

Principles of Healthy Masculinity

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the importance of breaking up the fallow ground in our hearts, exposing and repenting of idolatry that hinders our relationship with God. It highlights the need to seek God regardless of circumstances or feelings, to remove obstacles and hindrances that prevent spiritual growth, and to prioritize pursuing God above all else. The message encourages transparency, accountability, and obedience to God's leading, even when it's challenging or uncomfortable.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:7, Colossians 3:5, Hebrews 12:1, Hosea 10:12, James 1:15, Jeremiah 4:3, Proverbs 28:13, Psalm 32:5, Ephesians 5:13

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Overcoming Idolatry"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of breaking up the fallow ground in our hearts, exposing and repenting of idolatry that hinders our relationship with God. It highlights the need to seek God regardless of circumstances or feelings, to remove obstacles and hindrances that prevent spiritual growth, and to prioritize pursuing God above all else. The message encourages transparency, accountability, and obedience to God's leading, even when it's challenging or uncomfortable.

Transcript

It's so encouraging because I know men want to come, but then the enemy keeps us away. He almost kept me away. I'm not only gonna tell you my week, unbelievable.

Like, you know what, I'll just cancel it. Or they can put on worship. And that's how he works in our hearts.

And I know many of us, we come to the altar and we pray, Lord, break this in my heart. What's going on? It's like a repetitive thing. And that's why this message will be so important.

I think it'll be a breakthrough in the lives of many men because this topic is what keeps us in bondage. This is why we live with years of regret. We can't seem to get back on track.

You know, we always have to come to the altar. I mean, I do it a lot just to get my heart clean before the Lord and repent. God, get me back on the right path as a step of just a brokenness and humility.

And so the title is Demolishing Idle Factories. Demolish Idle Factories. And last week, we talked about principle number one, act like men.

From 1 Corinthians, be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men. Be strong and let all you do be done in love. Guys, if we could get that last sentence down, we'd be doing pretty good.

Because I was just talking to a few guys before this, we want to fix things. So when our wives come to us, we want to fix it. Here's what you need to do.

Don't feel, you don't need to be sad and worried. Let's fix this. Let's get over it.

You don't need to cry. Let's fix this. They need to just listen and listen and love them as well.

And then maybe if they ask, well, what would you do? Then offer that solution or just with others because love doesn't come naturally. It comes supernaturally as we submit to God. And I can tell you just looking back in my 20s, I was not full of a lot of love.

That was very, very hard. And then God breaks us and breaks us and breaks us. And that love will either come out or you'll become very rigid and critical.

It all depends on what you choose to do with what happens to you. So here's how it all works. I'm actually, I've never been this excited about a message in a while.

I'm kind of excited in Revelation, but it's a challenging book. I mean, it's like locusts and men on fire and the water becoming blood and the beast and the horns. And it's, you know, this is good too.

So what is idolatry? What is idolatry in the context of a believer? Okay, it's anything that we put before God or anything we pursue above Him. From time and I hope this works because I didn't, this is the item of commentary. From time and talents to money and resources, idols consume you instead of you being consumed by God.

Here's why it's challenging. It can sneak up at any time. You can be dealing, and that's why John Calvin, again, said our heart is a perpetual idol factory.

Like just, if you do nothing, you're making idols. And so we think of idolatry in the Bible, you know, this little statue or this thing they bow down to. Well, think about what they were doing.

They were bowing down to this idol. That's my time, my energy, my resources, my prayers. It's consuming me, I'm going to that.

So the same thing can be in our lives. Anything that really consumes us, and I'm gonna open up this morning more than I probably want to, to help men and to get this in our hearts deeply. I was going back and forth on this, so it's probably not up there, but the human heart is a perpetual idol factory, but also Hosea said they became an abomination like the thing they loved.

So you actually become what you love, what you chase, what you pursue, you will become. And remember, Hosea is writing to God's people who were once on fire for God, but they gave themselves over to idolatry, and they became an abomination like the thing they loved. And how many of you have heard, I'm gonna get to in a minute, of that real famous verse, at least I love it, break up your follow ground, it is time to seek the Lord.

It follows this verse about a chapter later. So he says, here's what's happened, here's how you fix it. And that's what I love about the old prophetic books.

It wasn't just hell, fire, and brimstone, it was like, it is, but here's how to fix it. The God of hope. That's why I see men are broken and they're hurting, they're going through so much, yes, but there is a God of hope.

Thank God he doesn't leave you there. You know, you can stay there if you want to, but God doesn't leave you there. And so here's what I was going back and forth on when it comes to this topic of idols, and I don't like to always name names, but people who have had an influence in my life over the years, who we have seen get attracted and attached to the idol, and it takes them down.

And I remember many of you remember Ted Haggard, remember Ted Haggard, back in Colorado, and I was just coming to the Lord, and that staggered me, it really knocked me back. I was following a pastor at Calvary Chapel in Florida, Bob Coy, Bob Coy, incredible teacher. He endorsed one of my books, so I had to remove his endorsement a while back because he fell into idolatry.

And when they fall, especially at this level, it hurts. And Vision Forum, I don't know how many of you use them for homeschooling back in the day, and just what came out with their leadership. What about Ravi Zacharias? Like, I hear, I'm like, I can't, I don't understand.

Idolatry. The idol eventually begins to control them and draw them away, and they begin to compromise. In all these cases, there's no accountability.

There's no accountability. And they're spending time, 80% of these men spend time with those of the opposite sex, or in Ted Haggard's case, the same sex. Whatever the attraction, you can't spend time with what you're attracted to.

It can draw you away. That currently, right now, Mike Bickle, IHOP. I talked to him on email two weeks before it all came out.

