

# Love the Sinner; Hate the Sin

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of balancing love and truth in our lives, loving the sinner while hating the sin, and following Jesus' example.*

**Duration:** 48:25

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:17, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13, John 4:23-24, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Galatians 5:15, 1 Timothy 1:15

**Topics:** "True Repentance", "Worship"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true repentance and following Jesus wholeheartedly. It challenges the audience to recognize their need for God's mercy and to prioritize a genuine relationship with Him over religious rituals. The message highlights the significance of worship as a time to connect with God and experience transformation in the heart.

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## Transcript

What's the name of the title of this message? It's not a popular one. Love the sinner, hate the sin. And if you were not here last week, go online, listen to last week's message.

We're getting a lot of encouragement from people. Last week was faith, the anchor of life. And I was reminded that, oh thanks, I forgot all about that.

The anchor, faith is the anchor of life. The anchor does not prevent the storm. We forget that.

The anchor holds the vessel during the storm or as the waves are moving or as they drift. That anchor holds everything in place. And that's what I talked about last week.

So go online and watch that if you can. And that's where we left off, Matthew 9. So if you have your Bibles, one of these, not a phone Bible. I just say that because people start texting and emailing.

And I can tell, I can see. So just beware. Because they do this.

I know because I do it. So Matthew 9, verse 9. That's where we left off. And there's so much in these few verses that I could have titled the sermon, Follow Me or Love the Sin or Hate the Sin and trying to mesh those together.

So with that said, Matthew 9, verse 9, as Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, Matthew, follow Me. So he rose and followed Him.

Now what happened is Jesus sat at the table in the house that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to the disciples, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? You know, they still say the same thing today when Christians get involved in outreach. Why are you meeting with those people? Verse 12, Jesus, when He heard that, He said to them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick need a physician.

But go, this is key. Jesus is saying, but go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. So there's a lot to unpack right there. And I'm going to get to some of it as we go on.

Oh, there's announcements. They can stay there for next service. Oh, thank you.

The introduction to this is really about this. Shouldn't only God hate sin? Shouldn't God hate sin? Not us. We just need to love people.

And a few years ago, I talked about, I think when we first planted this church, that meeting I had with a pastor. He was a local pastor in town. And he was saying certain things that I thought was pretty interesting.

So we got together, and he started to talk about how we can learn from all the other religions. We can learn from the Muslims, and we can learn from the Buddhists. And right then I knew we were in for an interesting conversation.

But as we went on to talk, he said we don't talk about the fear of the Lord. We don't talk about sin, Shane. Only God hates sin.

Only God deals with sin. And we don't talk about those things that make people feel uncomfortable. We just talk about the things that uplift.

And we don't mention sin. We don't mention those things. I thought to myself, well how can you pastor a church and not talk about those things? That's what put Christ on the cross.

But we're not gonna talk about those very things. So that was pretty interesting. But we have to remember that sin is serious.

The devil's not a toothless lion that pesters us. He is a demonic king that will destroy your life. The only way, apart from Christ, you cannot win this attack.

The enemy, the devil is sly. He's slick. The Bible talks about the wiles of the devil, the trickery of the devil.

He comes in as an angel of light to deceive. So this isn't some toothless lion or a little guy right here with a little pitchfork and a tail. He's sent to kill, to steal, and to destroy.

So sin has to be taken seriously. And what I did, I just pulled out a few verses about sin. Romans says we are to abhor what is evil.

Abhor, that's a strong word. Abhor. We don't hear it much anymore, but in our language, it's not quite the right word to describe it.

But it means to utterly cast down, to debase, to hate what is evil, to hate sin, but to cling to what is good. Jesus said that He hated the sinful needs of the Nicolaitans. And He said if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.

It's better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell fire. James says, he warns that sin brings forth death. Psalms 119 says, I have hate and I abhorred all lying, but I love your law.

So throughout Scripture, it's crystal clear that we're supposed to hate sin. Sin is destroying families. Sin is why I had to give that memorial last week to that girl who overdosed on heroin.

Because of sin, this is destructive. Sin's destructive nature. And I like what A.W. Tozer said, when we become so tolerant that we lead people into mental fog and spiritual darkness, we are not acting like Christians, we are acting like cowards.

Did you catch that? That's a significant, that could almost be a Bible verse. When we become so tolerant, we allow everything, we're tolerant of everything, and we lead people into a mental fog and spiritual darkness, we are not acting like Christians, we are acting like cowards. And it's interesting, Jesus never ever, and I try to find a Scripture, so if you can find one this week, send me an email.

