord and Savior. And we hear that term a lot. I've used it, you know, accept Christ.

Have you not heard that before? Accept. Would you not accept Christ? But I think we need to start crying out, Oh Christ, accept me. Oh Christ, accept me.

See, that was the difference from old preachers 100, 200 years ago. They would preach that hard and tell people, you don't accept Christ. Like, oh, would you please accept Him? Christ, accept me, a sinner.

I need to be saved by grace. I need to be broken before you. Oh Christ, would you accept me? I come to you with all my guilt, with all my shame.

I lay them bare at the altar. Christ, accept me and my brokenness and depravity. Without you, I will not be set free.

Christ, please accept me. See, now you come as a broken, undone sinner whose only hope is a justifying Savior instead of some person says, oh, I guess I'll accept Him. Whatever, I'll try.

Poor little Jesus sitting on the corner. You can be on my team, I guess. See how the heart is different? It's a heart and we've got away from that in the church.

And they start to put, would you just accept Jesus? Please just come and accept Jesus. Please, He's over here. He's all by Himself.

That's not the Bible depicts, depicts a whole different scenario. That we cry out to Him. If the devil can talk the angels out of heaven, he can talk you into hell.

So be careful who you listen to. I don't know who, I borrowed that from someone. I don't recall who.

I'm going to try to find out. But if the devil can talk the angels out of heaven, he can talk you into hell. Be careful who or what you listen to.

But you know, I deal with pride, you could say. Or I'm dealing with this. I need, I need prayer for this.

Or the altar is going to be open as well. You can come up to the altar. If you need to exit, you can exit quietly out the back exit.

I know we've got the other service here starting here shortly. But we don't want to be in a hurry. Like Akin, we want to identify that sin.

There's, if there's sin in the camp, it will, it will hurt your marriage. It will hurt you. Especially if there's unconfessed, let's say pornography in the home.

That will destroy, begin to tear apart brick by brick the relationship. And confession needs to take place. And you don't have to pray with someone necessarily.

You can go straight to the throne room of grace. You can find yourself at this altar. You can stay in your pew, whatever it takes.

I think it's important to get our hearts right before God. I'm confessing these things in my life that are not right. And you watch when you expose it, two things will happen.

You'll have the joy of the Lord again, but watch out here comes the enemy. We've seen it nine times out of 10. As soon as somebody starts to deal with something, the enemy comes in and latches on and wants you to take you deeper into it.

That's why confession is so important.

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