I'm like, what in, what is going on? And we can see how that's the goal of idolatry is to take you down. Darren Patrick, when I was reading his book on church leadership in the news, within a few weeks, I find out he killed himself as a pastor. Bill Hyboltz, Willow Creek, Carl Lentz in New York.

I mean, it's just endless. I have a list of, because I have in the back of my Bible these lists, and then I cross them out as soon as the enemy takes them out and trying to just, but in all cases, it has to do with idolatry. And here's how it works.

The demonic realm does not get old. It doesn't die off. It watches you at a young age, and it knows your weaknesses.

It studies you like a hunter studies its prey. So what's gonna be the stronghold in my area might not be in your area. And he knows you.

They are eternal, because they'll be eternally in the lake of fire as well, right? And so they study you, they know us. And let me just give you some examples. I added these early this morning, so they won't be up there.

So let's talk about one of the big ones. Addiction, for example. Addiction opens the example, for example, we open the door, and then the flesh begins to crave it.

And then we submit to this, and then we pursue it. That's idolatry. It becomes, addiction is a form of idolatry, of course.

And then what happens after that? Fiery thoughts. Here's how the enemy works. And it's kind of, it's tricky, because we can't blame everything on demons, but we can't rule out how the demonic realm works, because the Bible says avoid the fiery darts of the enemy.

And have I said many times before, I don't think any one of us have ever got hit by a literal dart. So where do they come from? See, so that's the perfect storm. We open ourselves up to the idolatry because of the lust of the flesh, and then the enemy, knowing our weakness and things, he can plant those fiery darts.

Can the enemy also create certain circumstances? Read the book of Job. The end, so, and I don't like this about the devil. You know, can he create, let's say you're struggling with something, you're doing great, and then you run into the person.

Did you know many who fall in the area of sexual immorality, same-sex attraction or not, there's that spirit often connects them. Airports or this, it's a, they can tell, and I don't wanna get too deep into that because, but there's something spiritual that also takes place. Especially when it comes to sexual addiction.

And so that's how it works. There's the lust of the flesh, there's the open door, and then there's the fiery darts of the enemy. And that's why they've said over the years what the flesh, the devil, and the world are the three bullets that the enemy uses against us.

And that's, it's a combined effort. And the reason I say that is you can do good in one area, but don't forget about the demonic attacks that might come and attack you. And many who fall back into addiction, they're doing great.

How many of you been there? We're doing great, I'm not even thinking about it. And here comes that thought. Where in the world did that come from? The fiery darts, they know your tendencies.

And these fiery darts, if we keep fueling them, or if we fuel them, they begin to grow in our thoughts and in our minds. And so one of the areas where idolatry can sneak in, idols, building an idol factory, and dealing with it and repenting of it. I mean, I can look back.

I mean, it's usually what you maybe were struggling with when you were younger. Or maybe it's how you are gifted by God, but also that strength can become a weakness. And so what are you going to put first before God? And you know, right? That's why many men don't come to church.

They don't do things because they've got all these things, and we've got good reasons. My favorite one was I'm working too much. I need my day off.

And that's why even little things can become idols that begin to draw us away from God. Like things I, for example, again, I'm going to open up a little bit. And again, they're sometimes little things, but they can become big things.

So if I start to get really into, like when I was younger, again, right? Younger, or maybe some new things. Phil, you probably know, like a motocross. You know, that's not mine.

But if I start thinking again of trap shooting and getting back into hunting and reloading, and I want a Browning over and under, I'm going to go to these events. That can become my idol. Or what about, I grew up with health and fitness.

Chubby kid who was stupid, who got on steroids, and now I can beat people up. And now I'm feeling pretty good about myself. You don't think there's going to be a tendency to go back to that idolatry? You know, when it pulls on you? I can go to my doctor right now, and I can get on TRT.

I can tell him what I want. I want testosterone suspension because it's water-based. I can take it every day.

I want a D-ball and an anovar as well. I want to look like Reacher. And I could still do that right now.

After 60, probably not. But see how that can become, right? Get to the gym all the time. And see how, well, that, you should take care of yourself.

Right, but if it becomes my, my, ah, I pursue that more than God. And my looks, and that's why the enemy will change struggles with that. I don't, well, what do you struggle with? What is, what's trying to, and I've seen so many people, what about sports? You have to golf 18 holes three times a week.

And that's why you don't come to Wednesday or Sunday? Or what about, how many, when I was growing up it wasn't there, but now with travel ball. I can't tell you over the years, over the, how many people said we can't come because of travel ball. Now, should our kids be in sports? Yeah, it's really good, but, and there might be a season where a couple months, you know, you're gonna, but if it's, but see how if it begins to pursue and pull you away? And that was a struggle with me too.

When I started coaching my son in little league, or over the hill there, I wanted to be the best team. I wanted to do all-stars like my dad did. And it became all consumed.

I'm gonna get a bad occasion, I'm gonna put it up the back. It's all in your reading about it. You're reading about, you know, shortstop drills and catcher drills.

And it began to consume me, and see how it becomes an idolatry. And so that's why it's a perpetual idol factory. We have to constantly remove them and put them in a healthy perspective.

I'm just glad I don't have a big garage. And if I could get ahold of a 67 Camaro, drop a 454 in there, put some glass packs on there. My wife said, what is that? I don't know, it's gonna be fun.

Right, and then it becomes my whole, is it a 454 Chevy? 456, yeah, there you go. 427, thank you. And so, and then Hemi, by the way, Hemi motor, which I don't know if you can put in there, hemispherical heads, that's why they call it that.

By the way, it's more power. But, and so that would now start to consume me, right? And also, what else follows that consumption? Money. How many people have problems in their family because of finances? If you're like me, me and my wife think where our finances should go a little bit differently.

