

Overcoming Fear ■ 10 Tips for Turbulent Times

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the need for a national turning back to God during challenging times, urging individuals to prioritize seeking God, fasting, and crying out to Him earnestly. It highlights the importance of overcoming fear, trusting in God's promises, and not rebuilding idols torn down by God. The message encourages believers to persevere in prayer, shepherd their families with faith, and seek God above all else, trusting in His provision and guidance.

Scripture: Joel 1:12, Matthew 6:33, Psalms 119:81, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalms 119:37, Psalms 119:116, Psalms 119:28, Psalms 119:147, Psalms 119:126

Topics: "National Repentance", "Trusting God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

This would be a turning point, a tipping point for our nation to turn back to you. God, I pray that this message gets out there and helps and encourages, convicts and uplifts. And that is only done by the power of your spirits.

And I pray this in Jesus' name today. Amen. Amen.

I was thinking many years ago, I told the Lord, thank you so much Blessing and Brandt as well for helping us with worship while staying within the guidelines of what we're allowed to have inside the facility. But I told God many years ago that I would preach whether there's 5,000 or no one. And I didn't think he'd ever take me up on that offer.

So I'm going to get right into the message, overcoming fear, conquering chaos, 10 tips for turbulent times. But let me tell you this up front. My office manager and the staff here decorated the sanctuary with pictures of the members all over the place.

So if you catch me looking here, looking there, not always looking there, have a little bit of grace. Your pastors have never been through anything like this. Fortunately, I have a little experience talking through a

camera.

But it is challenging because you don't see the audience. You don't get to go off of that. That can actually be a good thing because you don't see the sour faces either.

And we just have to plow through. So let me just say a few things that I saw on Facebook that might encourage you because I think it's okay to have a little bit of humor. But you're seeing those things out there.

Just like that, something happened. Well, just like that, spanking and prayer are brought back into the schools. And just like that, no one asks what a stay-at-home mom does anymore.

They have a clear idea of what happens when all of us are forced to stay at home. And we're going to work through this. We're going to get through this.

But here's my challenge. I wanted to just do a short message, but God really put on my heart to speak maybe longer. And it's not like we have anything to do, right? There's time to sit.

We can go back over this message. You can share this message with others. And we just want to focus on what God's Word says.

But I do want to tell our immediate family here in Los Angeles County that this just came out last night. The headline says, Breaking. All indoor and outdoor gatherings in Los Angeles County are prohibited.

Now, I want to just, a lot of questions are coming in. This is not martial law. We know the marshal who is in charge of the law.

So this is not there. We're not there at any stage of that right now. What this is, it's an order because a lot of people aren't respecting the 10-person rule.

And they're just, they don't care about it. So the county had to take a little bit more drastic measures. You can read all about that on the county website, but I just want to clarify that there are essential places going to be open.

There are businesses that are essential. They're going to still be operating. And before I get into the message, I want to do four things.

First, I want to thank those, all of those people who are serving. Firemen, nurses, health care practitioners. Who would ever think that a grocery store clerk would be more important than a basketball star? So we want to thank all of those people.

We also want to remind you to download our app for the radio station. We actually have a radio station. It's called West Side Christian Fellowship or WCF Radio Network.

So you can go to wcfradio.org. That's wcfradio.org. And it's 24 hours a day, seven days a week, heartfelt worship and sermons. People like Alistair Begg, David Jeremiah, many solid teachers are on there. And you can listen anywhere with your app.

So I want to encourage you to do that because we're going to need encouragement in the days going forward. Also, I wanted to let you know that our prayer team is available. So if you're on Facebook, you

can do comment section there.

Our prayer team will respond to your comments. They can respond to you individually as well. If you have questions about God, if you're anxious, if you just don't know what's going on, you need someone to pray with you, reach out to you, they are available.

Also, that's on YouTube as well. You can see the comment thread on YouTube. I just went on briefly.

It looks like we have people from Holland and different countries already tuning in to listen and be encouraged. So again, prayer team is available. If you need that, just reach out.

And I want to remind you also, especially mainly our local body here. And again, I might look at these pictures to remind myself who they are. We are starting our fast today.

We believe that God looks at the heart of the person and fasting is really a step of humility. If my people who humble themselves, pray, turn from their sin and seek me, fasting is in all four of those areas. It's a form of repentance and humility saying, God, my hunger for you outweighs this hunger.

Every time that hunger comes on, I'm going to seek you with all of my heart, my strength. I'm going to pray and we're going to contend for our nation. We're going to contend that you get these churches open.

Again, you can close the church doors, but you can't silence the truth. And that is the truth. Well, I know nobody's clapping.