Jesus was never ever ever tolerant over sin. He never just winked, turned the other way, no big deal. He told the woman caught in the act of adultery, go and sin no more.

The man that he healed, go and sin no more. Or a worse thing's gonna come. He was never tolerant of sin, so where do we get this idea? What happens though, is he was very tolerant of the sinner.

And that's a hard balance. I haven't mastered it yet. If you have, let me know and you can speak sometime.

If you've mastered this balance of loving the sinner, but hating sin. And not offending people, but offending them when you're supposed to. And loving them in all situations, but having tough love and not being an enabler.

That's a very hard balance. But Jesus was the embodiment of truth and love. And I love how he'd just go and love people and say, uh-uh, not anymore.

Don't do that. And the picture of a loving father, right? I can pick up my son and love him and say never again will that gas, that five gallon gas can be in our house. I don't know where you found that, but that's not gonna happen again.

Don't tell Morgan, okay? This is the first service stuff. She'll be at the second service. But I came in the other day and our gas can, a little bit of gas, and it was in our hallway.

I'm like, what is he? He's building forts. He's at that age where he just messes up everything. So I love him, but you're not gonna do that again.

And that's where we see from God. We see him. We love you, but that's not gonna happen again.

And you'll see in your bulletins, the article I wrote, we're kind of going the opposite with the jars of clay. Lee Singer came out and said, you know, about homosexuality and gay marriage, and we can't really say anything. The Bible's not real clear.

Well, it's very clear. And what's interesting is people on the side that don't like what I'm saying, email me or they'll say, why does the church always have to talk about this issue? Well, let me tell you why. Because the culture is putting it in our face on a daily basis.

Church, change your mind. Church, change your opinion. Church, change your doctrine.

And it's coming daily. So at some point, we've got to stand up and say, no, it's not. Where's the ground? There's a line.

We say here and no further. So we're not bringing it up. We're simply countering at the onslaught of media that's bringing it to our attention.

So that's why you hear the church is being focal because the church is being pressured. So when you pressure us in this area, we will speak out against this area. And we love those struggling with same-sex attraction.

I've talked to them probably almost every week. But I've got to warn you about that sin. I love you, but I have to warn you.

And if you get trapped on either side, as we've talked about before, you can all love and nobody ever changes. And you just love somebody on their way to hell. You just hold their hand on the way to hell.

There you go. See, I loved you though, didn't I? Or you can beat them up with the word of God and they don't want to have anything to do with God. It's interesting.

I think I didn't ask permission from the family, so I'll be sensitive on this probably at the second service. But the memorial service, the person who, she passed away at his house and did heroin with this person, the dad did something remarkable. He brought that boy to church.

And I could barely hold him up on Easter Saturday because he was weeping so bad. The guy who did that with your daughter, you're bringing him to church? I was convicted. Because that was not, would have been my plan.

My plan would have involved a right fist, but of course, God's grace. And don't leave here thinking I did that. But God's grace takes over.

And that's when you know his grace. But so now, he's hopefully coming tonight to the second service. I got him a book.

We're staying in contact with this person. That's loving the sinner, but you better bet I'm going to warn you. That's why he came forward at Easter.

And he says, I've never heard this before. I've never heard this before. And I'm weeping.

He's weeping. I'm holding him up as he's crying. And it wasn't an easy message.

Go listen to the Easter message. It was not a soft, you know, rock your baby to sleep message. It was hard because you have to warn.

God warns. God warns his people. Where do we get off track thinking we can't warn? We can't say anything that's challenging because our culture doesn't like it.

Yeah, the culture's never going to like it. That's why pastors have to say, God, what do you want to say? Not what do I want to say? Because if we're swayed by popular opinion, we'll be swayed in the wrong direction against God's word. But the other side is dangerous too.

If all you're doing is beating people up with the word of God and condemning them, you're a Pharisee. And I'll probably say this again. I've got it written down a few times because I want to make sure I didn't forget.

But I am absolutely amazed at all the people who are defenders of truth, you know, real solid in Bible doctrine. They like to tell everybody off. They forget all the scriptures about love and grace and mercy and longsuffering and patience.

Why don't you pack those scriptures in your suitcase sometimes? Do you ever see that? They're so this. They can beat everybody. Yeah, but this and this are coming out against everybody.

Okay, got it, got it. But where's all these other scriptures? Well, I don't care about those. Yeah, it's obvious.

That's how you love the sinner and hate the sin is you have to allow love and brokenness to truly reign in your heart and humility. That's the only way. Because we'll gravitate to one.