Most people do, right? I'm a saver, she's a spender. And that's, you know, it's a good combo, it works. But she's like, we need this now and now, who knows if we'll even live 50 years? And I'm like, well, I gotta, but as a provider, right, I'm thinking more long-term.

So you can see how all these things, everything I just mentioned can become, what about if I start focusing on this too much? And now I wanna focus on this too much. And that's basically what idolatry at its core for a believer is, it's anything that begins to take you away from God, anything. And it will begin to creep in.

And that's why even little things can become big things. Because if you look back, all these guys, and I read books on a lot of these men that fell in ministry, I've known people that have fallen, all of us are susceptible of falling, absolutely. We're one bad choice away from falling.

But if you look back, it doesn't start out huge. Somebody's like, you know, I woke up today and I don't know how I had an affair tonight. I have, how did that happen? Maybe unless you hit the bar and you have 12 drinks, I mean, that could be, but normally it's a progression.

Right, I'm kind of away from church now, so the conviction of the Holy Spirit isn't that great. I ran into such and such. Right, I've talked to people where they just, they say hi to this lady or this woman, and that feeling comes.

And it's like, oh, what do I, and then you see them again. And now maybe you're going out of your way to see them. And see how it's a progression? These little things, and that's why killing the idol before it gains a real stronghold in your heart is the key.

Because once it gains that stronghold, it's hard. That's why it's called a stronghold in the Bible. That's why it says we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, strongholds that have a stronghold on us.

And it seeks to take us out. Let me ask you some questions to identify idolatry. How do you act when you are denied the idol? When you can't have it? When you can't get it, isn't that a good sign? That's why, again, I'm gonna be transparent, that's why a lot of guys get ticked off of me, because I call it out in the sermons.

They don't want to hear it. I've been around a long time preaching. I can weed it out pretty good.

And I'm just, I'm the messenger, and so you want to shoot me. That's what, it happens a lot. Like I don't like that confrontation.

I don't like that conviction. And when you begin to, hey, you need to stop that, that we can get upset. Even little things, correct? And you can see how it has a stronghold on you.

Anything you have to have, right, I have to have it. No matter what. And how do you feel when you're denied? What comes out of you? I'm going through lots of things that I should share or not share.

It's like funny, you know, just, because some things people use against you, you know, but this one's pretty common. And I'll just, I'm just gonna, hopefully it helps people. And I've talked about it before.

But the one reason why I gave up coffee is because I had to have it. Asked my wife years ago, I said, you know what, I can't stop. Would you hide the car keys? So I can't get up at four in the morning, go to Starbucks? Yes, I was ticked off.

Trying to find them. This is not healthy. This is not good.

Now, I know it's a drug, it's a central nervous stimuli. I know how to fix the brain and the brain pathways. It's almost like opium and heroin, how it connects to the bio pathways in your brain.

And so for me, though, I had to have it. I got upset. And so see, for me, for me, and that's why I know I trigger people because they come up, well, that's for you.

But I like it, I enjoy it. Good, you don't have to say anything. Why do you feel the need to come and tell me what you have to do? Because you're convicted.

And so see, these little things. And I got down a little bit, and I'm like, Lord, I can't, why can't I have a little? Because partial obedience is not total obedience. And the big one, I think, for me as a pastor is it would make me, turn me into a jerk.

Have you ever got a, have I ever been rude to you or text message or email? And you're like, whoa, it's probably because of that. Phil knows, right, and Abram knows. We all, you know, we apologize to each other.

But see, these things that God is convicting me of, and I have to have it, and when I'm denied, and for you, it could be you fill in the blank, whatever that is. What about if your wife says, I don't want you on the computer tonight? And you storm out the door. Well, let's be real, right? Is it okay, Will, I get permission? Yeah.

But you know, and these things, they get mad. That's why fasting is often hard. Because what comes out when we can't have it? You see, the flesh is loud and very vocal.

What do you do when you're confronted? How do you act when you're confronted about the idol? We've come to people, and marriage counseling, or whatever, hey, you know, you gotta really, this is a problem. And then we puff up our chest. It's not a, and when we're confronted, it's a sure sign that it has a hold on you.

Can your spouse say something to you without you being confronted? When convicted, how do you handle it when you're convicted? Because I am convinced that we have become really good at making excuses. Hard day, just one won't hurt. Well, it's been a while, and we're convicted.

Really, what you do tilts the scale. And look at idolatry, how it can happen even in the area of family. Did you know your family can be, there's a form of idolatry? I've seen a lot of people over the years where the, and I wanna word this right, because family's important.

And we can maybe struggle with this, but it was almost like it was all of their family, and that consumed their time, their energy. They couldn't come to church. It was family too much.

It became, have you ever heard the word helicopter mom? Or what's the one for dad, I guess? I don't know. But a lot of times, fear in men will make us, you know, no, we can't go anywhere. We can't do this.

And it becomes a form of idolatry. Or on the opposite, the opposing characteristics. A workaholic, you're busy.

You're spending too much time with others. And those become idols that draw you away from the family. Finances, finances, does that become an idol? Always checking the stock market.

Always pursuing this. Always this. And you know whether it is or not because it begins to take you away from God.

You begin to trust in that more than God. It becomes an all-consuming passion. And it begins to take you away from God and trusting in that instead of in God.

Now, do we need to be wise stewards? Absolutely. That's why I love the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I just throw it out there.

Let Him do the work. Let Him do the work of conviction. But then the opposing characteristics of finances are so important.

Did you know laziness and idolatry are pretty close? Throughout the Bible, do a word study, do a commentary. Gluttony, laziness, drunkenness, idolatry. Because laziness can become an idol.

Maybe that's another one. I love vacation mode. I don't know about you.

