

# Sincere but Wrong: A Believing Unbeliever

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon explores the concept of being sincere yet wrong in faith, using Cornelius's story to illustrate the importance of true belief in Jesus for salvation.*

**Duration:** 52:05

**Scripture:** Acts 10:1

**Topics:** "Deception in Faith", "The Importance of True Belief"

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## Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the danger of being sincere yet wrong in our beliefs, using the story of Cornelius from Acts 10 to illustrate that good character and devoutness do not equate to salvation without a relationship with Jesus Christ. He recounts a personal experience of visiting a man in denial about his terminal illness, highlighting how deception can cloud our understanding of truth. Idleman urges listeners to seek God earnestly, asking Him to reveal any areas of deception in their lives, and stresses the importance of belief in Jesus as the only way to salvation. He warns against the dangers of false gospels and encourages a deeper relationship with God through prayer and fasting.

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## Transcript

The title is Sincere, Sincere but Wrong. A Believing Unbeliever. We can be sincere, we can be very sincere, but sincerely wrong.

And I was actually, this was brought home to me this week, reminding of how deception works. We can be deceived. We can be deceived about certain things, and the enemy uses deception.

I was able to visit, I often go to hospital homes or the hospital and visit people, and I met one gentleman who didn't look real good, and he was, I came in and asked him if he needed any prayer, and he said, no, I'm going home tomorrow, I've been, clean bill of health, and I'm going home tomorrow, and I'm like, okay, well, that sounds good, but as I was leaving, I found out that he's going home to die. He's going on hospice, he's got maybe a week, week and a half left. But in his, something was wrong there, and she said, yeah, he's in denial, and it's like, deception, deception.

Folks, we have to ask God, and I ask, if there's anything in my life deceiving me, if I'm sincere but I'm sincerely wrong in any area, Lord, show me. And that's my prayer for you this morning, is if there is any area, or this is going out the internet, the radio, if a person can be sincere and very wrong, there's, I think there's like, it's been, I don't even want to quote it, but all the killings of Christians in different countries,

and people are very sincere who are killing those people. So you can be sincerely wrong.

And that's our backdrop, and the story we can, we're going to talk about, it's not a story, it's actual truth from the book of Acts. Acts chapter 10. There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius.

He was a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment. Again, the book of Acts chapter 10, I hear a lot of people turning there. That's good, I like the real Bibles and not the Bibles on your phones.

I had to use one of those last night when I spoke for a little bit, and I don't like the Bible on the phone. Because then text messages come in, or emails, it's like, how's that work? Put on airplane mode, well then I can't access the internet. There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, so it's this man Cornelius.

He was over a certain amount of soldiers from Italy, an Italian Regiment. Now listen to this, he was a devout man. He was devout and one who feared God with all his household.

He gave alms generously to the people and prayed to God always. Boy, this guy had some good character, didn't he? Look at this, he was devout, he was loyal. He was loyal to the Jewish people, he was committed.

He feared God, his household feared God, he was reverent. And he had a giving heart. But we read in verse 3, about the ninth hour, and this is continuing.

Now we have his character at least, I think that's given for a reason. And about the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God. And coming in and saying to him, Cornelius.

And when he observed him, he was afraid. And said, what is it Lord? So he said to him, your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. Now I want to stop there for a minute.

It's interesting, people speculate it was an angel. Sometimes Christ would appear, as he did with Paul in the book of Acts, which we just read earlier. And he would knock Paul off of his beast.

And Paul would say, what do you want me to do Lord? Or you have angels ministering to people. In this case, he's asking, what do you want me to do? Or who are you Lord? So we don't know exactly what type of angel was this Christ himself. But the Bible doesn't say that.

It said an angel of God coming and saying to him. So we don't want to really speculate on things that we don't know. But we do know this.

Your prayers and your alms. Alms were a way of giving. So when you give, maybe monetarily, give of your time, give of your resources.

You are giving alms. We call it today just offering or giving of your time, resources. So this man was praying.

And he was giving to the work of God. And true prayer has feet. If a person is sincere and they're praying, their faith is going to be worked out.

In giving to others and helping and being involved. And so we see this man. God says, I hear your prayers.