It's difficult. But I'm going to just get back on track here for a minute. Also want to let you know, I've been going back and forth on this, but I will just tell you this.

People want to know about giving. At our church, we don't promote giving a lot. We actually don't pass a plate.

People just give willingly. It's not part of really what we do or who we are. But we do want to let people know that during this season, your local church, the churches, those out there ministering will need people to continue to give.

So you can do that on our Facebook pages there. The link goes all to our website, back to westsidechristianfellowship.org. And you can give there if God leads you in that direction. So again, I might go long because I want you to go back and listen to this when you have time.

Anyone there with little kiddos at home? It's difficult. I've got quite a few myself, and it makes it difficult. So this message is designed not only to encourage you right now, but also to go back and listen to.

So I had a message designed. It was all based on Joel, 2 Chronicles, and it was done until Wednesday morning. I started to read Psalm 119.

I want to encourage you, read that today. Read Psalm 119. God just started to pour all of this into my heart, and I said, you know, this would be something really good to share with the people that God has put on my heart.

So I switched messages, switched titles of the message, everything to right now begin on Thursday morning. I finished it up early this morning. But before I get into the message, I want to just remind us of a

few things.

This is serious. What's going on is serious. It's affecting many people, and God wants us, I believe, to take things seriously, but not lose perspective.

So in other words, I'm supposed to take this seriously, but not lose perspective. We are going to struggle with fear, but fear is not supposed to dominate. I don't think God wants us to walk around flippantly and upsetting people and acting like we have a spirit of rebellion and not being considerate for those.

In other words, I cannot have a spirit of fear. I can go to the grocery store. I can hug someone.

I can shake their hand. I can be within a foot personally, but we want to honor the governing authorities, and we want to honor those who maybe do not know God, and they're watching how we act. So it is very important, I think, to take this seriously, especially if you look at what just happened in Italy recently over the last, I think, 24-30 hours, that the death rate has skyrocketed in that area, mainly elderly, mainly those with chronic illness or immune system type deficiencies, but this is something that is serious that I think we need to look at.

It's not uncommon, you know, the bubonic plague was in Constantinople, I think it was in the fourth, fifth century, and then in, I believe it was London in the 1400s, and then, of course, Australia, probably 1800s or so, and it hit different areas. This is something a little bit different, but I believe it needs to be taken seriously, especially how it's affecting our families. One sad report I saw yesterday, it said North Texas Hospital reports spike in severe child abuse cases, and you're going to see that in the hospitals.

Child abuse cases are starting to increase. They said what they saw in just one week is what they normally see all month, because parents don't know what to do. They lash out, and usually, here's the sad part, it's usually kids four and under that the story was reporting on.

So this not only affects us physically, it affects us spiritually, it affects us emotionally, and it affects us in so many different ways, so we have to be able to offer people hope. It's not that you and I never fear, but fear won't take you down. That's the key.

If you say, well Shane, do you ever struggle with fear? Of course, if I read the media, I struggle with fear. If I look to God's word, I don't. It's a choice to take our thoughts captive as well, and there are many questions, aren't there? Many questions out there.

China's involvement, interestingly enough, I'm trying to research this a little bit more, but it looks like China is purchasing a lot of companies in Italy that are going under. So is it just a coincidence, many different conspiracy theories? Is it just a virus that hit, and we're dealing with it as the world? I don't know. There are many questions, but there is one answer.

So I don't know if you've never heard me before, I don't know if you're just tuning in, I don't know if a friend sent you this, but there is only one answer, and one answer alone. It is time for the nation and you to turn back to God. That's our only hope.

If my people cry out to me, call out to me, I can heal their land. Listen, in one week, God crushed all of our idols, and he wants us to turn back to him. The mission is not canceled, okay? West Side Christian Fellowship, those who maybe call us your family as well in different states, wherever you're at, the mission is not canceled.

We are still in the mission field, but the battle plan has changed. The battle plan has changed, and that's why we need prayer and encouragement as well. This is a very challenging time for me and my family and others, but this is a time where I will tell you this, God has become more real to me now than ever before.

He's become that rock that I've always clung to, but now it seems like there's a deeper type of relationship, a deeper foundation because of this. So I don't want to downplay what is happening. I don't want to downplay what is happening, but I also don't want to amplify fear, and that's the struggle.

So here's point number one. You're saying, Shane, you finally got to it. It took you 10 minutes to get to the sermon.

Well, here's 10 tips for turbulent times. I'm not going to say that very many times because it's a tongue twister. 10 tips for turbulent times.

Again, I don't want to belabor things, but I also don't want to just hurry up and get through this because I think people are hungry for truth right now. They have time to listen. So number one, the Bible does downplay worry.