I mean, I'll gravitate to this legalistic side if I'm not careful with the heart issues. And I'll gravitate towards this loving side if you don't stay in the word of God and see what God's word says about these issues. So with that being a long introduction, that's where my heart is for this message because the Bible speaks volumes about that's what put Christ on the cross.

Sin put Christ on the cross. He didn't come just because there's a few different ways. He didn't come because, well, let's try this out.

Sin was so horrible that it cost him his life, the perfect sacrifice. Yet we're supposed to not mention anything. I just got to love you.

And there's churches in town. I've talked to the pastor. That's their motto.

We're just going to love them as they come in. I love them. Well, when do they ever get converted? When do they ever change? Well, we're hoping they'll pick up their Bible someday and stumble upon it themselves.

No, that's not the goal of the person. That's the goal of the pastor is to preach that truth so that their lives are changed. You can't just hope somebody's going to read the Bible and stumble upon it because if they stumble upon it, they'll probably say, why haven't you been saying it? That's why this is so important.

But here's the two keys. Although dealing with sin is critical because of its destructive nature, we also need to encourage, love, support, and seek to understand. When we forget about grace, we can become self-righteous, rigid, and unloving.

And here's how I think. How would I want to be treated? Because we can dish out the judgment and the self-righteousness. Oh, but if I was in your position, how would I want to be treated? That's this young man I was talking about earlier who was there and he's been here.

I'm trying to put myself in his shoes as well. And he said, okay, how are they feeling? The ability to relate to people. Here's this whole thing on gay marriage.

You name it. Kids, prodigals, on drugs, whatever this. What's the key here? Well, here's one of the keys.

The ability to relate to people on their level to show genuine concern and love them regardless of their lifestyle is the mark of true Christianity. It's called compassion without compromise. And we see this.

You know loving parents, right? If they say, hey, I love you. You're still my son no matter what you do. I love you.

But that's not going to happen under this roof. I can't accept that lifestyle. I can't agree with that.

I have to challenge that. It's hard to find that balance. And I actually heard this at the mayor's prayer breakfast.

And I looked it up. It's called the Gospel According to You. Men read and admire the Gospel of Christ with its love so unending and true.

But what do they say and what do they think of the Gospel according to you? You are writing each day a letter to men. Take care that the writing is true. The only Gospel that some will read is the Gospel according to you.

And that really hit home with me because I'm thinking, that's a good point. Not everybody reads the Bible. I can overlook a lot of flaws in people in them and me.

And we look to Christ. We don't look to man. But the world can't.

And Lord knows our children can't. Every parent in the room, you should sit up straight and take heed to this. The only Gospel that some... My children are getting a perspective of God through me.

I had to sit down and say, wow. Remember I quoted on Father's Day last year, Dad, the lessons you give me 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 Dad, there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

Wow, I could have worship come back up and we just... That's how I'm feeling. I don't need to get through five notes. I need to get to your heart.

Five pages of notes. This is why a humble, gracious heart is so important. Truth that is not underscored with love becomes obnoxious, and we misrepresent the Gospel.

And I've brought copies before, and I'll bring copies again. There's a good book. Anton, who spoke here before, hopefully I'll get him here this summer, maybe again.

He wrote a good little booklet called Contentiously Contending. How people contend for the faith, but they're contentious. And what they actually do is we misrepresent the Gospel.

We misrepresent the love of Christ by being contentious and not loving. Now again, as I'm preaching to you, I could be sitting right there hearing the same thing. Because I've not mastered this area.

In case you haven't figured it out, I can tell people off pretty good when I get in debates about the Scripture and gay marriage and all these things. I can leave there going, I let them have it, Lord. Yeah, you sure did, but your attitude stunk.

I remember a guy in front of Vaughan's a while back. I actually apologized to him when I saw him again. He believes in baptismal regeneration.

I don't know if you know what that is, but some churches don't believe that a person's actually saved until they go under the water. So you can profess faith in Christ, but you better hurry up and get baptized because you're not saved until that happens. Luckily I read the early church fathers.

I know Augustine, some of them, leaned in that direction. But about the thief on the cross, a POW, a guy's walking up, he has a heart attack. What do you do with all these things? He just started to slam him for 15 minutes.

It got louder. It was like a deer caught in the headlights. And just started.

So we baptize unbelievers? That's what you're saying. We baptize unbelievers. And that's when he got agitated.

He just walked away. I'm thinking, wow, that was really good, Shane. He did not like how I came across and I left there, I don't know what happened.