They've come up as a memorial to me. I hear your prayers. I see your giving.

I see that you have genuine faith. So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to answer your prayers, Cornelius.

Now what about angels? Well, I'm glad you asked. I'm going to get to that in a minute. Verse 5. Now send men to Joppa and send for Simon, whose surname is Peter.

He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do. And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.

So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa. In a nutshell, Cornelius fears God. He's praying.

Who knows what he's praying, but he's praying and he's giving and he's sincerely seeking God. And I believe when a person is sincerely seeking God, that God will meet you. When a person is sincere and says, Lord, if you're out there, something clearly is bigger than me.

Something is greater than me. And I want to know you, God. I am sincere.

Will you show yourself to me? I believe that is a prayer that he will answer because the Bible says, A broken and contrite heart he will not turn away. And we see in Romans 1 also, when we'll talk about next week, is when a person is sincere about knowing God, that God will reveal himself to them somehow. And we hear a lot in the mission field of Muslims coming to know the Lord through visions and dreams and different things.

And there was a person I know, I don't know personally, but I know of his ministry, who was kind of mocking that last week, and I was a little offended by that, because who are we to say those aren't genuine? How do we know that God isn't visiting people in that way and convicting them? It's throughout the entire book of Acts, it's in the New Testament, that God would use different means to reach people that are sincere. So I don't have a problem with that. And we'll talk about angels in a minute.

I don't want to get off onto that just yet. But I'm going to throw out a question here. First we have Cornelius, he's devout, he's fearing God, he's praying, he's giving.

So you have this man of good character, do we not? But as we know, good works do not save us, it's a relationship via Jesus Christ. Once we repent of our sin, believe in the only name that saves, we are saved. That's the gospel in 30 seconds.

But we know in the Old Testament, where was Jesus? He had not come. So in the Old Testament, they would sacrifice, if a person had faith, they believed in God, then they would have a sacrifice. Without the shedding of blood, there's no remission of sin.

So the blood of animals was shed in order to temporarily cover the sins of the people. And then next year, into the Holies of Holies, the priests would go and make atonement for the sins of the people. Next year, and there was this ongoing sacrificial system.

So the question is, would Cornelius, we know he wouldn't be saved in the New Testament, but would he be saved if he lived in the Old Testament? Something to think about. Again, sacrifices to God are a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. What saved Abraham in the Old Testament? Genesis 15.6,

Abraham believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness.

Accounted it to him is an accounting term. He credited it to Abraham, so Abraham believed he had faith in God, and God counted that, gave him the righteousness by which he can stand before God, because of that belief, and then the sacrificial system would cover his sins. Now this can, we can get into a long rabbit trail on Abraham's bosom, and that when Old Testament saints would die, they actually died waiting for the fulfillment of Christ, so that Christ's sacrificial final offering on the cross, his blood could be applied to them.

Now this gets real deep into substitutory atonement, theological deep diggings and certain things, but suffice it to say that the Old Testament saints, for salvation they had to believe, and then the sacrifice of bulls and goats and animals covered their sins temporarily until Christ came in the New Testament. So Cornelius is living at a unique time. Christ is resurrected, he's ascended to heaven, he sits at the right hand of God, so in case you think Jesus is a good teacher, you might want to recorrect your theology.

He is not a good teacher, he is God, and he sits on the right hand of God. God doesn't have a right hand, God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth. That's a symbol of power and authority.

So when anybody asks you this question, do you take the Bible literally, you can say yes, when the literal application applies. Because God doesn't have a right hand, but we take the Bible literally. But we also look at it in context and understand, and look at the whole of Scripture in context.

So we see that, and I obviously personally can't answer this question, was Cornelius saved if he was living in the Old Testament era, because I don't know a person's heart. There's good indications here that he had faith, he believed in God, he was a God-fearing man. Was he going through the sacrificial system? We don't know.

The bottom line is this, for everybody in this room, everybody that's going to hear this message, you have to have belief and there has to be a sacrifice. I'm not talking about good works, hear me out. You have to believe that Jesus is who he said he was.

You have to acknowledge that he paid the price for me. That's what repentance is. Repentance is, Lord, I need a Savior.