Henry, you too? Okay, anybody else? And then one week can turn into two. And then you're like, how about the month off? How about this? It can become, you can become slothful is what the Bible actually says. And that can become an idol because it takes you away from, I think God wants us disciplined and active and moving and stewarding.

And it just came up in the staff meeting yesterday. We don't have enough people to help like with discipleship, especially those who call in addiction. And Will came to me and a few others.

But that's kind of sad because it could be, you know, we have plenty of men at this church. Hundreds and hundreds of men. And a lot of times if we ask them, you know, I'm too busy, or I can't do this.

But really, really, we just don't wanna spend that time doing that. And because other things have taken our heart. And I already talked about this.

Fitness, for some people, believe it or not, it can be too much, right? Of an idol, that's all they focus on. I actually back way off of my YouTube, you know, watching. Because a lot of the guys, who watches fitness videos? Some of you? Ben Greenfield, Gary Brecka, Peter Attia.

Right, you watch those guys. I know Gary, I got permission to share one of his videos. And so I'm like all into this.

Saladino, Dr. Saladino, who was carnivore, he's not, and I'm like so interested. And I can just find myself, though, getting too captivated by, you know, all this stuff. Begins to just take me away.

Because at the end of the day, I could die next week in a car accident. You know, the healthiest people in the world get cancer. So we do wanna steward and take care of our body, but not if it becomes idolatry.

Right, the big thing right now is peptides. You know, everybody's talking about that. Ipamiralin, CJC-1129, BPC-157, tesomerelin, all these things that are growth hormone enhancers.

And I could order a lot of them. I know how they work, more than the doctors. But it's like, what's my point? I don't need to.

Or you see these guys now, you know, bench pressing all this weight and doing all this stuff. I'm like, I get drawn back in, right? Yeah, yeah, that's, I remember that, those days. And see how, in itself, it's not a bad idea.

Like, hey, I wanna work out a little bit more. You need to, you know, get in shape. I need to, you know, take care of this.

But if it becomes where it's, where now, if I can't get to the hospital homes, I can't get to a family in need, I can't talk to somebody, then that has become too much. As long as I can balance my life and still meet, as long as the needs of the church are not dropping in any way, shape, or form, or the needs with my kids are not dropping in any way, shape, or form, I can make it work. One thing, too, now, my son's in baseball with the high school, and my daughter's in the swim.

It's really hard to do the schedules. And so now, at practice, I just go, I'll go get 3,000, 4,000 steps out of the way, and try to at least praying and doing, so I try to find it with what it worked without it becoming idolatry. But again, obviously, my struggle's not your struggle.

Yours could be something else on YouTube, watching how to repair engines. And there's one my father-in-law watches. I get hooked on this thing.

This guy, Luke, you'll know, Phil, you'll know. I think he's in Utah, and they pull out stuck trucks. Matt's recovery, like, I can sit and just watch for like three hours have went by.

He's pulling things off the side of hills and out of ditches, and I remember my Chevy Blazer got stuck in Lake Elizabeth in Kern County, and it started to rain, and we had to have three different trucks with winches pulled out, and I can just sit and watch and watch and watch. And that is what moves me to this one. What's the big idol right now in the lives of many men? Anything that takes me away from, yeah, I'm just, man, that's a good, what's it called? Oh yeah, Matt's this, and then it suggests this video, and now these guys are overhauling motorcycles, and these guys, now they're rehabbing trucks, and then I get into home makeover, and then it's like, what is this? Or you go online and you begin to compromise because the idol calls your name.

See, here's the thing with, I love accountability, I love software on phones and things like that, but if the heart's not right, you can find some loopholes, or the enemy will help you find some loopholes in what comes up on the screen. Watching that one is really important. What about, maybe this might not relate to a lot of guys, but some will, fame, wanting to, especially the younger generation, wanting to have likes and followers and subscribers and people that know your name, and that becomes idolatry, that becomes your focus, and that becomes your goal in life.

And of course, the other side of that goes back to a little bit of laziness, not fulfilling our callings and our God-given talents. And then also on this topic of idolatry, did you know doctrine can become an idol? It's so, working on this message, I'm telling you, God just downloads so much in my heart, because I never even thought about this until I began to realize, okay, think about idolatry, what it does, and actually doctrine in itself. Let me read it.

When doctrines are locked in rigid intellectual compartments in our mind, with little or no impact on our character, on our actions, on our relationship, they have become idolatrous. Religious beliefs and affirmations can function similar to the notion of life on other planets. Such life may exist, but it has no impact on our daily living.

Doctrines, beliefs, can be weapons, they can manipulate, they can dominate others, and so doing so, they become idols. The history of Christianity is replete with illustrations of such idolatry. Here's what, now again, a message like this, you have to take what applies to you, and a lot of this maybe won't apply to some people, but a lot of us that love doctrine, and how many of you, you love the Bible, you love the Word of God, but if we're not careful, we can fall into something called a fundamentalist.

Now the fundamentalist came, the title came from 1904, 1905, when R.A. Torrey put together the fundamentals of the faith. So in and of itself, it's not a bad thing, but when it becomes an idol, I start to study it more than I want God. I start to read systematic theology, and so I can impress you guys today.

I'm going to use an inductive approach to my sermon preparations. My hermeneutic and homiletic examples are going to be poised in the best of sermon application, and it becomes idolatry, because what is idolatry? Anything that puts you, if you have to put knowledge above seeking God, we often hide behind doctrine when we lack the fullness of the Spirit. Doctrine points me to living water.

So the Bible, studying the Bible, it should point me to a deeper relationship with God, deeper in brokenness, deeper in humility. It shouldn't elevate me where now I'm like this. That's why I use the term modern day Pharisee a lot.

The Pharisees had good doctrine, did they not? Jesus said, oh, do what they do. Or do what they say. Yeah, do what they say, don't do what they do.