But you learn from that. And I apologize. I came across wrong.

I apologize if you ever want to hear my view. Easy tone of voice. Let's get lunch.

And so I see him now and then, it's good. But it's like, wow, because you get passionate. And I'm thinking, you're telling people they're not saved until they go and get baptized? That's a works-based Oriental religion.

You're leading people astray. That's what's in my heart. But you can't quite deliver it like that because he got upset and left.

I mean, 6'2 and 230 pounds helps a little bit when you're debating. You can intimidate people. But that's not a good thing.

So that love and that grace and that humility has to be forefront. And it's hard. The guy's coming up to my house.

Hi, can you take this pamphlet? Sure. Let me tell you all about that heretical pamphlet. You're not Jehovah's Witness.

I'm Jehovah's Witness. Let me tell you. And then, just blow him out of the door.

Is that what Christ would do? Now, on the other hand, don't say I'm minimizing contending for truth. I write books about contending for truth. I preach about contending for truth.

And you have those little missionaries come into your house, give them some cookies, and you tell them about truth. But the Bible doesn't say don't welcome them into your house. Well, that's debatable text too, and maybe so.

So whatever your convictions are, go out and sit with them on the curb. Bring them lemonade. And say, have you thought about this? And that's how you really win people by loving them.

I haven't won too many people to Christ by yelling at them or being forceful. From the pulpit's a different story because nobody thinks it's directly related to them. So I can just let you guys have it, and you're like, oh, he's not talking to me.

But inside, your heart's saying, oh, Lord, I need you. So obviously preaching is a lot different than having a one-on-one conversation. I don't talk like this to people necessarily except for that guy at Vons.

I'm just sharing my heart so you can understand that I struggle with this area too because it's a hard one. You can get passionate about this, can't you? You can get passionate. It's all I can do sometimes to just hold myself back.

But the first thing, there's no way we're getting through this message, but Jesus said, Jesus still says, follow Me. And I want to talk about this. Jesus says, follow Me.

He still says, follow Me. Do you know He's saying that to everybody in this room? Some have followed Him. Some are kind of following Him.

Some have thought about following Him, and some think they're following Him. And here's the problem that I found, at least early on in my ministry, talking to a lot of young adults in the past. Here's what we think.

Jesus, yes, bless my agenda. Bless my plans. Bless my life.

Our idea of follow Jesus is, come on, Jesus, let me show you where I'm going. And when it doesn't go good, we get mad at Him. What? Come on.

Jesus, what about this best life now, and happy and healthy? Come on, my life is not going good. And Jesus says, no, you follow Me. Follow Me means dying to self, carrying your cross, come what may, losing your kids out in the ocean.

That song, Oh, As Well With My Soul, that's amazing. That's what follow Him means. No matter what comes, with this stage I can't really show you, but no matter what, I'm still following Him, I'm aiming towards Him, no matter what, I'm being hit by this, I'm still following Him.

Now, that may result in wealth. It may result in a nice home. Who knows? God blesses His people sometimes to be a blessing to others.

Your house is a lot nicer than my house, probably. That's not what the gospel is, though. Follow Him means, whatever the cost, I'm following You.

But this is what happens, doesn't this happen in American Christianity? Lord, bless my plans. Here's my plans. Here's what I'm going to do.

I'm going to go to school. I'm going to go to this university. I'm going to think about getting this job.

Come on, Jesus, come on. Okay, right there, that's far enough. And then I'm going to do this.

I want to marry this type of person. I want this many kids. And then we're going to live here, that house up on the hill.

Okay, come on, a little further. And then that's our idea of following Him. Right? For most people.

But it's the complete opposite. I'm not sure where I'm going to live, or where I'm going to work, or what school I'm going to go to, but I'm going to follow Him. Doesn't mean you don't put out applications, you don't pray, you don't seek God's will, but you allow Him to guide the ship versus you trying to steer the ship.

Any objection to America's lukewarm Christianity is met with a triumphant reply, but we are winning them. And what I mean by that is, and Tozer said this, I'm going to go on with his quote in a minute, but any time we challenge the lukewarm church, say, listen guys, this isn't working, we're the church that's in revelation, we're lukewarm, we're not seeking God, but people say, but Shane, we're winning them. We're winning them by the boatloads, by the truckloads, we're winning them, the church, we're winning them.

And then Tozer asks the question, which is perfect for this sermon, winning them to what? To true discipleship? To cross-carrying? To self-denial? To separation from the world? To the crucifixion of the flesh? To holy living? To nobility of character? To despising of the world's treasure? To hard self-discipline? To a love for God? To total commitment to Christ? Is that what we're winning them to? No, sir, just the opposite. That's why it's not working. You don't tell somebody, follow Christ, all your problems will be over.