I'm repenting of my sin. I'm not the captain of my own ship. I'm not my own Savior.

I'm believing in you and I'm repenting. And then the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, his perfect shed, the perfect sacrifice, that blood is now given a propitiation, and he absorbed God's wrath, and that blood is a covering now once and for all. So we have the belief and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

That's why they work together. You can't have one without the other. You can't have, I believe, but no sacrifice.

You can't have the sacrifice when a person says, well, I don't believe in it. That could go down another interesting trail because there's the concept of the five points of Calvinism. One of those points is limited atonement, that Christ only died for the elect and not for the whole world.

And John Calvin is often subscribed to him. Actually, he didn't believe in that. His predecessor, Theodore Betza, was the one who brought in limited atonement, bringing in the five points of Calvinism.

My whole reason for saying that is I don't believe that Christ's blood is just limited to only those who are the elect. I believe that the blood was shed for the entire world, but those who embrace it, those who believe receive it. Just like throughout the Old Testament, before the Passover lamb, before the death angel came, they would put the blood on the doorposts of the homes.

And whenever the death angel passed over those doors and those homes that had the blood on it, he would not kill the firstborn in those families. So the blood is there, but the application is when we believe and repent. Because see, once I believe and I repent and I see sin the way God sees it, and I acknowledge Him, that blood, that covering, that's why some churches don't like talking about the blood of Christ.

They say, oh come on Shane, it's the blood, it's messy. Yeah, it's messy. The cross is messy.

Sin is messy. Sin is destroying families. It's destroying marriages.

Sin is destroying our nation. We are calling good evil and evil good. We are in such a perverse state that now people can say, I don't want to be male or female.

I can be any, whatever they call that. It's no gender. And protection.

And all these things. We are a perverted nation. It's a perverted group of people because we have lost our moral compass.

Let me get back because that would be a whole other sermon. So while I'm on this topic, let me ask, do you believe in God? And if so, who paid the price for you? Jesus. Because many people say, I believe in God, but I'm not sure about Jesus.

Oh, you better get your theology straight on that one too. You love the Father, you love the Son. You love the Father, the Son, you love the Father.

The Son is God. Jesus Christ is God. You can't just say, well, I love God, but I don't know about Jesus.

What they're really saying is, clearly all this just didn't happen. My body, your body, the birth of a baby. I mean, let's just come on.

I mean, clearly something is out there much greater than me. But I still like to be the captain of my own ship and the master of my own destiny. I'm not going to bow my knee to some guy named Jesus Christ.

He might be a good teacher, but I don't know. So, they fear God, but they don't believe in Jesus. Now, God, I also believe, will hear the prayers of genuine, sincere seekers.

If a person says, I'm so confused by all of this religion or these different things, God, would you show me? I hear what Shane is saying. I see why Jesus would make sense, but I have so many questions. I don't understand hell or the concept of eternity.

Lord, I'm open. Would you show me? That sincere prayer, God will answer. I don't think God is in heaven going, no, no, mm-mm.

Not this month. Not next year either. Not until everything is just right in your life.

He actually says, come, let us reason together. Would you seek me with all of your heart? Then you will find me. Those who are heavy laden and if you would just cast your cares upon me, I will carry them.

Those who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Not might. Not maybe someday.

Not next week. Right now. Right now when he says, if you call on me, even as he's preaching, even as the worship is going out, even if there's prayer, if you just call upon my name, even at one in the morning or at midnight or next week, if you call upon the name of the Lord, he will save you.

He will guide you. Those are promises you can take to the bank when every other system is falling apart. Listen, you better not have your hope in the economy.

It's going really good right now. I hate when people say, oh, it's going great. Look at this.

It was going great in 2007, too. God still speaks. I believe that God still speaks.

He spoke to Cornelius through an angel, and I believe that God still speaks to us today, but primarily through his word. Let me clarify this for a minute. 2 Peter, I'm going to paraphrase 2 Peter 1.3. God has given us everything we need to know him and for godly living in his word and through a relationship with him.

Everything we have, everything we need is in his word. However, I also believe that God will speak to us in other ways. I don't believe, and many of you know, I've been coming here a while, that I believe that the activity of the Holy Spirit is still valid today.

