

Purity Clears the Way

by Shane Idleman

Purity clears the way to a deeper relationship with God, and obedience to God's Word is the key to restoring fellowship with Him.

Duration: 44:15

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:3, Matthew 5:8, Matthew 21:12, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Hebrews 12:14, James 1:27, 1 John 3:3

Topics: "Purity", "Righteous Anger"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the importance of purity in our relationship with God, using Matthew 21:12 to illustrate Jesus' righteous anger towards the corruption in the temple. He explains that true worship requires a heart aligned with God's will, and that purity clears the way for effective prayer and spiritual power. Idleman warns against the dangers of complacency and entitlement in faith, urging believers to amend their ways and seek genuine holiness. He draws parallels between the issues of Jesus' time and contemporary societal challenges, calling for a return to heartfelt worship and obedience to God's Word.

Transcript

Matthew chapter 21, verse 12. I encourage you to just read your Bibles this year. It'd be the best investment you ever made.

And last week, if you were here, you remember we talked about the triumphal entry. Jesus enters into Jerusalem, the king riding on a donkey. And people are like, what? What was that all about? Well, go listen to last week's message.

I explained everything in detail. And that was Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem, he's riding the donkey, the significance of that. We see him as king, we see Jesus as priest, we see him as prophet.

And now we see a different dynamic taking place. Verse 12, then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And he said to them, it is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.

Let's stop there for a minute. I had this whole chapter already out and outlined and I just hung out here for a little while. I didn't want to rush ahead because I think there's a lot to this.

And it's an interesting story. Jesus is actually upset and he's angry and he's throwing over the tables of the money changers. Another gospel tells us he puts a cord together and he whips, he drives out people from the temple of God.

And that's a picture we often don't see of Jesus sometimes. But we have to remember that righteous anger can lead to positive action. Righteous indignation is what people would often say.

Being mad about something and really what was happening is they were taking advantage of the people. This would be a whole sermon on itself, but let me just give you the nuggets here. They were coming, people were coming to Jerusalem.

Remember last week we talked about maybe a million people here to celebrate the Passover and they're coming. And if they don't have a sacrifice to give, they have to buy the sacrifice there. So the priests and the different leaders are saying, well, have this dove or this heifer or this she-goat or this ram or whatever it was to be sacrificed.

But it needs to be without spot, without blemish. This is, in our language, it would be \$100. They're like, \$100? That's normally \$10.

Well, this is the one you need. And they also had to exchange their money from other currency into the temple coin, what they would accept in Jerusalem. So they were raising the rate, they were selling these products at enormous prices.

And that's what it was, it was taking advantage of the people. And that is not good. And Jesus saw that and he said, my father's house, my house shall be called a house of prayer, not a den of thieves.

So that's the context there. It's interesting because righteous anger led him to do something. And righteous anger, a lot of times we don't take action until we get upset at something.

Think about the abortion industry. We're not called to blow up abortion clinics. We're called to pray and protest.

And that should drive us to something. You guys remember the name William Wilberforce? Who was very instrumental in stopping the slave trade in our nation, Great Britain. Very instrumental.

And there's a good movie about it. It took 30 years. And William Wilberforce was so, and rightly so, he was so upset at what had happened.

And he took action. You look at people in our nation or in the church, they take action. And there's great ministries here, helping homeless or helping those who are abused in a women's home or men's sober living home.

And we're so mad at what the addiction has done. We're so mad at it. And we take that anger and then we allow it to drive us to do something.

So that's one positive thing with righteous indignation, righteous anger. Is if we see people being oppressed or being hurt, it should drive us to do something. Can you imagine Jesus walks in and they're just taking advantage of everything that he stood for and everything God stands for.

And manipulating the people, making tons of money off the sacrifice. And the sacrifice, remember poor people could only afford doves. And that would be the sacrifice.

Here's another sermon, I just have to give nuggets. But the sacrificial system was a way to make atonement for the sins of the people. And a lot of people don't understand that, Shane, why killing doves? And I'm not God, I don't really know.

There's a lot of things that I see in the Old Testament, I'm like, hmm, I'm not sure I would have did that. But I'm not going to go to hell over a mystery. I've said that before, God's sovereign, he knows a lot more than I do.

