

It's Time for Tough Love

by Shane Idleman

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of balancing truth and love in the Christian faith to navigate cultural challenges and uphold genuine repentance.

Duration: 51:24

Scripture: Proverbs 3:12, Matthew 7:13-14, Luke 9:23, John 1:14, Romans 1:32, 1 Corinthians 4:6, Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:15, Hebrews 12:6, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Tough Love", "Truth and Grace"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of tough love in the church, drawing from the Apostle Paul's example of speaking the truth in love. He argues that the current state of the nation and the church is due to a failure to balance truth and love, leading to either harsh condemnation or overly permissive grace. Idleman warns against the dangers of embracing sin while claiming to be a Christian, stressing that true followers of Christ should desire to break free from sin rather than embrace it. He highlights the importance of humility, obedience, and the need for spiritual power in the lives of believers, urging them to respond to God's rebuke with repentance and a desire for deeper relationship with Him. Ultimately, he reminds the congregation that the greatest demonstration of love is found in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Transcript

The message this morning is entitled It's Time for Tough Love. It's time for tough love. And the Apostle Paul, even though he's very eloquent and very nice in some letters, in others, he can speak the truth in love.

And I'm convinced, I don't know about you, but the reason we're in the predicament we're in, in our nation, in the church, is because we don't speak the truth in love. We either speak too much truth, and there's no love, and this is where you get those angry guys on TV, you know, picketing everything, and they're just, oh, they're so mad, and we're gonna preach God's word right into them with our anger. And that just turns a lot of people off.

But then you have the other side, which you hear me talk about often, where it's all love, especially a lot of these guys on TV, you watch, it's all love, all grace, all goodness, all mercy. The problem, though, is you can become off-balanced. Because there's a time where you need that grace and that mercy and that encouragement, but there's that time when you need that right hook to get you back on track to speak the

truth in love.

And that's where we're gonna really see change in our own personal lives, and in the lives of our communities. If you're not aware, I told some of you, I was invited back to the Fox News studios next week on Thursday, and I don't really like these a lot because it's quick bullet points, and it's very, you know, right to the point, you gotta know what you're talking about quickly. And it's really not encouraging, it's encouraging to speak the truth, but it's discouraging because of the reasons I go down there.

What they're trying to pass in Sacramento, I told you it was coming, it's actually legislation to silence the churches and Christian counselors. You can no longer tell people that the LGBT, bisexual, transgender, lesbian, gay, none of that is wrong. You can't, that's the legislation they're trying to propose.

We recognize the state of California, and it lists all these things, it's not a disease, it's not a dysfunction, it's not this, and it's going to silence the churches. So when you get to Romans 1, when you talk about these things, if you talk about and you say this is a wrong lifestyle, it's a sin, that's going to be against the law. Now if there isn't a big gasp there, I don't know why, because this is a pretty big deal.

And it's time to speak the truth in love. Pastors speaking the truth in love, doesn't mean we go around beating up people and always just against something, we're for things as well, but there comes a time where we have to speak the truth in love. Especially in a culture that thinks you can do whatever you want and still be a Christian.

I'm going to quote The Bachelorette. I don't think I've ever done that. There's this movie out there, The Bachelorette, or on TV, or The Bachelor.

A lot of people watch, I'm not sure why. But it came on a news feed, and this lady, I guess who's the Bachelorette for this contest, she said, I can do whatever I want, I sin daily, and Jesus still loves me. And she was talking about what she's been doing with the other guys on that program, I guess.

But see, that's what gets out there in the media. But isn't that partially true? I fell into sin, but thank God Jesus loves me. See, it's just a couple words there.

I can do whatever I want, versus God help me, this is not right. I've fallen. I need your help.

And that's where grace and mercy reaches down and grabs that prodigal. And grabs that person and says, I'll walk through this with you, you're forgiven. But it's an affront to the grace of God to say I can do whatever I want.

Now technically, Jesus' love is still there. But you have to ask the question, well, are you really then a follower of Christ? Because if you are, you don't love the sin that he saved you from. You want to break free of that.

And a lot of people are saying today, I can embrace this lifestyle, fill in the blank, and still be a Christian. And the big question is out there, there's books written now, and there's articles, there's a lot of stories on this, can I be gay and be a Christian? That's what we're facing in the high schools, it's a question coming up. We get that question on Facebook a lot, can I be gay and be a Christian? Here's where people get confused.

You can struggle with sin and still be a Christian, because that includes everyone in this room. 100% of you and me, there's a struggle. Our Adamic nature is still there wanting to pull us down.