I believe that the Holy Spirit still moves and guides and directs people. Have I ever met an angel? No. That I'm aware of.

Has an angel ever spoke to me? No. We have to be very careful on these issues. Now, boy, this could go on for a half hour, but let me try to bring it in.

Remember Dr. Cho? I played his video from China when he was persecuted in China. It was put out by Grace To You. He said that the Holy Spirit led a man on his bike to his parents' house to retrieve a Bible before the police arrived.

See, I believe God still moves in these ways. I believe the Holy Spirit can prompt a person. I believe that God can warn.

I mean, to say there's no angels is biblical illiteracy. I mean, it's just everywhere. Everywhere.

Abraham, oh, was visited by an angel. You're going to give birth. Sarah, oh, an angel visited Cornelius.

An angel released Peter out of prison, I believe it was. And it's just everywhere. So we know the word angel in the Greek is messenger, and sometimes it's applied to people.

But it's also sometimes applied to a supernatural type of being, and God created the angels. He created men. There's a difference there, and actually you know a very popular angel named Lucifer.

And he fell from heaven because he said, I will be like the Most High God. He exalted himself. He fell from heaven, cast down.

A third of the angels went with him. So that's why you have this darkness and light. That's why you have this conflict.

That's why you have Michael, the archangel, fighting over the body of Moses or fighting in the book of Daniel, the prince of Persia. You see these spiritual forces. So to say there's no real devil, there's no real spiritual battle is biblical illiteracy.

You don't know what the Bible says, or you're scared of these things. Now here's what happens with angels. You've got this side over here.

I like to go on both sides and try to find the middle ground. This side is its angel buffet every week. I saw a 12-foot angel outside.

He just did this, and this 40-foot angel, and they're standing with swords and angels and angels. It's like, are you ever spending time in the Word? No, no, brother, I'm just led by the Spirit. There's angels, and God's doing this, and all this kind of, well, you might want to read the Word.

You might want to go back to your wife. You might want to stop drinking. I'm glad you have all these revelations and angels doing things, but be careful.

You have Christian leaders coming out that God, I saw a 30-foot tall angel doing this and doing this and other things. You look at the character of the person often. A lot of these groups or things can get all caught up in this.

Maybe those of us who haven't experienced this can take a lesson, but I just have to be careful on this side because I often see a lot of weirdness and not a lot of doctrine, a lot of weirdness and not a lot of character, a lot of interesting things and not very smart biblically. They don't know what the Bible says. They're not obeying what the Bible says.

See, we can't say we see all these things and do all these things and then disobedient to the Word of God. They will go together. The character.

Now, the other side is that there's, you know, okay, that was good for the book of Acts, but this stuff does not happen anymore. You know, there's no angels. There's no gifts of the Holy Spirit.

God doesn't heal. God doesn't do this. We just got the Word and the Word and the Word, and that's all we ever need, and we don't need any of this supernatural stuff.

Well, I have a problem with that because I believe that God still moves supernaturally in many different ways. And I have talked to people who have genuinely been awakened or there's an angelic being or something or speaking to them or in a church, in a worship service where revival comes and you can see the presence of God. So I'm not discounting those things, but I just want to be cautiously careful.

You know, Lord, whatever you want to do doesn't line up with Scripture. Here's why this is dangerous, because Paul said, if we or an angel from heaven preach to you any other gospel, let them be accursed. The word is anathema in the Greek language.

It's a very bad word. When God curses you, it's not a good thing. So if an angel preaches another gospel to a person and the person preaches a different gospel, they are accursed.

Do you want an example of that? Mormonism is a different gospel. Now, let me preface this, because every time I do this, I get emails. You're mean, and you don't like people, and you're supposed to be united, and don't judge.

They send Matthew 7, 1, don't judge your brother. But it's not coming from arrogance, it's coming from compassion and love that people are following a false gospel. An angel appeared to Joseph Smith and said, I'm going to restore the true gospel.

The church hasn't been following the gospel for hundreds of years, so you might as well throw out D.L. Moody and C.H. Spurgeon. Right? Okay? They're off the chart. So he's got the real restored gospel on gold tablets with special glasses that you need to read it.