The Bible, it's an inerrant word of God. But in his providence and his sovereignty, he said that without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sin. So people would have to bring their sacrifice to cover the sins of their family.

And it was a temporary covering, a foreshadowing of Christ and him coming and being the ultimate sacrifice. So we see people coming to make the sacrifice, to make the atonement for their sins, and then people are ripping them off. Taking advantage of it, it just really upset Jesus.

And he turned over their money, these tables, he drove them out with a whip. And we see this anger, so that's the setting here. But there's something interesting, I don't think we've touched on this too much.

Anytime I've taught in other places, I know I haven't. But we have kind of a saying here, I've said often, that context is king. Anytime you see a scripture, you want to put it in context.

Because everybody from Hillary Clinton to Donald Trump can take things out of context. And our president can take things out of context, about the gun lobby or different things. And the gay agenda can take things out of context.

Do not judge me, it says do not judge. Well no, but then you keep reading, it says remove the plank from your eye, and then you can judge rightly. So we have to put everything in context with scripture, everything.

So Jesus, when he said, my house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. He's actually saying, it is written. He's going way back, 500, 600 years back into Jeremiah's time, the prophet Jeremiah.

So let's put this little nugget of truth in context, and where it came from. Because Jesus is quoting Jeremiah. So many times when people say, and I kind of chuckle, we don't really need the Old Testament now.

Well Jesus quoted the Old Testament often. He quoted Jeremiah here, he quoted Isaiah. When he said, well did Isaiah say, you hypocrites, you stiff-necked people, you draw nigh unto me with your lips, but your hearts are far from me.

He quotes Deuteronomy, he quotes Psalms, he quotes the Old Testament. It's very healthy to find yourself in both old and new, they complement each other. Actually my Bible at home right now, I've got one book, I've got a bookmark in Kings, I've got a bookmark in Psalms, I've got a bookmark in the Gospels, and I have a bookmark in Acts, Romans, Acts, and just keep going through that old, so it penetrates

your heart, and you see it in so many different ways.

So let's look at what Jesus is quoting. Jeremiah, chapter 7, he said this, The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word. So in other words, he's saying, Jeremiah's saying, come to the gate of the Lord's house.

It's almost like what I'm doing here. From the pulpit, you're proclaiming what God says. And hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who enter in at these gates, and you worship the Lord.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Basically saying, fix your ways, fix your doings, they are not pleasing to God. If you change your ways, then God said you can dwell in this place, meaning the land of Israel, he'll bless the land, he'll bless the harvest, he'll bless the rain, he'll bless everything.

If you amend your ways and change your ways, do not trust in these lying words. God is saying this, do not trust. He's saying, Jeremiah, tell the people, do not trust in these lying words.

What are the lying words? Well, people are saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these. And we probably go, what? What is he talking about there? That doesn't make any sense. Well, it does if you put this, again, in context.

The children of Israel had a sense of entitlement. They were children of Abraham. God's chosen people have a sense of entitlement.

And we have to be careful there, because that can happen in the church, too. I've been raised in a Christian home, I've been Baptist for four generations, or whatever it is, and we have the sense of entitlement. And God is basically saying, listen, you're believing in lying words.

You're swearing in the temple. We're trusting in the temple. And that's what it was.

They trusted in the temple of God to be their shelter. And if they would remember, even, I don't remember how long ago it was, but about 18 miles north of where they're at, there was a place called Shiloh that actually housed the Ark of the Covenant. And that's pretty impressive.

When the Ark of the Covenant was present, there would be victories. People would be blessed. And God still judged that area because of their sins, even though the Ark was there.

So these people are saying the same thing. The temple of the Lord. In other words, we don't have to change anything.

We can still reject God. We can still worship Baal. We can do all these things.

And we can just say, but the temple, the temple, the temple of the Lord. We're blessed of God. We're children of Abraham.

That's the setting. And I was reminded that Christianity without obedience is like a car without an engine. It might look nice, but it's not going anywhere.

They trusted in the temple versus in God and changing their ways. So God says, amend your ways. If there is no shame or conviction about standing in God's holy place, unwilling to obey him, something is

wrong.

We see that in churches a lot, don't we? People come in flippantly. And they don't realize that we're here worshipping God. And it's almost like, well, I'm just going to come in and do God a favor.