No, they might start. Look at these things. True discipleship, cross-carrying, self-denial.

I mean, that one right there I don't like. My wife just said to me the other night, I can say all these things since she's not at this service, but a lot of the friends we had when we first got married, we're not friends with anymore because I can't go to Vegas every month, get drunk at Lake Havasu. I don't know.

Maybe I can, right? Of course not. Let's be real. So that's why following Christ costs us something.

A separation from the world. We don't like that. Some of you guys are laughing, so you must be heading to those places here shortly.

But you know what I'm saying, right? All kidding aside. There are certain things I can't go there anymore. I can't do that anymore.

I can't go and have some drinks with you later at the yard house. I can't do that. Why? Because I'm following Christ.

I'm a pastor. I want to be filled with the Spirit of God. Not waking up tomorrow going, why did I do that? In a pretty consistent pattern of that, I would be disqualified as well.

So I know there's a different standard, but also for all of us, that's following Christ. There is self-denial. The Puritans used to say, others may, you cannot.

I said, what's he talking about? Others may. Oh, got it. Others may do this and do this and do this.

You cannot. So we got to paint an accurate picture of Christ. Yes, He's an all-sufficient Savior.

Thank God for the cross. I will follow Him. But there's self-denial.

There's a separation from the world. There's a crucifixion of the flesh. There's a time where you have to turn the other cheek.

Take humility and run with it. Be despised. Be rejected.

You won't be able to set the record straight. You just got to take what's coming at you. Interesting too, we just had this happen Thursday.

Another Morgan story. You guys can all tell you heard these Morgan stories. But she, on Thursday, we went to this nice black-tie event, and it was a fundraiser for this organization who's coming against sex trafficking, going out and ministering to the women.

It's a great thing. So Morgan has a background with Hollywood and different things. When she came out of the ice house, she did a drama depicting on what these girls go through.

Well, nobody, they forgot to tell everybody that it was a drama. That's not her. So we had dozens of people going, I didn't know you used to be a prostitute.

I still had to answer email. I didn't know you used to be sex trafficked. Thanks for coming out.

No, no, no, no. I was just playing a part. And so now, can you send out an email, let people know? Come on.

And God just said, shut up. Take it. You guys all did that when you were younger.

You just didn't get paid for it. Ouch. So I'm trying to clean up damage control.

And God's just saying, take it. Doesn't that feel, isn't it weird to have a marked, somebody now thinks less of you, your opinion, your wife. Now you see how I feel.

And it's hard. These are hard lessons. Because I want to, you got to get an email out tomorrow.

You got to let everybody know that was just a drama. That's not her. Now, of course, I think it's good to clarify.

And people, you know, I got it. But at the same time, why was I getting so mad? Reputation. Was it not? We would never.

Oh, you did it. You just didn't get paid for it. I mean, my party lifestyle, I came out of a very Vegas, Havasu lifestyle.

So I know that lifestyle. I didn't want to be identified with it again. And so we're always being, and people sneering.

The editorials you see in the paper on these articles that I write, they go in the paper. People just attacking. Just all these things.

You just got to take it sometimes. There is a time, I believe, to defend yourself when warranted. But most of the time, you just have to sit and absorb what the world hates.

You're a punching bag for the world. So when it comes to keys to following Christ, this is not rocket science again, but it's focused on others. It's living like Christ.

He's not a genie in a bottle. That's why I always say that, or a butler to give us what we want. The whole thing about following Christ is this.

If you can sum it up in three things, it's others focused, it's character development, and it's about not doing what comes naturally. You do what comes supernaturally. You've heard that phrase before? Please don't do what comes naturally.

Because what comes naturally is the middle finger. Oh, I still know some of you haven't dropped that habit yet. Maybe you guys have, but the 530 service I know has not dropped that habit yet.

Or that anger. What comes out of you? Don't do what comes naturally. Do what comes supernaturally.

So that's what Christ is doing. He's coming against all of the desires of the flesh. The flesh wants to do this.

Christ says no. The flesh wants, Christ says no. So following him has to do with others, but it also has to do with character development and telling the flesh no.

That's a very healthy thing. Again, Jesus is going to talk about it as we keep reading. Here comes this bad word again that I can't seem to avoid.

Fasting. Fasting. He says the bridegroom's here, but when the bridegroom leaves, my disciples will fast.