The gospel that he's proclaiming is a false gospel because you can't have both the Book of Mormon and the Bible right. You can't have Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ both be right. It's impossible.

So the problem is, this is another gospel delivered supposedly by an angel. There's no glasses, there's no gold tablets, there's nothing that is in that book. They don't find any of the cities, the kingdoms.

Nothing is supported by it. And also, according to that belief system, because it's a false gospel, anytime you get a little bit of false gospel, you're going to get a whole bunch of false gospel. So now, God the Father and His marriage partner, the Mother of Heaven, had spirit children, and Jesus is the brother of Satan, and God chose Jesus' plan for redemption, and that's why the devil got mad and now they are fighting.

That is a false gospel. That's not true. How can you have the Bible and that? It's like mixing oil and water.

But see, the angel, but it's a restoration of the gospel. No, it isn't. Just study your Bible.

The problem is they put the Book of Mormon up here and the Bible here. And this happens all the time. I've got family members.

If I go to them, I go, can you tell me, can we sit down, can you tell me, let's talk about the differences. No, I don't want to talk to you. But if I'm lost, and I'm apart from God, wouldn't you want to show me where I'm wrong? No, I don't want to talk to you.

Why? Because they hate the light. Bring in the truth. So see, the angel, false gospels.

Now, Jehovah Witness and their Watchtower Track Society also said that Jesus is Michael the Archangel. That's who Jesus is, and that Jesus is a God, but He's not the Son of God. Their Bible in John takes out, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.

Their Bible says, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was a God. They're removing the deity of Christ out of the entire New Testament. So you have false gospels.

Michael the Archangel is a created being. Jesus Christ is not a created being. He is God.

He's the triune nature of God. So this is, now you can say, I don't quite understand the Trinity. Good for you, I don't either.

But you don't go and create a false gospel. So you see why this isn't so important? Because if an angel, so if Paul said, if an angel or a messenger, somebody gives you a gospel that's different from the gospel that Christ laid out, he's to be accursed. So that tells me maybe there are angels out there that will give false gospels from time to time.

I mean, it's hard to believe because we don't live in the supernatural, we live in the natural, and we don't see what's going on, but there is a supernatural battle. The weapons of your warfare, as a matter of fact, are not carnal. Your weapons are not carnal.

You can put as many guns as you want in the gun safe, but that devil is still coming in your house. The weapons of your warfare are not carnal, but they are mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments in every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The weapons of our warfare are not physical.

It's spiritual. See, I think if we understood this, you might be praying and worshipping a little bit more. That's your battle.

That's the battleground, obeying the Word of God, the Word of God putting on the armor. So I better get back on track or we're never going to get out of here. Peter's vision, chapter 10, verse 9. I better back up, though.

Cornelius is visited by an angel. The angel says, we have heard your prayers. God's going to send Peter to tell you what you need to know.

So the next day as they went on their journey and they drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray. At about the sixth hour, then he became very hungry. Very hungry.

It's actually famished. It's not just like, oh, I'm hungry. I mean, I'm pretty sure everybody wants to go to lunch later.

That's not that kind of hungry. He was famished. He was very hungry.

And while they made his food ready, he fell into a trance. Then we hear that word, too. Like, oh, gosh.

Shane's getting cuckoo. Better find a new church next week. Well, gosh.

I could spend 20 minutes there, too. He's hungry. As he's waiting, he's resting.

The trance is what you think of some weird thing. It's when you... Many of you who have done this before, if you fasted, if you went without food and you're spiritually in tune with God, you will be in the state of you're hearing from God, you're receiving from God. And God put before Peter this vision.

And what Peter saw was this. He saw that something like a great sheet came down from heaven. And all kinds of animals were on the sheet.

Probably things like pigs and lobsters. Jewish people can eat pigs or lobsters. And I would encourage you to still not eat pigs and lobsters.

It's dirty food. Dirty food. Not good.

God's word is... Oh, I'm convicting all the pork eaters right now, huh? And the sushi eaters. Just be careful. Just be careful.

So anyway, all this food that's coming down... You're changing your plans for after lunch now, aren't you? So he sees this sheet coming down. All these animals that are unclean. And a voice comes and says, Peter, arise and eat.