I'm going to check church off my checklist. I went to church this week. And we don't want to amend our ways, and we don't want to change.

We think going to church and hearing shame convict me is all I need. And that's not. God says, we need to amend our ways.

And if there's no shame, and if we're continuing in sin, and we can come into the house of God without any shame, there's something wrong. But if you read modern psychology today, they'll say, oh, shame's not good. People don't need to be shamed.

You need to build up self-esteem. You need to build up worth. And of course you do.

You need to build up somebody's self-worth and build them up. But shame can be very good in this sense if you look up the real definition of shame. It's a painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by wrong or foolish behavior.

So if I feel shame over a wrong behavior, that shame can lead me to repentance. That shame can lead me to amend my ways, Jeremiah. So it's very healthy.

And that's what he's saying to the people. They would walk into the temple of God, and their ways were not pleasing to God. But they thought they had a sense of entitlement.

And if you've been a Christian a while, you know that that can creep in sometimes. You know, I've been a Christian 20 years, or I've been a Christian 30 years, and I know all this stuff, I've read that book, and we have this sense of entitlement. But God says, listen, amend your ways and obey me.

I like what commentator F.B. Huey said. So far as God was concerned, the temple was a den of robbers. Bandits often took refuge in caves in the Judean hills for protection until the pursuers gave up searching for them.

They would then emerge to commit other crimes. The temple had become the refuge for the people to perform rituals they believed freed them to continue their wicked practices. However, they were not deceiving God.

So the people would go out, they would not change anything, they would not amend their ways, then they would come to the temple thinking God was pleased. And this happens a lot. If you've been coming a while, you hear me talk often about religion versus relationship.

There's a big difference. What religion does is they don't amend their ways. They have religion, and I'm going to say something here unapologetically.

It's going to get me a few emails, but that's okay. We see this big time in Roman Catholicism. I know, I used to be an altar boy.

Went to a private Catholic school, so I know. It can be all about religion. I'm going to go and tell the priest everything I did bad, and then I'm going to start to do everything bad again.

It's a form of, it was almost like, confess right then, but I'm not going to amend my ways. Confess right then, I'm not going to amend my ways. So you see a lot of that in Roman Catholic homes, and Protestants, of course, and all different, but mainly in those religions that focus on religion.

Get right with the priest, pray to a saint, ask Mary to forgive you, and then you go back into not changing your ways. In other words, we think, okay, I can sin this week as long as I go to confession. I can sin this week as long as I go to confession.

And then they sit there and they actually take Holy Communion without changing. And that's a strong rebuke here. No matter what part of Christianity we are a part of, it's a very strong rebuke to look at our ways and say, okay, Lord, are my ways pleasing to you? And the title of the message, I guess I should have gave this at the beginning, is Purity Clears the Way.

Purity clears the way. And what I mean by purity, I mean, if we took an opinion poll right now, many of you are thinking different things. You're thinking sexual purity, or you're thinking pure before God, holy, and all those things are right.

But purity really is, it's having the heart right before God. It's cleaning out the junk in the heart and having the heart right before God and coming and being able to worship Him. I like what Henry Howard said, of itself, this is key, of itself, purity is not power, but it clears the way.

See, in and of itself, purity is not the power. The power is in God. The power is in the Holy Spirit working through us.

But purity clears the way. It's almost like the analogy I gave about a year ago, I think, is the water hose. Have you ever, you know, when a water hose is just kinked? A few years ago, you guys remember, I was playing outside with my son in the summer, and he had the water hose on full blast.

And nothing, maybe a drip or two, he said, Dad, what's going on? The water, what's going on? There's a little drip, I have it all the way on. I said, here's, there's three problems. That one, that one, and that one.

Go undo the hose. And once he did, he almost couldn't hold it. It was everywhere, squirting everywhere.

Why? The kink in the hose. See, that's what purity does. When you say, Lord, I want to be holy and righteous before you, not perfect.

And I want to make that distinction, too. We don't teach perfectionism, where you can actually be perfect before you die. We know that we, but there's a big difference between a struggle and a lifestyle.

There's a big difference between a heart that's set on doing right before God. And purity, if you will, releases that hose. So now the water, now the power of God's Spirit can flow through a person.

And that purity, from that purity, it flows. And it flows, and it flows, and it flows. Think about people in ministry.