There's freedom in Christ, we're filled with the Holy Spirit of God, the redeemed part of us loves God, doesn't want to have anything to do with sin. But you've got this old task master that likes to draw us back in. So a person can struggle with sin and still be a Christian.

That's a big misconception out there. That's really what this law is going out in Sacramento, it's called reparative therapy, where they try to talk a person out of it. Talk you out of these tendencies, and talk you out of this sin.

And what they should be doing is deliverance can be found in Christ and Christ alone. But sometimes a person still struggles with the sin that used to be part of their old nature. Just ask any Christian person who used to be an alcoholic to try drinking a beer again.

And you watch how quickly that demon will latch on. That tendency will latch on. What's wrong with me? I still struggle, they say.

I still have this tendency. So see, that's not the sin, it's caving into it and embracing it and it becoming a lifestyle. That's why Paul said, woe be to those who practice such things.

So there's a time to speak the truth in love. And actually, wasn't that embodied in the life of Jesus? We all know that famous verse in John 1, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we behold the glory of the only begotten Father, full of grace, you guys, and truth.

Here's this side. He was full of grace, full of truth. And people love to use Jesus' words on either side.

The truth side, they'll just, all this, oh, hard sayings, and they just beat you up with it. And then the grace side, look, look at the woman caught in adultery. Look at her in shame.

He said, go and sin no more. Like a wonderful flower. I'm sorry.

I don't condemn you. I don't condemn you. That was my, that was the punchline.

I gave you the punchline in front. But he said, hopefully I remember that for the second service. But look what Jesus said.

He doesn't condemn her. He doesn't condemn her. Yeah, but you forget the last sentence.

Go and sin no more. The man, he healed. Completely healed him.

Jesus told him, hey, don't go back to sinning unless a worse thing will fall upon you. And Jesus rebuked entire cities for not repenting of the sin. That's what drives me crazy.

We think we're being so nice to people, so loving, so gospel-centered. When we miss, when we don't talk about sin and repentance, when we talk about just love and grace, you have to find that balance. It's difficult, but it can be done.

So we are in 1 Corinthians 4.6. That was a pretty long introduction. 1 Corinthians 4.6. So Paul, remember where we were in Corinthians, where Paul was challenging the people. You say you're of Paul.

You say you're of Apollos. You say you're this person. You say you're that person.

They were taking sides. And denominationalism was creeping in. And he said that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

Who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now, if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? Basically, do you know those people who take so much pride in what they've accomplished and what they've done, not recognizing that it's God who gives them breath? It's God who makes that heartbeat. It's God who gave them the abilities and the giftings. It's God who's done it.

But they, look what I've built. You'll hear men say that often. Look what I've built in my business.

No, you didn't build it. You put in some hours, but God helped you build it. Others helped you build it.

You're gifted. You're inclined. And so this church is boasting.

Now, if you indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? You are already full, exclamation point. You're already full. You're already rich.

You have reigned as kings without us. And indeed, I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you, exclamation point. So you see Paul, I see here having a little bit of fun with the people.

Probably not real happy. Oh, so you've arrived. You ever tell people that? So you've arrived.

You know everything. You've memorized the Bible. You're full.

You have no need of nothing. Good for you. And it's really, it's a derogatory statement.

It's going after their arrogance and their hard heart. What was happening? Well, same thing that happens today. Pride was infecting the church.

These prideful people were infecting the church. And as we know, then it begins to affect the church, spelled with an A. Once it begins to infect, it affects the church. So what are they, what's he dealing with? He's dealing with ingratitude, entitlement, a lack of love.

Anyone struggle with that? Hmm, not too many amens on that one. You'd be amazed at how many people, here's what I found. This is very interesting.

People that love, let's say churches like this, Westside Christian Fellowship, other churches, what they, many times what they love more than even God himself is the truth. They love the truth. And I'm kind of leery of those people sometimes.

I love the truth too, don't get me wrong. But when it's, they love the truth and you preach the truth, there's a, there's a pride that can go along with that. There's an ingratitude.

There's a better than you. There's a knowledge puffs up kind of aura about them. There's this, I love the truth, but do you love people? Do you love Christ? Because I love the truth because it points me to Christ.

I love the truth because it has broken me. It has humbled me. So a lot of these, a lot of these truth promoters, these people that just love truth, you also see them often as the, as the loudest, the angriest,

the most condescending, the most prideful of them all because they say they love truth.