The Bible will downplay worry. The Bible doesn't promote being worried and being anxious. The Bible actually downplays worry, but then it offers hope.

So God will say, here's the conditions, here's what's happening, but here's the hope. Here's what you're going through, here's the challenges, but here's the hope. So we must do the same thing, especially from the pulpits and as Christians.

We don't downplay this. We don't minimize it. We don't poke fun at people who might be very fearful at this time.

Oh, come on. It's no big deal. And actually, in my case, I might need to acknowledge this.

A week or two ago, I downplayed it a little bit more than I do now. Now, I don't know what the right word is, but many of us didn't take it quite as serious. A couple weeks ago, it's just like the flu.

It's no big deal. It will blow over. And clearly, we see that the enemy is working overtime.

Clearly, we see that, okay, this might not be everything we thought it would be. And I think that's a good thing in that this sense, God's got to get us to a place of complete brokenness where we cry out to God. And I actually erased this from the sermon this morning, but I'm adding it back right now because it's on my heart strongly.

I don't think we're there yet. I don't think our nation is crying out to God. I don't think we're that worried just yet.

I still got this. I think and I pray it's not the case, but I don't see our nation crying out to God yet. I see them crying out to Costco.

I see them crying out for this or that, but I don't see that deep repentance taking place. It's getting there. Don't get me wrong.

There's more prayer going up than ever before. There's more people seeking God than ever before, but there has to be a cry, a call of desperation. And my prayer is that God do not get us to that point.

Let us cry out to you before we get to that point. So number one, how the Bible downplays worry. The Bible does downplay worry and offers hope, but here's what I'm trying to say.

How people are responding to this clearly reveals where their heart is. Now, I'm not going to wait till the end of the message. I'm going to tell you this right now, that I want to tell you about God right now before I go any further.

Here's why. I've noticed at funerals, many people, especially during funerals, and I'll read, let's say Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want, and it's just beautiful.

People say, oh praise God, I needed that right now, but they don't know the shepherd. You can quote scripture right now and not know the God of the Bible. This is a time of self-examination.

Have you humbled yourself? So this is, I guess this is all created for this one question, I should say two or three questions. Have you humbled yourself, repented of your sin, and asked God to save you? Is he your shepherd? Are you trusting in him, or are you trusting in religion? Are you trusting in who Christ is, or are you trusting in good works? Listen, I sent this out to hundreds and hundreds, thousands of people actually. I sent this link out for this message to different religions, Hindu, Jehovah Witness, Mormon.

I sent this out to unbelievers. I sent this out because this is the main question. Do you truly know God? Is he your shepherd? Is he the good shepherd? Have you repented of your sins and believed in the gospel? I see so many people saying, well I'm trying to be a good person, or I'm a good Baptist, I'm a good Lutheran, I'm a good... No, no, no.

It's what Christ has done on the cross. This is, it's a time for self-examination. There is no peace.

Let me tell you this, as God is my witness, there is no peace, zero peace, until you are right with God. Because then you trust in an all-sufficient Savior. You trust in the God who actually holds, holds time and eternity in his hands.

He controls, God controls the destiny of nations. It's amazing. So turn, it's a beautiful word.

It's a word that many pulpits are afraid of, but I guarantee you they're going to start resurrecting that word again. It's called repentance. I repent of my sin.

I repent of my selfishness. I repent of my pride. Oh God, would you save me? And that is the answer for America.

That's why we have times like this. And then number two, number two, embrace God's wake-up call. Embrace God's wake-up call.

And here's where I'm going to Psalm 119 now. I'm not going to say the verses because I want you to read through the whole Psalm 119 now. The psalmist said this, before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.

Before I was afflicted. In other words, God, before you spanked me, I was out of control. Before you got my attention, I was out of control.

But now that you've afflicted me and I went astray, but now I keep your word. So embrace God's wake-up call. Yes, we don't like it.

We can become bitter and angry, but we have to embrace it and say, God, what are you doing in and through me? Why are you doing this? And like I said, in one fell swoop, all of our idols have been dethroned. But from a biblical perspective, this could be a wake-up call. Medical staff, I just read this yesterday, they are calling the situation in Italy the apocalypse because of the caskets and the death rate and different things.

And I was reminded of Luke 21 11. There will be great earthquakes, by the way. I think there was one in Utah.

You might read of one last time in Croatia. I think there's a shaking going on. There's famines.

And this is Jesus. There will be great earthquakes, famines, and pestilence in various places, and fearful events, and great signs from heaven. So none of us know, okay, is this a sign that Jesus was talking about? Depending on your eschological view, if you don't know what I'm talking about, basically people have a different view of when God is coming again, but we do know he's coming again.