I mean, if they're bound in sin, are they going to, is the power of God going to be flowing through them? Or are they going to regret it, and it's going to be difficult, ministry's challenging, and this, and I just hate my

life, and there's no power of God, I've never seen people get saved. It's because there's a kink in the hose, possibly. There's a big kink in the hose.

So of itself, purity is not power, but it clears the way. And obedience to God's Word, it restores fellowship with God. It restores heartfelt worship.

The Word of God comes alive. Joy and peace return, and a humble sinner is transformed. So anytime people are struggling with, like, say, depression, and anxiety, and worry, and this and that, I always start at the spiritual side first.

There's physical things, too, that can happen. But tell me about your relationship with the Lord. Are you a bank? Because obedience, the byproduct of obedience is joy and peace, and you can't wait to get to church.

You can't wait to worship the Word of God. I can't wait to get up and read this, or later tonight, because purity opened that door, and now you're receptive, and you want that. But when there's not, purity is not flowing, like that water hose, everything's closed off.

I don't want to really read the Bible. I don't really have a passion for the things of God. Often it's tied to obedience.

Not all the time. I'm well aware there's situations that happen. There's very saintly people that struggle with these things.

But always look at obedience first. Am I in a right relationship with God? Remember, we talked about this in the summer, too, with marriage, a lot of marriage issues. When people are having marriage problems, it's very simple.

You can say, tell me about your prayer and devotional life. Ten times out of ten, it's nonexistent. You will not get a husband and wife who are powerfully seeking God, broken and humble before God, in their Word, and praying, and then now we're going to go to divorce court later on.

I haven't seen it. Maybe somebody has, but I haven't seen it. Why? Because purity opens that door.

How can two people filled with the Spirit of God make that type of decision? But see, if we're not looking to obeying God's Word, and I just love that scripture so much where James says, be hearers of the Word and doers, because if you're hearers only, you're deceiving yourself. And this topic's interesting because it will not win me a popularity contest. You're not going to please everybody in the church by talking about obedience to God's Word, because a lot of people don't like that.

So that's the setting in Jeremiah, but then Jeremiah keeps going. God says, For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, in other words, be fair, be balanced, if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, then I will cause you to dwell in this place and in this land that I gave to your fathers forever. Behold, you trust in lying words.

You trust in lying words, words that cannot profit. So he's telling the people, if you just amend your ways, treat people, we know what that is, to love God with all of our heart, to treat people, if you just amend your ways and stop listening to these lying words, and this is also the time where Jeremiah would bring in, he

would tell people about the false prophets, what was the main role of the false prophet. They would tell people, peace, peace, and safety, when there's no peace, there's no safety, they're rejecting God, they're rebelling against God, God's judgment is about to fall, and the false prophets would come in and say, no, no, no, that's not happening, God loves you, you're children of Abraham, just continue doing what you're doing.

Jeremiah says, those are lying words. That's one way to tell a false from a true teacher, is they will tell you things that hurt sometimes. A false teacher, and we have to be careful, not everybody that does this is a false prophet or a false teacher, they just might not be in God's word and they're just trying to encourage, but a lot of times you can tell a false prophet or a false teacher by what they encourage.

If they tell America or us to continue in our sin, that God doesn't care, that's a false teacher, that's a false spokesman for God. If they're telling him, telling people, they actually have pastors for Planned Parenthood, pastors that support that, taking the life of an innocent child. And those are lying, deceptive words.

And they say, nothing will befall you, church, God loves, yes, He does love us, and thank you, but we have to amend our ways. God says, don't listen to lying words. It's very simple, do the words we're following, or does the advice we're following, does it align with truth? Well, I don't know.

Well, you better spend some time in the truth to know if it aligns with truth. Remember, it's interesting, some of you already know this, but do you know how they teach counterfeit bank tellers to find counterfeit money? They have them look at the original, all day long, and study the original. Look at the texture, look at the underlying colors, look at the imprint of the original.

That's how they spot a counterfeit. You think, well, they just show them tons of counterfeit. No, they show them the original.

And that's when you can know if lying words, if something is leading you in the right direction, does it line up with God's words? So God's saying, you're trusting in lying words. That's still the context that Jesus was talking in, or speaking about. Will you steal? Will you murder? Will you commit adultery? Will you swear falsely? Will you burn incense to Baal and walk after other gods whom you do not know? And then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations.