Oh, man. That's a hard one. But it's very important.

I believe it's a very important spiritual discipline to start fasting, telling the body no. No. Many of you know I do that on Saturdays.

And around 2 o'clock today I almost said, you know what, forget it. I don't need to do it. This is getting legalistic.

And I was driving to go get something to eat. But instead I brought water and just came here and worship. But the flesh sometimes has to be mastered because if you don't master the flesh, the flesh will master you.

Either one of us is in control and nobody has it perfectly. The flesh is leading. The flesh is always leading.

The flesh wants to go home right now and get somebody to fill in while I speak so I can lay down and watch the NBA games that are going on. Right? The flesh wants to do this. So you've got to pull that flesh back in.

We were speculating how many people would make it tonight because of that. And I know it's going to be a short crowd because of all those playoffs and things. But telling the flesh no.

Randy, I hear you laughing back there. I bet you're recording it, huh? That's not as good. Well, that's true.

You've got to deny that flesh. So there's so much here I could speak about following Christ, but that's what it really boils down to. Loving God and loving Him and allowing Him to lead your life regardless of what comes.

Listen, that's very easy to say when the paycheck's there and the health is there and the good moods are there. It's very easy to say. But when the storms of life come, that's where the rubber meets the road.

And sometimes that's why I believe we have storms. Will you still follow me? Would you still follow me when you're going through that? Am I still the king on a cross? Or am I off the cross now? I save you and you just follow me. Get off the throne and put Christ on the throne and you start carrying that cross.

But we have to go through those things sometimes. And that's what following Him is all about. Matthew lost his life.

It would be interesting to do a study sometime on what happened to these disciples after Christ left. I think 11 of them were martyred. And John was boiled in hot oil.

Yeah. Exiled to the island of Patmos. I'll verify all this.

I'm just going off memory now. And sent there to die in exile. All of them hung upside down, beheaded for a lot.

See, that's why sometimes I just want to run up and grab people and say, don't you get it? These guys died for their faith. They were on fire for God. God was moving.

He changed the whole world upside down with 12 guys. 11 if you don't want to count the one that brought in Judas. But He turned the whole world upside down.

People today are not following God like that. If they were following God like that, you would see ministries flourishing. You would see lives change.

You would see breakthroughs. You would see the Spirit of God descending on places of worship. But a half-hearted approach doesn't work.

So follow me is not just, oh yeah, let's glance over this. This is total surrender. Christ, wherever you lead, I will follow.

You take my house, I lose my house, I will follow you. My financial 401k, everything falls apart, I will follow you. My wife files for divorce, I will follow you.

Oh God, help us. That's what it is. And we get confused and distorted when we think it's something different than that.

When we think it's all about, no, please don't misunderstand. I love blessings. God, could you bring some more finances in? Could you not have my whole family, nobody be sick all year, please Lord.

I mean, I love those things, and we pray for those things. But following Christ is through the midst of the storm, not around it. And that's really, I believe, what the heart of this is.

Number two, why does your teacher eat with sinners? Why does your teacher eat with sinners? It's interesting, this week too, I was thinking about this, I had lunch with a pastor that planted a church out in

East Palmdale, kind of East Palmdale, right in a hard area, Palmdale. We just had to laugh. He's had families leave because there's somebody off the street right next to them.

There's a prostitute over there. Now I know we need to be concerned about the environment. I got it, I've got little kids, I know.

But to leave a church because you're concerned about who you're ministering to is not a good heart. There's no other way to put that. And I thought of this, why does your teacher eat with sinners? Why do you associate with sinners? I like what John MacArthur said, there is no suggestion in Scripture that Jesus purposely assumed the look and the lifestyle of a sinner in order to gain acceptance.

See, there's the difference. He didn't assume the look and the lifestyle. He ministered to them.

But he didn't assume and look as the sinner. He didn't assume that lifestyle. That's the same thing.

We don't have to assume the lifestyle, the Vegas, Havasu lifestyle to still minister to the sinner. Now some of you are scheduled to go to Havasu, that's fine. Just, you know, just bring some water, lemonade or something.

But here's the challenging part. We're to minister to sinners, but 1 Corinthians 15:33, young adults, listen to this one. Do not be deceived, evil company corrupts good habits.

Wait a minute, how am I supposed to minister to sinners, but evil company corrupts good character? How do I balance that? Well, I'm glad you asked. I have the answer. We are called to minister to others in all areas of life.

We cannot totally separate from them or from the culture. What good is a light that is hidden? But if the relationship is pulling you in the wrong direction, it's time to rethink the relationship. That's the key.