And people often email me, Shane, you're just trying to scare me. And I say, I am. I'm trying to sear the hell out of you.

Because you've got to have that fear that God says, I warn you, I give you, no, that's not cussing, don't worry. He wants to bring that out of us. He wants to change us from the inside out, and you have to tell people the truth.

And I find this so ironic. This is unbelievable. Listen to this.

One of the most quoted verses during this time. You know what it is right now? You can google this. I mean, there's a couple ones.

I think Philippians about anxiety, John 3, 16, the great tribulation. One of the top verses is this one. You can probably only see, you can't see the two here.

2 Chronicles 7, 14. Many of us know, I mean, our sign out front says that if my people who are called by my name will what? Humble themselves and turn to me. But here's what's interesting.

Here's the context. The verse right before it. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain.

In other words, there was no, there was no fruit, there was no food. And when I command locusts to devour the land. Or when I send a plague among my people.

Listen, this is God's wake-up call. The context is a disobedient and rebellious people needed to be woken up from their slumber. So God, when I send these things because I love you so much.

When I send these things to turn you back for me. If you humble yourself and repent and seek my face and turn from your wicked way. I will hear from heaven and I will forgive your sins.

And it's interesting. Provision is being dried up. Locusts is devouring.

If you google this, you'll find out what locusts is doing right now in Africa and possibly hitting to the Middle East. And what is a plague doing, the pestilence doing now in our nation and across the world. Now again, we don't know if this is what, if this is truly an end times type of prophecy.

But we do know that this is a wake-up call from God. And like Paul said, I'm hard-pressed on every side, amen. I'm hard-pressed on every side, but I'm not crushed.

I'm perplexed, but I'm not in despair. I'm confused, but I'm not without hope. Paul says, we look to you and you alone for our guidance and for our strength.

So number three, don't worry, I'll try to get through this quickly. Number three, difficulties shape our character, amen. Difficulties shape our character.

Or guess what? They ruin it. Many people are ruining their character right now because they're making very ungodly, unwise decisions. They're possibly running back to an addiction.

They're possibly running away from God when they need to be running to Him. So never forget this in the Psalm 119, it said, teach me good judgment and knowledge. Well, why is that a big deal? Because that's what we need to get through these dire times, good judgment and knowledge.

And the context in Psalm 119 is affliction. We hear this word a lot in 119, teach me good judgment knowledge, Lord, through my affliction. Here's what affliction means.

It's when God allows something to happen. In Deuteronomy and Chronicles, it talks about the bread of affliction. And in the plural, many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them from them all.

In other words, this should not be a surprise. Many Christians are being shaken right now because they believed in a false gospel that tells you that God is a genie in a bottle, you can have whatever you want, you're going to be wealthy, healthy, and have the best house on top of the hill, and God's going to just get you through all challenges. That's not the Christianity of the Bible.

The Christianity of the Bible says, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. And God begins to bring you through the storm, not around it. That's the God of the Bible, and that's how we develop trust.

That's how character is built and sustained. How many of us need help with joy, patience, and trust this week? I'm assuming most of you out there see pictures and out there. How do you develop joy if you're not challenged with sorrow? How do you develop patience if you're not challenged with impatience? How do you develop trust if you're not challenged with fear? See, here's how God works.

I'm fearful God needs to prune that fear away. I look to His Word, I look to His strength, and I begin to develop trust. There's so much impatience right now.

I went to the store, I just wanted a dozen eggs, that's all, and the line is 45 yards at each register. I put those away and just got in my truck and left, very impatient. But how do I get rid of that impatience? God has to challenge me in that area.

He has to prune it away. And how do I experience joy if I don't first confront sorrow? So remember that this is a wonderful time to shape our character. And I'm not minimizing the death mortality rate.

I'm not minimizing the pain of families. But I do want to remind you that God can use this to shape who you are. If we become a lazy Christian without difficulties and challenges, we will actually, our faith will wither.

These are the times where faith is strength, and this is the time where faith is built up. Then we can look back and tell our kids, this is what God has brought me through, and He will bring you through as well. And then number four, oh please hear this, post it on your refrigerator, post it wherever.

Minimize the media and maximize the moment. Minimize the media and maximize the moment. What do I mean by that? I was googling something and it said the top 10 movies right now are about pandemics on Netflix.

My kids, one of my kids, let's watch that. No, no, we don't need to watch about a pandemic during a pandemic. You need to put on things that build you up spiritually.

That's why the psalmist said, turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, direct my steps back to your word, and there comes a point in your own heart you have to say, turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things. If you're going to sit at home and just get drunk or get medicated and watch things that pull you down spiritually, you will not get through this without a tremendous amount of pain and fear and anxiety. God says maximize this moment by minimizing the worldly influence.