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, says the Lord. So that's the context. Jesus is going way back into Jeremiah's time, and paralleling it with this time where he's at.

You're going to do... Sometimes we just miss all this stuff. You're going to steal. So we know what stealing is, right? Stealing time, stealing money, taking advantage of people, being lazy.

I think stealing from the government, stealing from the state, stealing in any way is stealing. People love to rip off the government, rip off the state, rip off the church, rip off... They're stealing. They're taking advantage of people.

What about adultery? Oh, well, I'm all good on that. Really? Can I check your mind for the last week? Because Jesus says, as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. If you even lust after someone who's not your spouse, you're committing adultery in your heart.

Oh, now we're in trouble. And if we're not putting up safeguards, we are walking around committing adultery in our heart. And I wonder how many in Christian homes at night, what they watch on television, they go to sleep with those images.

And they're not taking those thoughts captive. And this perversion that's just permeating our culture. The sexual sin.

What about swearing falsely? It's lying, it's deceiving, it's manipulating, it's gossiping, it's slandering. That's in the church. Shane, come on.

Not this church. Oh, yeah. It's in the church.

Lying and deceiving and manipulating and gossiping and slandering. And God says, here's his exact words. And then you come and you stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered to do all these things.

God says, that's a lie. You're believing lying words. Because my house will be called a house of prayer, a house of holiness, a house of righteousness, not a den of thieves.

Very powerful context. And then he talks also about bell worship. And this is very interesting.

They would actually worship cows. Golden imam. What happened with Aaron? There's another king.

I don't remember his name. I don't know if it's Asa or Manasseh. One of those kings would actually build.

He was scared that the children, when the northern and southern tribes of Israel split up, he was worried that that tribe would then go to the other side. So he built them altars for bell worship. And what bell worship is, they're thanking this whatever for the fertile soil, for the rains and the harvest.

Oh, bell. Thank you, bell. Thank you.

And it struck me, and I had to put this down as a side note. Just because there's an open door or a blessing, we can't assume that God is opening the door or blessing us unless our ways align with His Word. And I see that many times.

God's blessing me. No, He's not. You're just working hard.

God's blessing me. No, you just have a great marketing campaign. And have you ever thought the enemy might bless you? Because what was happening, the rain is coming, the wheat is growing, the harvest is in, and they go and worship bell.

The bell, and they would make this calf. I won't tell you all the stuff they did, but it was terrible, bell worship. And they talk about sacrificing their child to Molech.

They would also sacrifice their children to Baal, this false god, because he's bringing the rain, and he's bringing the wheat and the harvest. How misled, how utterly misled is this group of people? But be careful, because just because there's an open door, or just, man, Shane, I've just got a raise. I'm making so much more money.

God is blessing me. I know I'm about ready to leave my wife, and I haven't been in church, but God is, no, He's not. He's not.

There's something called capitalism in America that's made a lot of people very wealthy. That, in and of itself, can make people wealthy. So I think we want to be careful here, because we can assume that any open door or any blessing is from God, and that's not always the case.

We have to make sure that our life, our ways line up with Scripture. Then we can be assured that God might be blessing, or He might be taking us through a difficult season. But I've seen many people make the mistake and think that God is blessing them, just because they get a promotion, or they get a big settlement, or they get a big lottery, or a family member passed away, or whatever it is, they think, okay, God's blessing me.

Not necessarily. It could just be a good marketing plan, or it could be timing, it could be coincidence. It's just life.

I mean, how many wealthy CEOs do we know of looking at Fortune 500 companies who aren't Christians? So we have to be careful in this area, because that's what the people are doing. That's bell worship, is they're worshiping this false God because of the provision that the real, true, and living God was giving them. Now, I want you, this is interesting.

Parallel this to today, back then. Today, sexual immorality, unless you've been locked in a closet, is an epidemic. From homosexuality to heterosexuality to every kind of sex, it's just an epidemic.

It is perversion. We are a nation out of control. We are a nation perverted.

It's perversion. And the word perversion really means to take what is straight and narrow and right, and you pervert it. You twist it.