I don't know how many of you, I don't see Yvette's here, but how many of you go to Grace Fest when it's here? A lot of beer in this room. As always, you're going to see that small little group of people out front hanging out things saying this is of the devil, that music with instruments is of the devil. And boy, I've talked to this guy.

I can't even have a conversation with this guy. He's so, it's all about truth. Oh man.

No, it's all about pride. It's all about arrogance. So see, they claim the truth so much and they have, that's what Paul's dealing with.

There's a ingratitude comes in entitlement. There's a lack of love. They begin to look down on others.

See, here's what happens if we're not careful. If we don't, this is why humility is so important. The truth puffs up and that's okay if it's knowledge, if it increases knowledge, but the Bible says it puffs up as in pride.

So as it puffs up, as you're up here, you're start to look down on other people. Oh, you fell into that sin. Oh, you compromised.

Oh, you didn't do that. Oh, you, and you begin to be a sniff, sin sniffer. Did I pronounce that right? A lot of S's there.

And it's funny, my wife, I thank God for her. She, like once a month, she's telling people, no, no, no. Shane doesn't talk to people individually like he preaches for there's this, there's this thing out there that, oh, Shane, I don't talk to people like I'm preaching.

I mean, that's individual. You love them. You understand.

But when it comes to preaching, a whole new dynamic takes place. That's where the spirit of the living God is let loose and it's piercing the hearts and I don't even know who it is. So people are much more receptive to that.

So you can have the truth and still love others. I've asked these questions before, but it's a good time to ask them again. Do you take joy in pulling others down? Do you take joy in critiquing? Do you think that you know more than others and you take pride in it? That's what was happening in this church.

Just because you know what the Bible says doesn't impress people. Have you ever learned that? People are more, people are more impressed by you and your attitude and the way you love them and how you act and then you bring in scripture. The greatest need is to see our need.

He said, you're already full. That is so ironic because he's in church and it'd be like me going, you're already full. You don't need to come to church every Sunday.

You don't need to go to the worship events or the Wednesday night services or the Wednesday. You don't need more. You're already full.

Wow. That's what Paul's doing. He's challenging that hardness of heart.

And how can we boast? He said, how can we boast when everything we've been given is from God? Man, every year that goes back at this church, every year that goes on at this church, I just look back and even more so than when it first began, we just look back and go, God, God, how can you boast? Well, look at this. Look at that. Look at, it's God.

Christians should not boast in what they've done. They boast in what God has done through them. And then Paul gives his perspective in verse nine.

For I think that God has displayed us. He's talking about the apostles last as men condemned to death. Wow.

What a perspective. So he's talking about being displayed, being displayed with pride and arrogance. And then he said, God has displayed us last as possible as apostles, men condemned to death.

And I gave you an article. The title is others may, you cannot. It's been a, it's been a title on many powerful sermons.

Others may, you cannot. Do you know what that means? If you want to follow God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind, if you want to be filled mightily with the spirit of the living God, then guess what? Others may, you cannot. Meaning others can do those things you see them doing.

Others can watch ungodly movies, hanging around with ungodly people, do little for the Lord, live a life that is halfway on the fence and living for God, living for the world. And so that you look at them, go, how fun would that be? How fun would that be? Drinking again, partying again, the lifestyle again, these movies again, this man, I remember that. Oh, and others may, they may do that, but you cannot.

If you want to follow God with all of your heart, with all of your strength, there's a difference. There's a distinction. Of course, you still love entertainment.

You can go on vacation. I'm not talking about those things. I'm talking about, do those things have you? Are they pulling you away from God? I don't, this is, maybe it's just me, but I have discussions with young pastors often where they think it's really cool to have wine and beer testing at Bible studies or tasting.

It's like, I know one guy who picked up a six pack of IPA beer on the way to the Bible study for the guys to try. And I'm like, are you sure you have one only? Come on. Oh no, we feel it a little bit.

Well, that's crossing the line there. And you're a Bible study and you make your own in the garage. But look, others do.

Look, there's freedom in the Bible. The Bible says, I know what it says. Others may, you cannot, if you truly want to be filled with the spirit of God.

I know you love to watch these movies. I got in trouble with Christians when I said, hey, you might want to reconsider Game of Thrones, Twilight, Harry Potter, all this, all this glorifying witchcraft. People got mad at me.

Can you believe that? Oh, you're so legalistic. Oh, you're so this. And I say, no, I just want to preach with the fire of God.

I want to live with the passion of God. I want to be filled with the spirit of God. I don't want entertainment and darkness to entertain me and become dull to the things of God.