Time in God's word and prayer changes your heart. He goes on in Psalm 119, my soul clings to the dust. Does that sound familiar right now? My soul clings to the dust, revive me how according to your word.

My soul melts from heaviness, strengthen me how according to your word. And you might be sitting out there going, what in the world does that mean? According to your word, according to your word, strengthen me according to your word, revive me according to your word. Here's what this means.

In God's word, God's word is absolute truth. God's word does not change. It is the embodiment of truth is who he is.

So when he says something, it's going to happen and end a story. So in God's word, he provides promises. So according to, in other words, Lord strengthen me and revive me as I look to your promise.

Your word said seek me and you will find me. Draw nigh to me and I will draw near to you. You look to me with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and I will comfort you.

I will embrace you. I will be your shelter. I will be your refuge.

I will be your strong tower. I will be your king. I will be your conqueror.

I will be everything to you if you look to me. See, I take God at his word and I can, I can take those promises to the bank. So you have to look to his word.

You have to look to his word. Really what you're looking to is to his promises. David said, I've never seen the righteous famish.

I have never seen, I have never seen the righteous forsaken. Let me tell you this, those who know God, he will never forsake you. Yes, there are challenges.

Yes, people have lost their, lost children or loved ones in many calamities and it feels like God's not there, but he is always there. He's an ever-present help with time and need. He's, his word says, I will never forsake you.

I will never leave you. Cling to me. Hold on to the cross and that word, that promise revives me.

So here's how it works. I go on the computer. The world is falling apart.

All hell is breaking. You should look at some of these stories. Worst case scenario.

I don't want to hear worst case scenario. I want to hear best case scenario. How many will be affected? The mortality rate, the government shutting down, military plans.

It's all this and you're feeding and you're feeding and you're feeding. God says, look to me and me alone. Don't be conformed to, be, be, be, be prepared.

Know what's going on, but look to me and me alone. Let me be conformed, not to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You have to focus on who God is.

And that leads me right into the next point. You have to fuel hope, not fear. Now, that's, that's not a cliché.

That's a reality. Did you know this? Throughout the day, you're either fueling fear or you're fueling hope. You're either gravitating towards fear or you're gravitating towards hope.

Remember, Psalm again, remember the word to your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has given me life. Fear, did you know fear and chaos need a host? The virus needs a host, meaning it needs a body.

Fear and chaos cannot dwell without a host. In other words, come on into my house. Let me host you.

Let me host you, fear and anxiety. And it needs fuel. So many of you out there, let me tell you this, if you don't know who God is, that's where it must start.

You must turn your life completely over to him and stop watching a bunch of junk that is going to fill your heart with fear. Get into his word. Get into prayer.

Get into worship. Reach out to us. Reach out to us.

If you made that commitment today, if you said, I need to know God and I need help, reach out to us. Email, Facebook, it doesn't matter. And we will get people administering to you through the internet.

Listen, as discouraged as many of us are, we've also all been praying, God, I just need more time with my family. And now look what happens. Lord, I need more time with you.

Look, this is a wonderful time where we can seek God again. And number six, this is my favorite point. Number six, we must prevail in prayer.

We must prevail in prayer. What do I mean by that? Well, you've heard me say it before if you've been listening, but microwave Christianity, five-minute devotionals, quick prayer is not going to cut it in these dire times. We need broken people again, petitioning God, crying out to God, spending time in the prayer closet.

Well, Shane, can you prove that from Psalm 119? I can. He said this, I rise before the dawning of the morning and I cry out for help. He said, I get up early.

What does that mean? That's my priority. Sleep is not his priority. The media is not his priority.

The Bible says he rises up. He rises up early in the morning and he cries out for help. And parents, let me tell you this, or those maybe who aren't parents, but you're in your home, you set the tone.

You set the tone of humility in your home. Men, women, you set the tone. Be quick to ask for repentance, quick to ask for forgiveness.

In this season right now, the blame game is over. We can no longer say, well, you don't know my spouse. You don't know how difficult she is.

The Bible never says do this unless you have a difficult spouse. It always says do this on your part and I will honor that. So the blame game must end.

We must get back to prevailing prayer. And by chance or by sovereignty, I'm not sure, but I was reading a book on George Mueller. By the way, now is the time to read good books.

All of my books are on our website for free, free downloads. And I hate when people say, oh, you're just promoting them. I am.

I'm promoting free books to help people. Amen. So we want to get you into good books.