And that's what people are doing. Do we see now the worship of creation over the Creator? Everybody's worried about Mother Earth, not Father God. But I also believe Christians should be some of the most, we should recycle.

We should take care of the planet and leave it to our children, of course. But you don't worship these things in the New Age and all. I mean, the same thing, we're worshiping the creation, not the Creator.

And then the final thing, child sacrifice. It's the same thing. Oh, Shane, now you've lost us.

No, I'm not joking. If you could watch just for a minute what a partial birth abortion involves, or saline abortion, where they inject saline solution into the mother and actually burn the child to death. What's the difference? There's no difference.

There's no difference. This culture parallels that culture to a T. We are worshiping false gods in our society, in the church. We're not calling people out of that lifestyle.

We're actually encouraging it by our silence often. And God is saying, now hear God again. And then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations.

No, you're not. That's called heresy. That's hypocritical.

So it's a good wake-up call for the church that the heart of God is that we amend our ways. And I think, this is speculation, but I believe that the babies that were offered back then were unplanned pregnancies

due to the decadence of society. I mean, I don't know how a mother could just give her child to Molech or Bell, but if that child was unwanted, huh, sound familiar? What do you think funds these organizations and these groups? Unwanted, I didn't plan on this.

Well, it's not the child's fault. See, what people forget is the conception of the child is not sin. That's not sin.

That's a living child. Now, sin might have caused that, but that's not sin. That's not oops, that's a mistake.

That's a life. And so people come into the church, and I've spoken on this before, if you've had an abortion, and I encouraged my girlfriend 24 years ago to do this, and it still haunts me today, wondering how old my child will be, and boy or girl. So I don't take away, I don't try to make anybody feel convicted whatsoever, but I do want you to be challenged.

I want all of us to realize that we are a nation adrift, that we are a church that needs to amend our ways, and we need to talk about difficult topics. We need to say that's wrong, but then we also need to offer hope and healing. See, there's a flip side to this, too.

There's hope and healing in that. God can deliver. God can set you free, but you've got to turn it over to him in either way.

Amend your ways. Purity clears the way. Interesting book I try to read once a year.

It's called Surviving the Anointing. It's by David Ravenhill. Many of you probably recognize his dad, Leonard Ravenhill, and I emailed David this week, and he sent me a few dozen copies of this book, and I bought some for the church if you're interested, mainly for leadership.

It's really good. Surviving the Anointing. What it talks about is when God anoints a person to ministry, to preach, to pastor, to lead a ministry, children's ministry, worship, there's an anointing.

I don't know if you know. That's not a weird word. Anointing just means it's a special call of God on a person's life to do God's will.

They are anointed to do God's will. To survive that anointing is very difficult because the enemy comes in at many different ways. He writes about that in this book, and he said this.

Holiness is spiritual health, and I never really thought about that because we think of physical health, right? A person's healthy, but holiness, purity, is spiritual health. If you want to know how you're doing spiritually, how are you doing in the area of purity and holiness? That's spiritual health. Then he went on to say if you hate something, if you absolutely hate something, there's no longer any real temptation.

That's a problem with sin often is we don't hate it like God hates it. We don't see it like he sees it. We see it as, oh, my little vice.

I need to work on that. I was raised that way. It's going to be difficult.

It's going to be challenging, but this little vice will end up destroying eventually because it grows and it grows and it grows. That's why God says amend your ways, and purity opens the way. It clears the way.

Here's a few scriptures on that issue of purity. 1 John 3.3, and everyone who has this hope fixed on him purifies himself just as he is pure. He's saying here everyone who has this hope fixed on him, do you have your hope fixed in Jesus Christ? I don't know, group this size.

I don't know all of you. I don't know if you have your hope fixed on Jesus Christ. If not, I would encourage you.

The best thing you can do is repent of your sin and say, Lord, I need you. God, I need you, and have God save you. Then because of that, because I have this hope fixed on him, I purify myself just as he is pure.

See, it's not just let go and let God. It's not all God. It's not all me.

It's where God says you do these things, you say no, and I'll do the rest, basically. As we submit to that purity, as we submit to that holiness, God fills us with his Spirit. Matthew 5.8, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

This is interesting too because a person who makes purity part of their lifestyle, who wants to focus on holiness, who wants to please God, they know God in a more powerful way than most Christians do. This is why they're more sensitive to the things of God. This is why they're more in tune with the things of God.