I don't want what you have. I don't want that. I want the spirit of the living God.

Others may, you cannot. Others may compromise. You cannot.

Others may live in sexual sin. You cannot. Others may do this, but you can not.

If you want to be filled with the spirit of God, there's a price to pay. There's a cost. Why have we forgotten that verse? Whoever desires to follow me must pick up his cross, deny himself.

Really, what that is, is denying what the flesh wants, because the flesh is always wanting to pull you away from God. Others may, you cannot. What's interesting about this topic, others may, you cannot, is many people say amen, but very few people live it, because it's hard.

It's hard to live that. Here's the article. I'm just quoting what G.D. Watson said.

If God has called you to be truly like Jesus in all your spirit, he will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility. Amen to that. He will put on you such demands of obedience that you will not be allowed to follow other Christians.

And people might say, that sounds hard. No, obedience is not a bad word. Obedience is, oh, I obey my master.

I'm filled with the spirit of God. Joy and love and peace enter my heart. I love to obey the things of God, because we have this idea that obedience is like, uh-oh.

It's like when mom says, don't touch your cookies. Obedience is like those guardrails you see on that mountain road. Who has ever said, remove those guardrails.

I want to drive wherever I want. I want to drive where I want. Who's to say I don't want to drive down there and try out my four-by-four? No, they're there to protect, not to prevent fun.

They're there to protect. In many ways, he seems to let other good people do things which he will not let you do. Others who seem to be very religious and useful may push themselves, pull wires, and scheme to carry out their plans, but you cannot.

You can read the rest on your own. It says, if you begin to do so, he will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works. Others will be allowed to succeed in making great sums of money or having a legacy left to them or in having luxuries, but God may supply you only on a day-to-day basis.

And people might say, that doesn't sound fun. Oh, hold on. Keep reading, because he wants you to have something far better than gold.

I'll take this far more than gold and money and things. A helpless dependence on him and his unseen treasury. A helpless dependence upon him and his unseen treasury.

This amazed me about my trip yesterday to the prison and meeting this stage four cancer. He's got a big lump here. It's in his lymphatic system and bone marrow, and he has more joy than most people I know.

The joy of the Lord. See that unseen treasure, that unseen strength in that relationship. That's what gets you through life.

Who would trade that for the cares of this world? So that's what Paul's up against. He said, we are last of all men condemned to death. Oh, by the way, others may, you cannot is the key that unlocks the filling of the Holy Spirit.

So many people want to be filled with God's Spirit, but they're not willing to do what it takes to be filled with God's Spirit. See, in the old time churches, they used to talk about obedience and holiness. They weren't afraid of it.

But today, we've had to kind of clean it up a little bit, because people want that lukewarm Christianity that is smooth to the touch. Gentle, gentle to us. It's not too demanding.

Unless you can read scripture and find something else, Jesus encourages us to follow him. And then the next verse nine, for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ.

We are weak. Oh, but you are so strong. You are distinguished, but we are dishonored.

You see what he's doing here? He's paralleling this group of Christians that thinks they're so distinguished and honored and rich and above. And he's saying, no, you're not. To the present hour, we both hunger and thirst.

We are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands, being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we endure.

Being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the off-scoring of all things until now. Based on that, who wants to be a Christian? The irony is that's the byproduct often of following Christ.

When you follow Jesus, you think others are going to look up to you? Unbelievers? Are they going to think you're the filth of the world? When you're working and you're laboring with your hands and when you want to bless people, you're reviled? You want to keep enduring, but you're persecuted? You know what? Maybe I'll just throw this out there. If you're not experiencing any of these things, are you truly following Christ? Because people say, Shane, I don't experience that at work. My friends love me.

My family loves me. Unbelievers love me. No, I don't have any of that persecution.

Huh. Are you ever talking about Christ? Well, only when people ask me. Very rarely.

So see, what happens is we have this closet Christianity where nobody can see how we truly live. So what's happening here? Why is the world hating Paul? Well, because he's saying there's no king but King Jesus. In the Roman Empire, all these gods, Nero and the emperors, they were gods.

Paul was coming on the scene saying there's no king but King Jesus. That's what cost him his life. And it's going to be the same thing today.

At some point, Christians, I don't know if you see where we're going now, even with political parties. You know, there's a big divide now on what they believe and what, and you see this at some point, a person is

going to say, all hail King Jesus or all hail this belief or this system. It always gets back to who is Jesus.

Think about this. Condemned to death, they were made spectacles. They were a visual display.