George Mueller, A.W. Tozer, Leonard Ravenhill, we can recommend books as well. But he said this, and if anybody relied on God, it was George Mueller. Never asked for a dime and funded millions of dollars through his orphanages, helping millions of kids in England.

I believe it came out, I don't know the total number of how many kids he helped, maybe in the tens of thousands. But he said this, here's how you have prevailing prayer that is answered. Number one, you depend on Jesus.

Okay? Not your retirement, not your 401, not your boss, not your job. God can take everything away from you. And he says, now will you worship me? I depend on Jesus and Jesus alone.

You are my sustenance. You are my ever-present help in time of need. I'm looking to you.

And then he lists number two. Are you ready for this? Forsake all known sin. Forsake sin.

God told the prophet, he said, I can hear you. My ear's not, my ear's not short, or my hand's not short. My ear's not, my, I'm not hard of hearing.

But your sins, your sins have separated you from me so that I cannot hear. Listen, I'm not talking about a perfect person. I'm talking about a person who comes before God and says, God, cleanse me of all my known sin.

I repent of you. I repent of these sins, God. And I want to get my heart right.

I want to look to Christ and depend on Jesus. I'm forsaking the sin. What about the sin of anger and rebellion? What about watching and looking the porn, the porn industry? Did you, these things are

breaking my heart.

The porn industry is growing right now. Porn sites are offering free subscriptions. They're, they're trying to, see here, when both, I said this last week, when both God and the devil are after your soul, you know it's important.

So the enemy's coming in like a flood, but God is raising up a standard against him through his word. So he said, depend on Jesus, forsake all known sin. In other words, repent and have a clean heart.

And then he says, you have to exercise your faith. You have to exercise your faith. In other words, I'm not going to stay in my house fearful.

I'm going to respect the governing authorities. I'm going to do it, but I'm going to exercise my faith. Lord, your word says this, that I will make a difference.

I will help people. You put this in our heart. We're going to see this through.

And I'm exercising, right? Exercising faith. How do you build muscle? How do you get in shape? It hurts. And you have to exercise that faith.

And then finally, George Mueller said you have to preserve, persevere in prayer. And it's interesting. I looked up that word this morning.

I got up at three this morning excited to tell you this. Persevere in prayer. It means this, to persist, to persist in something in spite of counter influences, in spite of opposition, and in spite of discouragement.

Amen. Did he just call it out? What is going on in our nation today? Persistent prayer in spite of counter influences. I mean, I'll try to be positive and I'll get so good.

Negative Nellie. No, no, no, no, no. I'm persistent.

I don't care what you say, Negative Nellie. I want to know what positive Christ says. Persistent in opposition.

There's so much opposition now. And behind this, thank God for our president leading us in National Day of Prayer. Thank God for our local officials.

But in many cases, they're hoping they can also shut down churches and silence that voice of truth. So we persist in that. We also have to persist when it comes to discouragement.

The more discouraged we get, the more persistent I have to have to pray. So in a nutshell, when counter influences are coming in and negative opposition and discouragement, the strength on the inside has to be greater than the pressure on the outside so I don't implode. That's why persistent prayer is so important.

And number seven, I'm just going to throw this out there to parents. This is the time where you need to shepherd your child's heart, not break their heart. You need to shepherd their heart.

Kids need to see faith right now, not fear. I haven't perfected this in our home. My wife and I, we still mess up a little bit, but we're not going to look what the news says.

Oh, look what's going on. We're going to turn this into a positive. Look what God can do.

If the truth be told, I've had two of my kids so far say, I like this because I have more time with you. So our kids are, again, not minimizing what's going on. It's terrible.

We're praying against that. But also, whatever the enemy tries to intend for evil, God can turn around and make it for good. Now is when you contend for your families.

Now is when you pray over your children and say, hey, we're praying at lunch. We're praying at breakfast. We're praying at dinner.

Where are you at in your walk with the Lord? Let me pray for you and over you. Take them through a study. Get them through the word of God during this season.

Shepherd your child's heart. They need to see faith, not fear. Here's why, parents.

The atmosphere of your home is directly related to the atmosphere of your heart. And we need to start shepherding our children with love and equip them. Tell them, hey, here's what's going on.

This is normal throughout history. Here's what God's word says. We're going to look to him and him alone.

We might lose employment. We might lose some savings. We're looking to him.

And it's going to be wonderful and okay. And you set that tone. Sometimes even if you don't believe it, you need to say it.

You know, you need to say, Lord, my mind says something else. My mind is discouraged, but my heart says trust in you. And I need to believe.

Not like Jeremiah said that the heart is evil, but I'm talking about the heart that God has changed. And then number eight, seek God first thing before the media. Amen? Okay, I'm sure many of you are saying amen, but just think about this.