This is why they love worship, why they love their word, why they might seem peculiar. Because there's a deeper relationship that goes with following God. When you're sold out, when you're pure and you're right and you're holy before God, joy comes upon your life.

Joy unspeakable. Peace. You have direction.

You thank God. You just walk around, Lord, thank you for sparing me. Thank you.

You're closer to God. Why? Back to that hose analogy again. There's nothing coming out.

The Holy Spirit's not coming out. He's been quenched in grief. So purity allows that to open up.

James 1.27, pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and our Father is this. If you want to know what true religion is, here it is. To visit orphans and widows in their times of need and their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Another translation would say unspotted from the world. And this is a challenge for most Christians, including me. We're not supposed to look like the world.

We're supposed to come out from among them and be separate. See, I live in the world, but I don't have to watch Desperate Housewives and Kardashians and have all kinds of junk on Facebook and YouTube and listen to the same music and put on Lady Gaga and 50 Cent and pornography in my house. You don't look like the world.

You are in the world, but you come out from among them. You say, Lord, because I want to please you, because I want to honor you, because I don't want to lust after women other than my wife, I'm going to make certain choices that guard that and foster holiness and purity. And that's what it looks like.

And he's absolutely right here. To keep oneself unstained from the world. And I have this imagery sometimes.

Maybe it's just me, but you're walking through the world. It's almost like you're walking through an art gallery while people are painting pictures and paintbrushes are flowing. You're kind of walking.

You don't touch me with that red paint or that white paint. That's how we walk through the world almost, unspotted, untainted. I have to live in the world.

I have to minister to the world, but I should walk through it as, you know, I don't want this on me. I don't want that on me. So Christians aren't weird and following a bunch of rules.

It's because I want a deeper, powerful relationship with God. I don't know about you, but I want powerful sermons to come from my heart because God has been working on my heart. Powerful sermons aren't going to come from a heart that's been looking at pornography all week or a heart that's been holding in bitterness and anger and unforgiveness and I'm jealous of you.

No, it has to come from a pure, undefiled heart, not a perfect heart. I struggle just like everybody else and so do you, everybody in this room, but there's a big difference when you say, Lord, I don't want to view these things or watch these things or hang out with people. There's people I still can't hang out with high school because I know they'll start to pull me back in that direction if they become too much of a friend.

Now we have to be careful to be unstained and unspotted by the world. So it's a very interesting scripture that says we are of the world, but we're in it, but we're not of it. So in other words, I can be in something, but not of it.

When I jump into a swimming pool, am I of the water? Am I the water? No, I'm in it, but I'm not of it. There's a difference there and that's what God calls us to do. Men and women, of course, men who do not live well do not pray well.

Wow, I could have just said that and sat down. Saved me a half hour. Folks, this is so true.

I think it's Ian Bounds. I couldn't find the exact quote, but he said something like, men or women who do not live well do not pray well. Purity clears the way for prayer as well.

You will never see somebody living like the world who has a powerful prayer life. You can't. It's impossible because they cancel out the other.

If you have a powerful prayer life and you're focusing on purity, you're gonna have, you're gonna live well. And there's a distinction, but men who do not live well do not pray well. And I think that's what hinders prayer life for many people.

If a person's not living for God all week, how are they gonna come in and worship God and pray and seek His face? It's like foreign concept. It's like, Shane, you're tired. I don't really know what you're talking about.

Right, because you haven't been living well. The best type of worship service here is gonna be the byproduct of us living well throughout the week. Preaching.

I like what Ian Bounds said about preaching. Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It's the outflow of a life.

And that's why I try to tell a lot of young pastors that it's not a performance for an hour. You don't come up here and let me have my pneumatology and eschatology and the Greek and the Hebrew and I'm performing and it wasn't that wonderful. No, it's actually the outflow of a life.

Preachers preach really how they live. That's how they, so I can watch somebody on TV and I can tell you how they live. When I see those guys on TV joking about their personal Cessnas and \$7 million airplanes and I can tell you how they live.

I can tell by their sermons. I can watch a sermon and see if their heart's there or they're just trying to please the masses. Because out of the wellspring, that's why the Bible's proverb says guard your heart for out of everything flows the issues of life.