And I've seen it, fortunately not a lot at this church, but in the church, the great divide of the church, you're either a circus or you're a cemetery. You're trying to find that balance, and a lot of times on the cemetery, it's the doctrine, I have this, and it becomes an idol, and they have to get the next PhD, they have to get the next master's degree, they have to finish this course, and it becomes now, that's great, you know all that, but your kids don't want to be around you and your wife is ready to leave you, because it's become an idol. If doctrine doesn't humble you and break you and draw you closer to God, you might want to rethink where your heart's at, because that's what it does.

Doctrine, the study of God, the doctrine about God. That's where we get our term systematic theology from, learning about the nature of God, the character of God, the attributes of God. And it shouldn't puff us up, but should lower us down more on our knees.

And as a person who loves doctrine, and studies doctrine, it's something I have to work on, as well, because you can get too much time studying, trying to increase knowledge, and it can hinder your relationship with the Lord. Well, how do I know if that's a problem in my life? Well, if you don't like what I'm saying, it's probably because you need to hear what I'm saying. And it's so, it's like, when you throw a rock into a pack of dogs, the one that barks, you hit it.

And so I can tell, I can tell, just about after every message, who I hit. And it could even be in the prayer room. It's like, you know, when you said that, I study to become better, and I need to get this master's degree, because it's been something I've wanted to do all of my life.

Well, good, go for it. Why are you so lit up? Why are you so upset? Good, go for it. I didn't say not to.

I said, be careful that it doesn't become an idol in your heart. Sounds like it is idol in your heart. That's why you're convicted.

And so see, if we get kind of pumped up, right? You know, and we can tell what's idol. And I'll tell you, my son's here. He's doing camera.

I apologized to him and my wife the other day. Just two days ago, somehow our shower broke. And it's seven o'clock at night.

And it just won't turn off. Here's the shower, going and going and going. All the hot water and the fire alarms are going off.

I wish I could say, oh, you know, it's no problem. It's no problem. I'm like, what the heck happened? Who does, what happened? Oh my gosh, I'm like, I go off to turn off the whole water to our whole house, you know, and now I'm on this project, and it's like, and then just, you know, 20 minutes later, hey, you know, I'm sorry, this is how we learn.

I'll show you how to fix it. But man, that it can, you know, and owning it. But it's also a wonderful opportunity for your family to see, hey, I can blow it and apologize and repent.

But what was my idol? I was tired. That's not bedtime yet. Nine o'clock, nine o'clock's bedtime.

But I start winding down, don't you? You don't want a water that's not going off. Today's still not working, so I have to deal with it after the service. Arthur Wallace, in his book, I would encourage you to read this book, in the day of thy power, in the day of thy power, we grow cold to the Lord and his people, and we grow indifferent toward the souls of the perishing.

These people are marked, what he's talking about, modern day Pharisees, these people are marked by formality and cold orthodox in their contention for the faith. This state of heart will often lead to a belligerent and graceless defense of minor points of doctrine. They strain at a gnat, but they swallow the camel.

I love talking about doctrine, and so do many of you, but be careful, make sure our heart is right. Have we become cold and callous? So many examples, when idolatry leads a Christian, we choose things, like I already mentioned, the big game, chores at home, time with family, or work over church in the pursuit of God. So what tilts the scale? Oh yeah, that's a good one, I forgot.

Idolatry often focuses on, have any of you want to live vicariously through your kids? You know what that word vicariously means? Let them accomplish things that I didn't get to accomplish. Has it ever entered my mind that I could make my son really good at MLB, baseball? Oh yeah, oh yeah. I know I could, if it becomes an idol.

And that's how we know, that's how we can gauge it. And we want to live vicariously often through our children. So what tilts the scale? Here's what you need to know.

It's the priority of the pursuit. I can be pursuing God and loving Him and still have a 67 Camaro in the garage. I can be pursuing Him and still have the stock market app on my phone.

I can still be pursuing Him. I'm gonna go to the, oh, I don't go to the gym, I don't like the atmosphere, oh hello. I can still work out, but actually my pursuit of God makes me want to take care of myself even more, if that makes sense.

Because to be a better pastor, a better leader, a better husband, a better father. Many of you know, and some might not, but I went through a hard season around October. I took some time off, I was gone a lot.

I don't know if you remember that. It was a hard, just a hard season. I didn't know what was going on.

And yeah, just looking at the pursuit and thinking backing off would really help things. And it didn't. And that was the idol of just taking time off and just, you know, I just need to unwind from every single person

and everything.

And we're coming to realize, okay, that's not the problem. You know, what's going on? So God does deep works in our hearts when we just come to Him and we let Him know, Lord, I need help in this area. I don't know what's going.

Sometimes we have attacks and we just need a season. Anybody ever going through a difficult season? Just about everybody that is honest, right? We went through difficult seasons. So that's the key.

Really, what is the priority of the pursuit? Everything I said can be in moderation. It's okay, most of it. So finding the balance.

Make sure that your walk and the time with the Lord is not suffering. Be open to constructive criticism. Continually dethrone your idol.

That's the key. If something's coming into my heart and we can see, and your wife says something about it, don't get upset and make excuses. They're often the best detectives in this area, aren't they? You know, you're spending a lot of time, whatever that is.

Ah, I need an outlet. I need this. My wife, she sent me an Instagram thing.

I know exactly what she's saying. It's about how, it's a message like this video of when kids come in the room, we should put down our phones and just look at them and have a conversation with them. Like, she's not just sharing this.

She's, oh, look at this. I came across this. This would be great for us.

No, you're saying it'd be great for me. Great for me. Holy, she's, I said, we have a joke.

Don't be the Holy Spirit this week. Let God, right, convict me. But that just shows the idolatry doesn't like to be challenged.