They were called fools. And we learned as before, those who follow Christ are called fools. But then the Bible calls those who deny God fools.

So whose fool are you? We have to make that choice, that distinction. Paul said we are weak. I should clarify this word because we see it and we're like, oh, who wants to be weak? Any man in here want to be labeled as weak? Well, according to the biblical term, you should because it means meek.

Meek. Meekness means strength and power with control. Strength and power with control.

That's meekness. You have the power. You have the power, but it's under control.

Like Mike Tyson in his heyday would be walking down the street, right? If people mess with him, he's like, you don't even know. You don't want me to go there. Strength.

I know it's probably not a good example in a sermon, but where, I don't know where he's at now. Poor guy. We got to pray for him.

Or it's men. It's like a Hemi motor. 500 horsepowers under that Dodge Charger.

You just can't wait to push that gas pedal. I saw one go by me on the freeway. I'm like, oh, man.

You just hear it. You just hear your truck shakes. Like, what is that? But it's just sitting in the driveway.

See? 500 horsepower. Just sitting there. Hemi motor.

Hemispherical heads on the motor. That's why it's called a Hemi. And it's just full of that power.

And you push down that pedal. Now it goes. But before that, it was strength under control.

That's what some of you need is meekness. Not weakness. You have the strength because the spirit of the living God is in you.

And you're so full of God's spirit. You're so full of his strength that you're holding about. It's meekness.

Don't let me loose. Don't let me get into the prayer closet. Don't let me start praying and fasting that the spirit of living God would change you, child.

Because I'm going to. See? There's a strength there. There's a meekness.

It's harnessed back. But we're looked upon as weak. Look at those weak Christians.

Turning the other cheek. It's funny. I know men.

Many of those men incarcerated. I had a privilege to talk to some over the last few years. You know, they think that the weakness.

But they think it's strong to beat up your spouse. Punch holes in the wall. Do it.

Screaming tirade. Rule your house with a rod of iron. That's not strength.

That's actually weakness. That's weakness because your emotions is running. The emotions are running your home.

And there's something very valid here with weakness. And they're dishonored. They're dishonored.

Isn't that what a lot of us are challenged with? Even me. I'll be honest with you. It seems like you're fighting the world.

You're fighting the media. You're fighting unbelievers. Everything out there.

Hollywood. Seems like everything is dishonoring. Have you ever seen Christians being honored in Hollywood? If it's not a Christian movie? Or a sitcom? Or a play about Jesus? Transgender Jesus? That's a news play that was out on Broadway a while back.

Lord, help us. And we get dishonored. And we're often poor.

Yes, physically. There's laboring. There's working.

There's toiling. So many people think that just Christianity just means just sit back on your laurels. But the Bible talks about labor and working and ministering.

And even when others don't notice you, God does. We bless even though we're persecuted. We endure.

We are defamed. We are called the filth of this world. Here's where it gets interesting.

Paul said, I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children. Uh-oh. What's he going to say here? Second service.

Wake up. Our first service. I'm fast forwarding.

What's he saying? I don't write these things to shame you. And I love what Paul says because I resonate with it. I don't write certain articles.

Or I don't preach hard messages to shame you and have you leave here discouraged and condemned. What does he do? He said, I wrote to you as beloved children to warn you. For though you might have 10,000 instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers.

For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel. So he's showing them that their faith is shallow. It's a warning.

It's a warning. Do you realize this? There are so many encouragers, but not very many warners. I don't know if a warner is a word a person places now, but so many people encourage us.

But how many warn us? Believe it or not, this is why I often talk about those guys on TV. A lot of them, not all of them. There's good teachers, Charles Stanley, Chuck Swindoll on television.

But for the majority of the time and you listen, that's why we look for certain people on the radio too. For the most part, it's encouraging. And we need to be encouraged in this day and age.

But if it's just the encouraging and never the warning, people get off balance, off kilter. So he said, find those who warn you. Oh, I'm sorry.

I'm telling you, find those who warn you with the right heart. And not like a stern warning rebuke necessarily, but a warning. In other words, find those who will speak into your life the truth from an unbiased opinion that will tell you the truth.

What does warn mean? It means to inform someone in advance of a possible danger, problem, or other unpleasant situation. And that's often why we don't warn people. We don't want to step on toes.

We don't want to upset. But a true believer sees something in somebody's life and they want to say, listen, here's where that path is going to go. Any parent out there, have you ever had your children date someone you didn't agree with? Oh, come on.

Why? Because you saw where that relationship was going to go. But mom, dad, I love them. We're soul partners.