Everything comes out of the heart before God. So priority. The priority, Jesus said, is prayer.

Prayer is the priority. I actually had a whole sermon for this too when Jesus said, my house shall be called a house of prayer not a den of thieves. I mean, we can talk a lot about that house of prayer and what that means and I have done that many times but I want to just throw out this for a minute.

Take the test. Is prayer a priority in your life? I mean, if Jesus says, my house is a house of prayer, that's what this is, a house of prayer. Your house should be a house of prayer.

Well, take the test. How much time do you give to it? It's real easy to find out, is prayer a priority? How much time do we give? Whatever you give the most amount of time to is your priority. Star Wars just broke all kinds of records.

Were prayer closets full? See, we saw Christianity today, all the prayer closets are full. War room. War room motivated a movement.

I like what George Mueller said, I went to my God and prayed diligently and received what I needed. See, we forget about diligent prayer. We forget about heartfelt prayer.

I would encourage you, go back and read books on prayer over a hundred years ago. Pick up anything by E.M. Bounds, read Andrew Murray, read Tozer, read C.H. Spurgeon, read the Puritan on prayer and you'll just go to bed hungry for God because prayer has to be cultivated. There's a diligence there and really what this boils down to is why are we at church? Motives.

Why am I here? I mean there's people here who want more marketing, you know, want to build their downline. There's people here, you know, not here, but churches in general come, real estate, looking for clients. There's people here looking for a date.

There's kids here coming because their mom just dragged them here or their dad. I mean, we have to really look, what are our motives? Why do we come to church? Is God's house a house of prayer? Is prayer the priority? I mean, I remember when the church prayed. I remember when prayer was an asset, not a liability.

I remember when prayer was on the forefront, not the background. I remember when everything was gauged by prayer. You actually should find leaders for your church in a prayer room, in a prayer meeting.

That's where, because that's the true power. Power comes from prayer. So what I want to do is do a little bit of extended prayer and worship and I want our prayers to be focused tonight on a few things.

I want you to pray specifically to be filled mightily with God's Spirit. To be filled mightily with God's Spirit, but beware, that's going to have, that full surrender's going to need to take place. Somehow to be filled with His Spirit.

For God to rebuild and repair and renew marriages and families and your own personal walk with Him. Pray for our nation and our leaders and the persecuted church and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. So when we go into a time of worship and prayer, that's perfect timing to pray for.

I believe that God can restore marriages. I believe that He can restore families. I believe that He can bring prodigal sons home.

I believe that He can help to eliminate some of the terrorist activity that's going on if He's our shelter and He's our protection and we're looking to Him to do that. Prayer moves the hand of God. Prayer is the most powerful thing.

You look at Hezekiah, when he prayed, when David prayed, when Moses prayed, when David prayed, when people prayed, God moved. So prayer is so important. That's why it's the most difficult.

The most important thing in the Christian life is not listening to error one. That's real easy. Oh, this is easy.

The most difficult thing, the most challenging thing is prayer and it's the most important. So we're going to go into a time of communion as well. Prayer, worship, and communion.

And communion is at the front, it's at the back. It's basically for those people who are believers, who say, Jesus, You are my Lord, You are my Savior. And the Bible says when we come together that we do this in remembrance of Him.

We remember the cross. We remember the body that was bruised and broken for my sins and yours. We remember the blood that was given, the chastisement that He went through.

That's what communion is for. So I'm not going to come back up here and say anything. You just come at your leisure during worship and you take communion.

You go back and you can pray with your family, pray with your spouse, pray up at the front, pray in the back, pray with the prayer team. Let's just have this be a time of prayer before the second service comes in. We've got about ten minutes to just pray and worship and seek God.

And you can even stand for extended worship and continue to worship God. We've got to get people back on seeking God more diligently. This isn't fast food microwave Christianity.

I mean, I love reading books. I love listening to biographies and reading biographies. And many times, I would say the majority of times, when God would finally break in through a person's life, it was never, ever, very few times do a quick prayer.

It was extended times in prayer and worship and seeking God. And diligently. Those who seek me diligently will find me.

And that diligence, it's like that little drip of water hitting a rock. Eventually, you start to wear down that rock. And that's what diligence is in seeking God.

So I would just encourage you guys to do that tonight.

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