But when we repent to that and we keep, by the way, and I apologize if this convicts people. Well, maybe I don't apologize, but it's, and again, I mean, there's so much going through my mind that I could tell you guys. I just wanna make sure it's not too much overkill.

But I've never felt better when I finally obeyed God and gave up coffee. Isn't that weird? Like, I don't even wanna tell people because it's embarrassing. But when I finally obeyed, because I was fasting and nothing was happening.

I was fasting, couldn't succeed. I was in a funk for a while. But I had to have that.

It could be, well, you said, and I mean, but again, I'm just trying to help. Maybe that will relate to somebody. I remember reading D.L. Moody's biography where this lady could never, she wanted the fullness of the Spirit.

You know what that is? It's when you fully surrender, the Holy Spirit just comes upon you and your joy and love and peace and contentment. It's the fullness of the Spirit, the heritage of every believer, if they want it. But you have to be desperate for more of God.

You have all the Holy Spirit, but does He have all of you? And so He's convicting me of this and I didn't want to give it up. I didn't wanna give it up. And so that little disobedience can actually fracture that relationship.

Because I don't think God's like, you know what, that's just a little thing, don't worry about it. No, He doesn't let you go. Because, but again, the bigger picture is it affected who I was.

I'm a jerk to people more. I'm already, it's already type A personalities, you already know it's hard. You guys, you're called.

You know, and so these little things and getting right before God and then just filling that freedom and filling that obedience, it was just like the scales fell off. And so I know I've lived this out. I would get up every morning, go, Lord, I don't feel anything, I don't wanna read Your Word.

And I would just look at my phone, and I'm like, God, what's going on? What's going on? I can't, I'm talking a long time. It's okay, okay, fine, what? What, four ounces, what's a big deal? But I had, right? You see what I'm saying? I don't mean to, but this is my struggle. This is what, He worked something, maybe it's alcohol.

Maybe it's, yeah, nicotine's a, that's a hard one to kick. And if God is convicting you, and that's why I can't relate to that, I'm like, just stop smoking, right? What, that's why it's hooked. And now this huge push for marijuana, you know it's a huge push.

I was doing crunches, and I couldn't get up, and then YouTube sends this interview with Jim Kimball and Mike Tyson. Now Tyson's got 2.0 marijuana. And everyone's like, oh, yeah, great, you're stoned right now, great.

Then Snoop Dogg Doggy comes on. Man, yeah, I got connections, everything's like, see, and this becomes all these addictions. It's a form of idolatry, it begins to consume us.

Now, is there medicinal purposes? Sure, we're not gonna get into that, but we know, let's be honest, 99.9% of them do not use it for medicinal purposes. That's their excuse. Don't we use excuses? Right, we have these excuses.

Oh, I can't stop drinking, helps, Shane, a little bit of wine helps your stomach. See, Paul told Timothy, not two bottles a night. Excuses.

The benefits of red wine, it's called resveratrol, you can get it from organic grapes, much better. See, all these excuses. Man, I really wanna quit, I know I keep falling into porn, but I gotta use this laptop for work, and I gotta do things, I gotta take trips.

No, you don't have to. There's ways around that. Excuses.

Excuses. I know I need to do something for my health, but I'm busy, I'm in a hurry. It runs in my family.

Listen, don't blame genetics, ever. Genetics might load the gun, but lifestyle pulls the trigger. We always tend to blame things when we truly don't want to change.

I do it as well. I know it's a little lengthy and meaty, but I think it's so important, so I'm gonna just close with some Scriptures. 1 Corinthians, oh, that's a good point.

Repentance will keep you from idolatry, or idolatry will keep you from repentance. 1 Corinthians 10.7, do not be idolaters, as some of them were. So look, he's telling the church.

He's telling the church in 1 Corinthians 10.7, do not be idolaters, as some of you were. It's written, they sit down to eat and to drink and to go and indulge. So the Bible says this about idolatry.

Flee from idolatry, keep yourself from idols. Abstain from things that war against your soul. Make no provision for the idol.

Flee its influence. And I will tell you, on a topic like this, it is hard because thank God for God's grace, right? We don't walk around as all rigid and tense and I gotta obey all these rules, I can't do this, I can't do that, I can't change, this seems too constrictive. Yeah, we shouldn't live like that, for sure.

But what's the other end of that extreme? I'm not, it doesn't matter, I don't care, God's grace. That destroys you. That absolutely destroys you.

All these grace preachers are no longer preachers because it takes them down. Colossians as well, put to death, to the church in Colossae, put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature, which is sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. All of that is idolatry.

How, Paul? Well, because it takes you away from God. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us what? Lay aside every weight in the sin, which so clings closely to us, and let us run the race with endurance. And I don't know why I put this here, I was gonna move, but I'm gonna get to this in the end here, why are weeds bad when it comes to tearing up the fall of ground and not removing every weight? What is a weight? So in other words, ignore the weed part, I'll get to that in a minute.

What is removing every weight? Because isn't it interesting, Paul says, well, I think it's Paul who wrote Hebrews, I could be wrong. Every weight and remove the sin. So wait a minute, weight isn't a sin? Is that possible? Depending on the commentaries, what it is, though, that we actually just look up the word in Greek, it means an obstruction, an obstacle, or a hindrance.

So if I'm running this race to finish strong, fulfill my calling, what is an obstruction to me? What's in my way? What's an obstacle that's stopping me? What's a hindrance that's gonna pull me back? These things I've been talking about, this idolatry. So something, a good thing that isn't a God thing, we go over that now at our staff meetings. Okay, we wanna do Ren in the Heavens again, good idea, but is it a God idea? We want to do this, you wanna get involved in this, and you wanna take on this, okay, good idea, but if it's not God-inspired, it becomes a weight.