Kill these and eat them. He said, oh, there's no way. I can't do this.

And it happened three times. He said, you will. You will not call things uncommon or common that I've called... Well, let me read it.

That would probably be better. And God said, what I've cleansed, you must not call common. And this was done three times.

And the object, this sheet, was taken up into heaven again. So Peter's famished. He's probably laying down.

In a supernatural way, God speaks to him and shows him this. So as the men are coming, Peter's being prepared. Because Peter would not even accept their entrance into the house or talk with them had God not revealed this to him.

These are not Jewish people. These are from Italy, Greek, in the Roman Empire there probably. He was under that providence.

And he didn't want to have anything to do with them. So God was working on the backside. Now, you know I need to use this as an opportunity to talk about fasting for a minute, right? He was very hungry.

He was famished. Whether it was a purposeful fast, that word threw me off the first verse too. The fact that the flesh was starved is something that we should not overlook.

Cornelius was fasting as well. Cornelius was fasting. Peter is famished.

The lust of the flesh is dead. And God begins to work in both of these men. Scripture is clear that God speaks to us in more profound ways than when we fast.

Now, I'm hoping I can unpack this. I went off into a rabbit hole at the first service, but God made it crystal clear in my mind and hoping it worked. But what happens in our bodies? Are you aware that you have two competing appetites? Oh, you're very aware.

I want God, but I also want this. And when I want God, this doesn't want me to have God. And these two competing appetites are within us.

The ironic thing about food and eating and consuming and drink is it is feeding that fleshly carnal nature. Now, of course, eating is good. That's how you live.

Your body actually takes the nutrients from the food. Your banana that's dying on your table, you eat that, and you take the life of the food with the carbohydrates, protein, fat intake, and that gives life to the body. You have to have it.

But when we... Gluttony would be a good word to use or a different thing. But when we continue to feed and feed and feed and feed and feed in the flesh every three hours, every three hours, every three hours, and we get up in the... We're just feeding the flesh. That competing appetite is growing and growing.

And then our spiritual man or woman is getting weaker and weaker and weaker often because you have two competing appetites. So that's why fasting is so important. And for those of you who are unaware, fasting is throughout the entire Bible.

Moses fasted and received something we call the... Ten Commandments. Ezra was fasting for protection. Nehemiah was fasting for direction.

Esther was fasting to protect the Jewish people. Elijah was fasting, and fire fell down from Mount Carmel. Peter was fasting.

Paul was fasting. Jesus was fasting. You want me to keep going? There's plenty of examples.

That's why it starves the flesh, and you're filled with the Spirit. Because the more I starve the things of the world, the things the world watches, the things the world listens to, I don't go home and just get a two Big Macs and a six pack of IPA on the way home. Right? Don't worry, I don't do that.

I'm just saying, it wouldn't be a good idea. And just so... Try to go preaching after that. Oh, gosh, I'm just going to go home calling sick.

Why? Because... Try praying. Try praying after a heavy meal. You watch how good you pray after Thanksgiving.

Right? Let's be honest. Let's be honest because I think there's an important lesson to hear. We feed this animal more than we should.

We feed this carnal nature more than we should. And it's on every corner. It's everywhere.

And feeding... So I believe the more you begin to incorporate some type of fasting and starve the flesh, you'll be filled with the Spirit. That's why I don't eat before I preach. Often, like yesterday, I'll just have water only until yesterday.

Because I want to get up here starving the flesh and preach to God's people. I want to be a better husband, better father, because that flesh is put into submission. But if we listen... Listen, I've got to stop and get these donuts.

I've got to stop and get this for lunch. I've got to stop and get this for dinner. Chocolate, chocolate.

And you're just constantly feeding this. You will not be filled mightily with the Spirit of God. That's something you can also take to the bank.

And that's not legalistic. That's just truth. Remember the story I've told before? I think I heard Billy Graham talk about in the 70s about the man who went to the... A boy, a young man who went to a pastor.

And he said, I've got this battle inside of me. I've got this evil dog and this good dog. But the evil dog keeps winning.