Does he love the Lord? Well, someday, I'm hoping, you know. But we love each other. No, you lust.

Because to truly meet someone, the right person, you've got to seek God. You've got to obey his word. You've got to have some, you've got to have a standard, young people.

You have to have a, it's okay to have a standard. See, I don't think the problem is that we raise our standard and we miss it, we lower it, and we hit it. It's good to have a standard.

And you ask God, you seek God. And I had some great advice from a pastor that gave me advice when I was dating Morgan. He said, follow wholeheartedly after Christ and see if they keep up.

What do we do? We often go, backtrack. Let's go, let's go, let's go this way and hopefully we'll get to Christ at some point. No, you find that person who's going to compliment you in your relationship with Christ.

So when your parents warn you it's out of love, don't go down that path. Don't take that direction. Don't hook up with that person.

Don't do that. There's, because they foresee. This is, does this blow your mind or not, if you're over 40? All these people like 21, 22, 23, commenting on our president, commenting on the economy, like they know it all.

And we're just some stupid 40, 50, 60, whatever, like we don't know anything. You're a conservative. You're old-fashioned.

We're progressive and liberal and we know it all. We can fix tomorrow's problems. No, you're naive at best, uneducated at worst.

That's why we warn. Look at where we're going. Look at the direction we're going.

History doesn't, history repeats itself in that it repeats itself. We see that before a nation falls, we get into the state America's in today. That our blessings from God became, be turned into apathy and apathy turns into our abundance and then abundance turns into apathy and then we see this same fall.

There was a historian who wrote about America 50, 60 years ago and he said of all the great civilizations that have ever existed in the world today, crumbled and fell when they were in the same moral spot that America is in today. So we warn the people, warn the people. I can just imagine as soon as I go on Fox

News, now I'm a bigot, now I'm a hater, now I'm an anti-choicer, now I'm narrow-minded.

No, it's speaking the truth in love because you warn people on the path that they're on. Broad is the road to destruction, narrow is the gate that leads to eternal life. There are few who find it and that's what Paul is doing.

He's saying, I'm warning you. I love you enough to tell you the truth, therefore I urge you, Paul says, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you that who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach everyone in every church.

Okay, I want you to sit up straight, pay attention, don't think about lunch. This is important. Character is not taught, it's caught.

You'll get that driving home. Yes, teach character, but it's more caught than taught. Little silly Sally's tantrum might have more to do what she sees at home than what's inside of her.

She sees it modeled. That's why kids are so shapable and fashionable. You ever see that little, where did they get that from? They got that from you.

They start screaming and throwing the remote control. Oh, who just did that a month ago? See, it's taught often. I'm sorry, it's caught.

So you teach it, but you also live it out. You know my favorite Father's Day poem that I read often? The lessons you give may be very wise and very true, but I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do. For I may misunderstand you and the high advice you give, but there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

It's character. Paul's, your kids are watching. That's what Paul's saying.

Kids are watching. Spouses, others are watching. And I'll just tell you up front, I hate that.

I'm walking to the store, wonder who's watching me in the parking lot. Make sure I'm watching with the kids. Run to somebody, this happens all the time.

Run to somebody at the store. Oh, what are you buying? Is that Captain Crunch? Is that organic or processed? Is that your truck? You must make a lot of money. It's 100,000 miles almost on my truck.

But there's this fishbowl. Now, thank God I'm not, most of you here, this is the last thing on our minds. We love you.

It's a church family. But often outside of that, you're watching. People are watching everywhere you go, every step, every choice.

And they're watching your what? Your character. Because he's talking about consistency here. He wants consistency everywhere in the church.

He says, imitate me. Imitate Paul because Paul was imitating Christ. Now, this might be a good little note of encouragement here.

Find someone that can imitate you. Whether it's a child, a grandchild, a friend, we should be discipling. You bring someone along with you and you disciple them.

And if you say, I need discipleship, then let us know. We've got men or women we can plug you into. That's why we have a Saturday morning men's and a Tuesday night men's.

And we have the Thursday morning with Donna and a Thursday evening study for women and Titus. Why? To disciple. That's where real growth takes place.

This is just the pep rally. This is just the motivation to get us going. And people will watch how we deal with disappointment and achievement.

They were watching Paul. How they deal with disappointment and achievement. With anger and discouragement.

With persecution and with praise. They watch and they learn from how you deal with it. Where are your kids or grandkids going to learn humility? In the home.

From us. Teaching them. It's hard.

Isn't it? Because I beat them in volleyball. I want them to know I beat them in volleyball. You know, you do the dance.