I don't use them anymore, but I have 100-pound dumbbells. And if I wanna bring it up here, and it's like, I'm trying to fulfill my calling, but I'm carrying this, remove every, I can't run very fast. So many, how many Christians are carrying this weight? They're not removing it.

I mean, just, even in the prayer room, we talked to a lot of people who need to break off relationships that are, wait, don't go leave your spouse, I'm not saying that. Some of you, but there's a too late now, now you gotta carry the weight. Now you gotta get right with God and pray for this, but we're carrying the weight, or doing too much, right, a weight.

You know, I've been asked to, not too recently, but I've been asked to run for the Antelope Valley Hospital Board. I've been asked to run for mayor. I've been asked to go to the school board meeting.

I'd like to give Newsom a run for his money, but that's not my pastor, right? Get too involved, and people, they get mad at me because I won't carry the weight with them. Why won't you get behind this program? Why won't you go to this event? Why won't you promote this? Because I don't have that much time. I gotta figure out what I'm called to do and cut that weight and go forward.

Isn't that true? I've, and it's hard, because, and I've had people, they want me to go to more school board meetings and call out the board. Okay, but I'm gone from five till 10 at night when that happens. Go promote the Care Net and get an abortion, get behind this and get behind that.

See, all these weights, even for me, if I can qualify this, because weights can be good things, right? This is why it's hard, even for Abram, too, I know, and me, to go to the Tuesday night men's study. For me, it's a weight, because then it puts a burden on my wife to get my son to baseball, get my daughter gymnastics or swimming, and then I'm gone, here Wednesday, I've got Friday, we've got a Sunday event, we've got Sunday services. Now, am I carrying too much weight and not where I need to be for my particular area of life? If the kids are out of the house, then yes, it makes perfect sense.

But I've gotta say no to a lot of things, and because they're encumbrance, they are weights, and I can't pull them. My race actually slows down, doesn't it? The enemy will use busyness and get you off track from, how many people have said, I wanna start a ministry, I wanna do this, ah, but I'm too busy. I can't do it, I can't fulfill it right now.

Roy Hinnison, people imagine that dying to self makes one miserable, but it's just the opposite. It's the refusal to die to self that makes one miserable. Boy, if I could say that every Sunday, I'd put this up before, isn't that true? They became an abomination like the thing they love.

Many are convicted, many are struggling. Here's the answer. So he said, okay, break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

So here's how you break this idolatry in our hearts. We have to break up this fallow ground that has been built in our lives. Fortunately, like is Jason here? Jason, we have a lot of experience with dirt work.

Clay, caliche, sand, hard pan. We know how to move dirt, we know how to level dirt, we know how to work in dirt. I know exactly what fallow ground is.

Here's the thing, ground that used to be useful is no longer useful. It used to bear fruit. The ground used to bear fruit to our family, to our marriage, to our lives, but it's become fallow ground.

Hard, rocky, stony, weeds. Back to the weeds, what do weeds do? Weeds actually take the nourishment from the plants. Weeds actually cover and they obstruct.

And so breaking up that fallow ground is so important. Breaking up the ground, it actually, why do farmers do it? It gives life. Refreshing air comes in, the hard soil is removed and nutrients are replenished.

So God knows what He's doing when it says, men, break up that fallow ground, break up that hardness in your heart. Let the refreshing Spirit of God come into your heart and revive you. That's why I say you can't leave different than when you arrived.

There's no reason we should come here every week not being able to change. But you gotta break up that fallow ground. Excuses must die at the foot of the cross.

The hard soil must be removed. The hardness and the callousness of the human heart. Fallow ground, again, once yielded fruit, but has become hard, packed tight and overgrown with weeds.

Here's the thing, guys, we need to wake up because the only way often to break up that fallow ground is we use often a shovel, right? Or if it was real hard, a digging bar. But there might come a time when God breaks it up. I think we have an image of it, hopefully.

Jason, you like that too? Man, if I could sit on that all afternoon. D10 Caterpillar. How many of you know what that thing does on the back? Not only does it trench, it actually breaks up the soil so the loaders can come in and get the dirt.

It breaks up the soil so the bulldozer can back up and begin now to plow that dirt because it has been broken up. God will use a shovel and a digging bar, but at some point, if you're going through it, he might be going deep. He might be bringing that hard pan up and so you can break because here's the thing, break up your fallow ground.

God says you break it up because if you don't, I will. And when God breaks it up, it's messy. And you see how hard that soil is, but once that tooth gets down there, once it gets down, it begins to just, and then why does it break it? Because the power in that engine is stronger than the resistance in the soil.

The power of that cat engine just, oh, you can feel it, I've never done a D10, a D5, and it's like you feel like you could bulldoze a house and you could. And it just rips, it's called ripper, and it just rips the soil because the strength of God in your life is greater than that hard pan. But you've gotta submit, you've gotta surrender, you gotta say, Lord, take it all.

Show me what I need to do to get rid of this. Show me who I need to be accountable to. Show me what study I need.

Because see, when you're transparent, you're open, you can get help, you bring light to the surface. But if you try to hide it, oh, that's a struggle, but it's my struggle. It's hurting my family, it's hurting my marriage, I'm not gonna deal with it.

And sin grows in those deep recesses of the human heart that are not exposed. That's why even we have elders meetings, I go and I tell them. Guys ask me, talk to my wife.

You know, they know my strongholds, things I've just explained to you. Things that could, they can come back years later. In the last year, I've talked to, they used to go here, probably a couple different people who went five, six, seven years clean, sober.

But then, bam, hit them. Now they're worse off than where they used to be. Because I truly believe once you give in in that stronghold, and you give in again, it's hard to break out of that because you've given out permission again for the idolatry to consume.