If the relationship is pulling you in the wrong direction, away from Christ, rethink the relationship. In other words, are you ministering to them and helping them or are they pulling you away? And you use wisdom. I've had, you know, if there's a car wash down there now on J and Beach, and, you know, we're out and there's prostitutes on Sierra Highway and asking for money, and I'm like, you need the God, you need church.

Let me give you my wife's number or she'll call you and invite you to Bible study. That's it. I minister, but I'm not, I can't have, you know, put in a weird situation where people see you minister, but you use wisdom.

Because I come in contact with those people all the time. I don't know about you, but if you're just in life, and if you're open, you can always have that, but if you have that loving, hi, how are you doing, good, you know, attitude, people will be drawn to you through that light of Christ, and that's how we make a difference. All those kids at the memorial, some of them strung out on heroin and crack and crystal meth and all these things, still being able to reach out to them and draw them to the light of the gospel.

So that's the key. You know, especially older adults, if the relationship is not pulling you in the wrong direction, you know, you can continue to minister, but if you're going to minister and you're popping open some beers with them and they're pulling you down, guess what? Now you have a biblical mandate to withdraw from that relationship because it's pulling you in the wrong direction. That's one of the reasons

the Bible talks about being equally yoked, being equally yoked together.

Spouses, and I believe it's friends, business partners, equally yoked, pulling together in the same direction. We should relate to them, but never succumb to their lifestyle. And also ask, is the activity God honoring? Is it God honoring? Jesus led the conversations and the activity, and I've gotten to discussions with the younger pastors before.

They'll go to Yard House and have a big beer and minister to the waitress. Well, does a lemonade not work? I mean, are you sure? Everybody's laughing. They must do this.

But think about it. You get a big 18-ounce, 20-ounce L beer, 7, 8% alcohol volume content. You're having the equivalent to about five or six regular beers right there ministering to the waitress.

You wonder why she's not coming to Christ? You wonder why she's not going to church? There's got to be some distinction and difference there. I mean, call me stupid, but that's just not a good way to witness. Now, it might work for some people.

I don't know. I don't want to get emails. But overall, is the activity God honoring? And here's the kicker with this.

If you're everybody's friend, and you know who you are. There's people in this audience. There's people at the 530.

If you're everybody's friend, if you're a social butterfly, you're everybody's friend, you might need to work on truth and being honest and upfront with people. But if you're everybody's critic, you need to work on love. So which one are you? Are you everybody's critic? You like to pick apart everybody? You need to work on love.

See how easy this is? I make this real simple because we all know who we are. If you're not sure when you leave, ask your wife or a good friend. They'll tell you.

Are you tend to be critical or you tend to be everybody's friend? I know which one my wife will tell me. Yeah, I lean in this direction. And it's a hard job of preaching not to be critical sometimes when they see the depravity and the sin out there.

But if you're everybody's friend, and that's why we're a good balance because she's everybody's friend, I can be critical. So we come together. I said, you can't let him walk all over you like that.

You got to just stand your ground. Tell him this, do this. Oh, I can't do that.

So we balance each other out. It's good how that works. So think about that.

Are you a critical person? Let's just not laugh at this and leave. If you're a critical person, repentance needs to take place. That's not a good thing.

Do you come to church critiquing, critiquing everything? You go home and look up the Scripture, make sure I didn't miss one? Do you come with a critical attitude because God cannot work in a critical heart. But you also come with everybody's friend. And I'm not going to talk about truth.

I'm not going to upset anybody. I'm not going to do all these things. You've got to find the balance there and draw to that side that you're weak in.

I'm often amazed at how many defenders of the truth overlook the clear cut Scriptures on biting and devouring. Whoa. I didn't move much.

Matt, you better stay at that sound board. I'm often amazed at many of the defenders of truth that overlook the clear cut Scriptures on biting and devouring. Galatians 5.15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will destroy each other.

That would be a great sermon. If you bite and devour. If you bite and devour one another, you will destroy each other.

And I've got a lot more, but I know we're running short on time. But number three, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick do. And I don't know in an audience like this, I don't know everybody here, but do you think you're well? Do you think you're good? Young adults, people who haven't been here before, do you think you're well? Do you think you're good? Because Jesus said, those who are well, who think they're good, have no need of a physician.

But those who are sick, those who know they are sick, they need Him. This is a great spot for Romans 3.23 All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All have sinned.

Humility recognizes that we are fallible human beings who have sinned against God. Romans 6.23 says, For the wages of sin is death. Christ shed blood on the cross only makes sense in the light of the consequences of sin.