Seek God first thing before the media. Now, I pulled this from Matthew 6.33, not Psalm, but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things will be added to you. Here's why.

Whatever we seek first is our priority. There's no way around that. Whatever I seek first is my priority.

If I get up and I have to seek Starbucks before God, that's my priority. If I have to seek what's the media say, what happened last night before God, that's my priority. So what I've done, I'm encouraging you to do is get up seeking God and get to the media later.

I've had to turn off my phone and I put a post-it note. The post-it note says, don't turn me on until you seek God. And you have to be reminded of that.

So this has to happen during this season. Be intentional. Be strategic.

Say, God I need to hear from you. When you go, when you go in the morning to hear from God, he will answer. When you come hungry, you will be filled.

And then number nine, when God tears down your idols, don't rebuild them. When God tears down your idols, don't rebuild them. God is tearing down the idol of sports and Hollywood and comfort and convenience.

Many have lost who knows how much money in the stock market. And we have we have all this trust in these things that that we shouldn't be trusting in. So when God begins to tear down your idols, do not rebuild them.

Again from the psalm, he said, I love your commandments more than silver and gold. So see, here's what happens during these times. Most people love their idols.

They love their silver. They love their gold. But when God begins to strip away things, we begin to say like the psalmist, I love your commandments more than silver and gold.

God, you can give me all the gold in the world, but I don't want to. I don't want that above you and what your word says and your commandments. Use this time to rebuild your faith and strengthen your soul.

So here's what happens. Anytime something is removed from your life, you can add things in. The problem is many people are adding the wrong things in.

We have to add the right things back into our schedule, into our soul. So again, keep those idols torn down. Let me just tell you, people have been asking, okay, what should my day look like? And it has to be built around who you are.

But let me tell you what I do. I try to get up early and I seek God first. I pray, I read, I worship a couple hours in the morning.

Then I'll go on a walk, a prayer walk, and then I'll get back and pray with my family, talk about the day, maybe go out and do some things with them outside. And you use that day to start to build and instill good habits. My wife started something as well where there's a quiet time for at least an hour or two where the kids, no media, just unless it's something productive, but get in the Bible, read a book, do something, something.

And then we have meals together, we pray together, maybe watch a good movie in the evening, and then just get through the day because we're looking to God. So you can't begin to rebuild these idols or build new idols. The key is to allow them to be torn down.

And then finally, number 10, I want to encourage believers with this final point from Psalm 119. Again, you got to read this tonight. It's so incredible.

Keep building, keep trusting. Keep building, keep trusting. Despite what you see, you have to keep building.

This was so funny. When I was in construction, we were going onto a construction site, and people would come by and say, where's the building? Where are you starting? Why are you digging down? You're not building up. And I would say, because before you build up, you've got to build down.

You've got to go down deep into the earth. You've got to compact and build the foundation that is sturdy. So I was building as I was going down.

I was strengthening the building as I was going down and down and down and lower. But when God says, hold on, I'm not done yet. As you build down, I will raise you up.

So you keep building, you keep trusting despite how things look. He said this in Psalm, my soul faints. Does anyone out there feel like this? My soul faints for your salvation.

In other words, Lord, I'm getting weary here. You're not saving me. You're not delivering us.

My soul faints. I'm tired of waiting. God.

And then he said, but I hope in your word. I hope in your word. So let me tell you, your families will be tested.

Your marriages will be tested. Your faith will be tested. But chaos is not the absence of God.

Chaos doesn't mean God's gone. Chaos means now you're going to look to me because you figured out you can't fix the problem. Chaos is really disorder because people are not ordered around God.

So chaos is not the absence of God. It's God trying to get the attention of his people. And again, you can shut the doors of churches, but you cannot silence the truth.

God is an ever-present help in time of trouble. I'm going to close with this verse from Joel. I'm actually going to not read to you.

Let me tell you the setting here. Joel is a prophet. Prophet in the Old Testament.

Prophets would call the people back to God. They would go wayward. They would call them back to God.

They would go wayward. They would call them back to God. Sound familiar? It's exactly where America is at today.

So God got to the point, and Joel said this, the vine has dried up and the fig tree has withered. Basically, they didn't have a Costco. They didn't have a store in every corner.

They relied on rain. They relied on the fruit of the vine. They relied on those things.

Without that, they were done. So the vine is dried up. The fig tree has withered away.

The pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree. All of our produce is gone. We're not going to make it, God.

All the trees of the field are withered. And then he goes on to say, surely joy has withered away from the sons of men. In other words, God has taken everything from us, and our joy has been lost.

So what does God say? Too bad. You deserve it. I don't like you.

I'm against you. No. God always offers a solution.