So I know it's a heavy, heavy message, but it's true. Is it not based on God's Word? It is completely true. God wants men to lead, and I think we're holding on often to just too much idolatry because of excuses.

Again, everything I said, everything I said you can do that's not a sin. Everything. Finances, to fitness, to family, to vacation, it's all.

But is God my all-consuming pursuit? You see, because I love, like when we go on vacation, now my kids want to find a church. Not me. Can I just, right? I'm just being honest.

Can we not go to church for just two weeks? But we go and it's fun, right? But it's because I need a break sometimes. That's not a break for me. And so they want to do that, pursuing God first.

And as long as we're, it's not affecting our lives. One thing I did. I remember Courts Hill Little League asked me to coach, and when you coach, you got umpire 10 games.

I'm not a good umpire because I don't like people saying stuff. Come on, Blue, you missed it. Went outside.

So I found people to do it for me. But I said, I can't coach unless you do the schedule around our Saturday night. We have Saturday night church, and I have to be completely done by three.

And they moved the whole schedule around for the season, so I could still do that. And if not, I felt like, you know, you can put things, these are just little examples, but there is a way we can put God first. Now, are the difficult seasons where you've got to work on Sundays? Or Wednesdays? Or, yeah, absolutely.

We got married. And we, my wife and I, when I was in construction, everything plummeted. You remember that, 2008, 2009? I owned something like that, but a smaller version, a backhoe.

And I had to just, that became idolatrous too for me, because I wanted to hold on to it. We need the money. Oh, and I just, this nice 310 John Deere ST. I remember when the rancher came from Bakersfield to pick it up, and I'm like, I cried.

Like, bye-bye. There goes my dream of owning it and paying it off, and right, and it began to, I want to keep doing this, God. I don't want to go preach.

I don't want to go. And I had to give that up, and then He opened a door where I had to get some work, and I had to work seven days a week for a while. And so there are seasons.

But you know, that's between you and God. But the key to dealing with idolatry is breaking up that follow ground and seek the Lord. Because with idolatry, you're seeking the idol.

With breaking up the follow ground, you're seeking God. You can't have idolatry in your heart if you're seeking God. That's the deceptive nature.

It begins to take over. And I see, I'm sure, a lot more than you, but do you ever say, we're such and such, we're such and such, we're such and such? I've seen it for 14 years. Such and such, most of the time, is following an idol.

I don't need to go to church. And now I hear it all. I don't need to go to church to be a Christian, Shane.

You're right, but you're not gonna function correctly, and that bitterness is gonna bring you down, and you're gonna be a free game to the enemy. Of course you don't have to be a Christian to go to church. I'm not stupid.

But there's something wrong in your heart, possibly. This would be a time to just get your hearts right before the Lord. I know a lot of times when I come to the altar, I say, Lord, I wanna be a better husband.

I wanna be a better father. God, I need to get rid of, because pride can become idolatry at some point, too. You know, that pride, always being right, and wanna do things my way.

And so just keeping a short account of sin. But guys, be encouraged. I know sometimes, I've been there many times where we don't feel.

We don't feel like it. I don't feel full of the Holy Spirit. I don't feel those rivers of living water.

And those actually are the most important times for you to press through, regardless of how you feel. Because how we feel, man, the joy follows when you're, and again, I was kind of kidding about yesterday, but I felt like just quitting the staff meeting, letting Abram speak this morning. So much junk, you know, just, I don't feel.

God, I don't feel you. I don't hope you're in the sermon. I don't feel like going.

But then when you obey, the obedience follows. And the enemy wants us to stay stuck in dismay. Oh, woe is me, and this life stinks.

And yeah, it's hard, but we worship God regardless of how we feel. Actually, I think there's more, there can be more to it when we seek Him regardless of how we feel. When the Bible says, seek me and you will find me, I don't think it necessarily means seek me when you feel like it.

I'm pretty sure it means seek me regardless of the circumstances, regardless of your feelings, because then feelings follow. Feelings are a byproduct often of happenstance, what's happening to me. Life really stinks right now.

It's really challenging. I blew it yesterday, amen? Anybody? And I just don't feel like it. But now's when I need to press in and seek God like never before.

And as I begin to search for those rivers of living water, the scripture comes true that says, you will find me. And when you find me and that repentance takes place and those rivers of living water flow in, and then the joy where there was once depression and anguish now comes joy and freedom. It's a matter of pursuing Him.

Listen, all the guys, Spurgeon dealt with depression, Oswald Chambers dealt with it and is devotional, David Brainerd in the first great awakening, Jonathan Edwards, Don Wesley. There's so many that have come before us, Ed and I, Judson, Hudson Taylor on the mission field had to fight bouts of depression and not feeling like it, but it's perseverance and it's pressing through. That's what really takes us in.

You know, if you're struggling with something, like if you're really wanting to stop by that liquor store and grab a 40, I've been there. You bring it to, you say, hey, can you pray with me? You just exposed it. You just, man, I'm really feeling like I'm gonna go on my phone tonight at midnight.

My wife's gone, expose it. Man, I really need, I wanna make that doctor's appointment, get prescribed that opiate again. I'm struggling with that today.

Let's expose it. And when you expose it, man, I fell yesterday and it's got a hold on me. Hey, let's expose it.

Nothing surprises me, why? Because it's Christian men trying to get through a very difficult season in life. Expose it, hey, my marriage isn't, I need prayer for my marriage. And you expose it.

Sin grows in that darkness. And when you don't expose it, and where it's growing, it doesn't just stay little. It grows, it grows.

That's why James has said, when sin fully grown brings forth death, therefore expose it, repent, and bring it to life.

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

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/shane-idleman/principles-of-healthy-masculinity/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net