I can beat you again. I beat you again. Let's play again.

I beat you again. You know, of course, kidding. I don't care when they beat me.

But they'll point it out to you. Dad, that's pretty prideful. That's pretty.

I'm saying you're right. It is. It is.

But they're watching the example. They're watching the example. Yesterday, when I was down at the prison, I was going through the gates and a Hispanic man stopped me.

He was on the other side. He's a chaplain there. And he said something very interesting.

He said, thank you so much. Like why? He goes, very few men come here and visit. And I walked in this huge waiting room, size of probably this room.

I didn't see but two men visiting. It was all the moms and wives. And I told them even through the gate.

I said, well, thank you. But I said, that's why our nation is falling apart. The family, men have to take a good look in the mirror and step up.

It's a challenge, isn't it? Because we want to do our hobbies, our agenda. Life is about me. I'm learning quickly.

At my prayer, most mornings as I get up, I have a list of prayers. And I say, Lord, what have you called me to do? My agenda has to die. I need that relationship with you, God.

I need to worship. I need to build that relationship with you. And you can ask my wife.

Every couple days, I'm saying, what are we going to do with the kids? We need to have time for them. What's the plan? How are we going to spend this time? And what does she need? What are the needs of the kids? What's the needs of the church? And that's my, you're dying to self. And don't go, oh, Shane,

you're so spiritual.

No. It's a daily battle. It's a daily dying to self.

Dying to self, isn't it? I mean, if I had my way, I'd have get more guest speakers. I'd be up in the high Sierras fly fishing. And you would not see me very much.

Throughout the day, I'd say, oh, let the kids do whatever they want. I'm going to go, what's a good thing? I'm going to go get a massage. And then 18 holes of golf.

And then what else can I do? I want to purchase a, get a dirt bike. There's nothing wrong with those things. But if I want to ride it, I want to do it.

I want to, it's me. Now some of these things can be done with your family, and that's great. But we have to be careful.

Paul's talking about dying to self. So again, little Sally's temper tantrum might be a reflection of what she sees more than what she hears from us. Verse 18, now some are puffed up as though they were coming to you.

Oh, I'm sorry. Now some are puffed up as though I were not coming to you. So here's what's happening.

They're saying, oh, Paul sounds real tough in his letters, but he's not here. Oh, Paul said, but I will come to you shortly. If the Lord wills, and I will know not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power for the kingdom of God is in the power, not in word, but in power.

So here's a paraphrase, Lord willing, I will come to you very soon, and then I will find out what these arrogant people are saying and what power they have. In other words, the proof is in the pudding. Let me see your spiritual power.

Stop, you're belittling me. You're saying my bark is worse than my bite. You're putting down leadership.

You're not humble. You're not broken. Let's see who has the real spiritual power.

But it's interesting. I wish I could do a whole series or a whole sermon on this one. He said, if it's the Lord's will, if it's the Lord's will, I will be there.

That would be a good sermon title. Here's why. So many people are confused about if it's the Lord's will.

I pray for people, and they've stopped me during my prayer and say, don't say if it's the Lord's will. Just pray for healing. Because you pray, Lord, if this is your will to heal them.

No, no, no, no. Like it's a bad thing to say. Now, that's in hyper-Pentecostal churches.

Many times, they don't want you to say if it's the Lord's will. No, you speak healing into that person regardless of what God's will is. You name it.

You claim it. The word of faith movement, and there's some truth. That's why these movements are movements.

There's some truth in that, because there is a faith that rises up. God will sometimes alter what he was planning on doing. Okay, Hezekiah, I'll spare your life.

Okay, you repent and believe. I will restrain from destroying that. If I find 50 in Sodom, I will not destroy it.

So God relents sometimes. King James uses the word repents. He doesn't repent.

He relents. He changes his mind. So there's some truth in that, but I have no problem praying in God's will.

God, if it is part of your will to heal this person, would you heal them in Jesus' name? And one thing we forget about healing is God often uses disease or sickness to break us. If we could just be healed anytime, wouldn't we want to be healed? And there's questions out there, and I've emailed Bill Johnson's church in Redding, California, and said, hey, you've mentioned that it's for God's will for all people to always be healed. I'd love to talk more about that to see where you're coming from and let people open up and expand their theology, because you don't want just little sound bites of what people are saying.

But if it's God's will, we forget that God is sovereign. God is sovereign over the affairs of men, and I thank God for that. That's how I sleep at night.