And then of course, 1 Timothy, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. So if you don't know Him, that's how you need to leave here, knowing Him. If you've been playing church, if you've been riding your parents' coattails, that needs to change tonight, especially in light of this verse.

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Basically, those who say, the need for God, right? Lord, I see my need for You. I see my need for You.

And I turn to You. That's what this whole point is all about. And then the fourth point, But go and learn what this means.

I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And this is interesting. I was going to turn to Hosea 6, but I don't think we'll have time.

I'll do it in the 530. But we always hear, Oh, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Oh, yeah, whatever.

That's powerful in the Old Testament. Because a lot of times, God's people would wander from God. They would wander from Him.

And then they would come to church as if they're doing God a favor. They would bring their lamb. They would bring their bull.

They would bring their goat. They would sacrifice it. Say, look, Lord, we're sacrificing it.

And God would rebuke them through the voice of the prophets, saying, I don't desire that. I desire a broken and contrite heart. That's what I want.

Your sacrifice is nothing. Those are futile attempts to reach God. What I need is a broken and contrite heart.

So that's what Jesus is thinking here. He's saying, go and learn what this means, you legalistic, fundamentalist Pharisees. Go and learn what this means.

Stop trying to please God by doing all these things and let your heart break. Rent your hearts, not your garments. They would also go, oh, and they'd rip their shirt off.

I can't believe God. Oh, we're so holy in this. He goes, stop, put your shirt back on.

Do heart surgery. Do heart surgery. So that's what Jesus, he's pulling in from the Old Testament, saying God desires mercy and not sacrifice.

Mercy and not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. How do you know if you're a sinner? We all are.

See, that's a very easy question. We all are. That's what I told people struggling, same sex in marriage.

I know I don't want to get on this thing, but those struggling with that, I tell them, guess what? I'm a sinner too. I'm a sinner. Not those kind, these kind.

The only difference is I recognize it and I turn to him and I say, Lord, forgive me of my sin. Create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit in me.

Lord, I confess and I repent. Now I'm a child of God. The Bible calls me a saint, not a sinner.

That's the only difference. So stop putting this sin way up here at the top. Oh, how could they? We say, we're all sinners.

If it wasn't for the grace of God, there go I, down the road to destruction. It's a very good message because it's a life-changing message. I'll just have Ronnie and Chelsea, they can come up now.

Hopefully they're listening in there. But it's interesting as we close, this issue of worship, now what we do is we go into a time of worship. And you know what? A lot of churches put this in as a filler.

Like, oh, we got 10 minutes of worship. That's what churches do. But that's not what worship is, guys.

We had, I think, 70 people at the worship night on Monday worshiping God. And what worship is to me, it reminds me of when I travel. And I used to travel a lot and miss the kids or family.

And my heart wants to go home. I'd be preaching, and as soon as preaching was over, guess where I'd want to go? I'd want to go home. I want to go home and hold my wife and my kids.

I want to go home. My heart's not here. I got a job done, but my heart was home.

And that's the same thing with worship. Your heart should be home, wanting to go home. That's why I don't understand this perplexing issue in the churches where people don't want to worship.

There's no time, they don't want to worship. How can you? In this sin-sick, perverted, God-rejecting culture, I must worship. I need a spiritual shower every day.

Cleanse me of this filth of this sin-sick culture. And the only thing that does that is worship. That's why it's so hard, but that's why it's so powerful.

So I would just encourage you during this time, if you don't have a longing for worship, ask God why. Ask him. Ask, Lord, why? I want to worship you.

I want that. And that's why we have this time. It's not just to get a filler in before the next service.

The whole point of my message was to stir that heart so there's something inside of you going, Oh, Lord, I need this, I need this. And then worship is where the heart breaks and change takes place. It doesn't take place if you hear this and then go out there.

Because people week in and week out. Out the door, go. Out the door, go.

No change ever takes place. They came and heard, but they did not worship and repent. So nothing changes.

So to me, this time is absolutely critical. Absolutely critical that we stay and we worship, even in the 530 service. And that's where the heart cries out to God.

These changes that we're talking about don't just change. They don't change in our heart by reading the Bible. They don't change in our heart by wanting to, by being sincere, by thinking about it.

Many people think about it, right? Yeah, he's right. I've got to make some changes. Oh, boy.

But not right now. And we leave here no different than when we arrived. That's why I say that because I see it all the time.

Not here necessarily, but every church, a lot of places I preach, people leave no different than when they arrived. And this is the point right here during worship.

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