Here's what he said, Joel. Consecrate a fast. Call a sacred assembly and gather the elders and the inhabitants of the land into the house of your God, and cry out to God.

Cry out to Him. What does that word cry out mean? Well, first I want to tell you this. Consecrate a fast.

That would show the magnitude of what's going on. When something was serious, they would fast. So when something is serious like this, we must fast.

I'm not going to tell you how to do it, but I will say this. It's a depriving of food. You know, people say, I went on a Daniel fast.

Well, that's good. It's really a Daniel healthy eating program, and it's hard. Don't get me wrong.

But a real fast is when you deprive yourself of food. It doesn't mean you make a 1400 calorie chocolate smoothie. It's when you deprive yourself of food, and you fast.

Some people can't go long. Some people can. Let God direct you.

And fasting meant the magnitude is great. And then he said, call a sacred assembly. In other words, there is unity.

There is unity. Is that interesting? Have you ever seen the church more united? You've got Baptists and Pentecostals coming together. Let me tell you, that's unity.

I had somebody recently tell me, what about this worship band? You know how people are controversial. I said, I don't care anymore about that stuff. We're dealing with a pandemic.

This is time to seek God. Get away from all these little trivial, trivial things. And some of these things are serious, I understand.

But at some point, we've got to be united and come together. So we see magnitude of this. We see a call to unity.

This is better the elders and all the inhabitants of the land and come into the house of your God. In other words, it's a priority. So there's a magnitude.

There's unity. And it's a priority. What was the answer? And cry out to God.

Cry out to God. And here's my concern, is I don't see that yet. I don't see people truly crying out for God.

In the Old Testament, here's what it meant. There's an earnest. Now we're getting there.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not being negative. I'm being very positive.

But I also have to be very truthful. What's happening is the pressure is being applied, but people are still holding on to their bank account. They're still holding on to this.

They're still holding. Well, maybe this will be over next week. No, it won't be over next week.

Let me tell you that much. And they're holding on to these things. Well, maybe this will happen.

Maybe I get. No, you've got a total abandonment to all that and say, God, I'm crying out to you. The sooner we do that, the sooner we'll get through this.

But if God has to say, are you still counting on the economy? Chip, chip, chip. You're still counting on that? Your job? Chip, chip, chip. You're still counting on the food and Costco being open? Oh, well, we can at least get supplies.

We can at least do this. No, you've got to get to a point of total desperation and saying, God, unless you move, we are lost. So crying out meant there was an earnest.

There was an intense. It was a priority. It was heartfelt.

It was urgent. And revival never came without travail. The pain of travail, the pain of seeking God.

Now is the time to do that. Don't keep resting in the economy, your bank account. What might change? Now is the time to cry out to God and say, God, I've been wrong.

I intercede on behalf of our nation. We have shed the blood of innocent children. We have aborted millions of innocent children.

We have called good evil and evil good. We have been perverted by pornography. We're the sex slave trade industry.

Lord, it's in an epidemic. And we call on you. We cry out.

Oh, God, save our children, save our families. We look to you and you alone. We're crying out and we're not stopping.

We're not going back to our idols. We're looking to you and you alone. And that's how we find hope in the midst of this struggle.

I'm at the worship team. Come back up. And this is this going to be your opportunity.

This is going to be your opportunity to stop what you're doing. Listen to this later. Rewind it later.

Listen, maybe when no one's around. And get on your face before God. Men, women, now's the time to pray with your children.

If you have a little one running around, understand. But now's the time. We're going to seek God through worship.

And my concern is, folks, that we're not yet at that truly broken state. So during worship, just cry out to God and repent. If you don't know him, contact us.

Let us know so we can get you some good resources. And it's very simple. God is not concerned with how eloquent your prayer is.

He doesn't. He's not concerned if you hit all four of the points on the spiritual laws of being saved or the Roman's road. He just wants to hear a sinner cry out and say, God, I'm a sinner.

Save me. Save me. God, I need you.

And we're going to make that opportunity. Let us know. We're going to go into a few songs of worship.

Then I'll come back up and close in just a minute. And this is a time to say, Lord, I don't even know what to pray, but I'm going to pray for you to show me. I'm going to pray for my families or my family.

I'm going to pray for my church. I'm going to pray for my nation. I don't care where you are with the present.

You need to pray for him. You need to pray for our leaders. And Lord, we look to you as we close in worship.

Lord, strengthen us. Please, God, revive your people. If there is ulterior motives through China, through Russia, the different things, I pray you come against it.

You expose the unfruitful works of darkness. You raise up kings and you pull another king down. Lord, it's time to crush kingdoms as we look to you and you alone.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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