That's how I sleep at night. I know that my kid's salvation and my family isn't contingent on what man does and what man holds on to, and it's all left to my kids. And God's like, well, hopefully you make the right choice, Shane, that there's a sovereign God working in the prayers of his parents, seeing the goodness and grace and mercy of our Father, and praying and saying, God, hold my family together.

Hold my marriage together. Hold my life together. God, you're sovereign.

You're going to direct this church. You're going to direct my life. You're going to direct my health.

You're going to direct me. If it's your will, God, would you do this? Would you move with fire? Would you move with passion? I love God's will, and I think we get scared of it sometimes, like God's out to get us. No, don't pray if it's God's will.

I don't want to still be sick. But what is God's will? Well, in case you're wondering, I don't have time to get into all the details, but the Bible said, it actually says, this is the will of God, that you be sexually pure, that you worship him, that you be holy and set apart for his glory, that you love other people, that you love God's word. His will is that you disciple people.

Basically, it's loving God with all your heart, with all your strength, and with all your mind. That's God's will, and then his will begins to unfold in your life. And he said here, the power of the Holy Spirit will reveal what's really going on.

So I'm going to leave you with this. I really encourage next Sunday. God just put so much on my heart about this topic.

But he's saying here, the key is, the kingdom of God is not in words. Could this be the problem in many of our lives? Balcony, paying attention? Could this be the problem in many of our lives? We have the word, but not the power. We have word.

We speak things, we read the word, but we don't have spiritual power. And that's what Paul, even in 1 Corinthians, the first chapter, he said, I came to you not with excellence of speech, but with the

demonstration of power, spiritual power. That's how your kids are going to come back to Christ.

That's how you're going to make a difference, is with that spiritual power. Saying, God, I need to be connected to that. What is spiritual power? Well, I'm glad you asked.

It's conviction, authority, influence, healing, redemption, whatever God does through his word, through his working of spiritual power. You can't just pigeonhole it. And this is what amazes me more than anything else.

When I preach often, when others preach too, same thing happens. How can it be convicting someone way up in the balcony, while the single mom who is desperate is being encouraged? And they leave here crying, Shane, I was so encouraged. Thank you.

And then this guy says, I was so convicted. I have to make some changes. Because you would think it would convict everyone.

You think it would, or why? Because the spirit of God and the power, he takes that word and he brings it life into their heart, into that situation, into that encouragement, and builds and strengthens. And then verse 21, he said, what do you want? So let me ask you this question, what do you want? He said, shall I come to you with a rod or in love and a spirit of gentleness? And I think God still does that today. What do you want? Do you want me to correct you? Do you want God to grab out the paddle and paddle and challenge and rebuke and do things? Or do you want God to respond in gentleness and with a loving spirit? Well, it's how we respond to his rebuke.

It's how we respond to his word. That's what determines what happens to us. Once we are confronted, we have a decision.

What do we do with the information we have been given? So closing this tough love involves a rod of rebuke and a spirit of gentleness. I hope that's a takeaway. Tough love, like Paul gave them, tough love, it involves a rod of rebuke.

You need to hear some hard things sometimes. People need to be challenged. This lifestyle is not right, but then there's a gentleness there.

And let's not forget this, God rebukes us because he loves us. That's why God rebukes us. That's why he speaks the truth in love, because he loves us.

It's just like a father. When my kids go out in the street and ride their bike, no, no, no. Especially the little one.

Don't go out in the street. Well, I'm looking, yeah, but others aren't. Stay out of that street.

Why? But daddy, dad, no, I'm rebuking because I love. So God in his love and his mercy will often rebuke our attitudes, our lifestyles, often through the preaching of God's word. And what you do with that rebuke is what tilts the scale with how God responds.

Because most people go, oh, forget it. That guy, I don't like to hear what he had to say. Uh-oh.

God's going to still get your attention. If the sermon didn't, he'll still get your attention. He'll use something.

But if you say, oh God, I repent, or I turn back to you, or I'm encouraged, I'm built up, I'm strengthened this morning. God will use that to further and build that relationship with him. And then I'll close with this.

I've said that three times now. The greatest demonstration of love ever seen was on the cross. So I don't know where any of, I mean, I know where most of you are, but there's people watching, there's people coming in all the time that are new.

The greatest demonstration of God's love was on the cross. So if you don't know Jesus this morning, if you don't have that relationship with God, if you don't know that you know that you know, you can change that. You just repent and you believe.

The Bible says, repent of your sin, tough love, and God will save you. Grace and mercy. See how they meet? They met on the cross.

They met on the cross.

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