And the pastor said, young man, you need to starve that dog to death. That's what determines victory. Who do you feed? What do you feed? That's what determines success or failure in the Christian walk.

Are you feeding the things of the Spirit or the things of the flesh? Now let me encourage you. I'm not saying don't eat ever. Right? And food's bad.

Shane said, that's bad. No, it's very good. It's God-given.

God gave us it. But when it becomes our idol or our master, it determines everything. Hmm, I'm deciding whether I should say this or not.

But I think I will. The reason that most people are in a hurried church is because they're hungry for the wrong things. Isn't that true? If I said we're going to do an hour of worship and I've got an hour message, you'd be like, oh.

We have Jack's Place lined up or In-N-Out or Sharky's or McDonald's or Panera or we've got that lined up. Shane, we're ready to feed that master. We're ready to feed that master so this master, the one and true master can't give you everything he has to give you because you're so concerned about feeding this master.

Think about it. Isn't that why we're mainly in a hurry? We get up. We have to have our what? Oh, you said it, not me.

What do you have to have when you get up? What do you have to have three hours later? What do you have to have after this? What do you have to have tonight? And the Bible's boring. I don't want to go to church. I mean, I talk to pastors now that tell me you've got to get your services down to an hour, Shane.

You want to be really effective reading each next culture? The whole thing? Worship, prayer, and a message in an hour? Are you kidding me? Why? Because to feed the carnal nature. The carnality. And folks, I'm not beating anybody up.

I'm preaching right at me. I'm preaching. This is coming right back on me as well.

But think about what we're really hungry for because what you're hungry for determines what you'll feed on. That's why I don't want to eat until later tonight. I just put that flesh in submission, that flesh that wants to destroy me.

Do you know that's the course of the flesh? It's not your friend. Your flesh is not your friend. It wants to destroy you.

It wants to ruin that relationship with God. So he was very hungry. He was famished.

Let me read this testimony that came in from Jack who attends here. He said I could use it. He said, Fasting has changed my life in an amazing way.

And I'm not really, I hope somebody says, oh, he's just timing fasting. I truly believe that Cornelius was fasting. The Bible says it was.

He heard from God because your prayers, your fasting have come up to God. Peter is famished. The flesh is starved.

And you have two men receiving angelic visitations and also visions from God as the flesh is starved. I see a connection there. It doesn't say after a huge meal and lots of wine, Cornelius received from God.

It doesn't say that. And from past experience, I will tell you that the more you feed the flesh, the less you'll be filled with the Spirit of God. So he said, Fasting has changed my life in an amazing way.

And now I know exactly why it's so hard. It puts you in alignment with God and Satan hates it. Now this next part is going to apply to a lot of people in here.

I used to have a temper with my family. Sound familiar? Or are you just mild, meek, mannered, little, gentle people at home? No slamming doors. No yelling.

Just calm, right? I had a temper with my family. I would get upset at the stupidest little things, yelling over nothing. My family was suffering from it.

I knew I needed to change. I heard caffeine played a huge role in mood swings. I don't know how he heard that one.

Hmm. I told him that. I did.

So I started fasting from soda. I found that I did not need it and my attitude improved. Then I fasted from coffee and cut out caffeine 100% and God really calmed my entire spirit.

Then I decided to fast for two days on water only and that turned into four days. God really convicted me on the way I treated my family. Check this out.

How can I go to church and portray a Christ-like life but yell at my kids and my wife and have them fear me at home? Listen, this is in the pews, folks. It's here. It's here.

So I cried out to God to change my heart and he did. I felt a massive shift of peace and his love take over. My anger is totally controllable.

And I'm not going to say it's gone completely, but God changed my heart through fasting and I'm so grateful for that. But think about this. My anger is now controllable.

See? Controllable. Who's controlling you? Because when the flesh is running the show, it's in control. It will tell you where to eat, where to stop, where to sleep, who to sleep with.

It will govern your whole life when the flesh is in control. So by starving it, you put the spirit in control and you control your choices instead of allowing your choices to control you. Now, big disclaimer, I'm not talking about methodical fasting and every got to do this and got to do this and religious exercise and hypocrisy and things, you know, where monks would go away for thousands, not thousands, months and months and months and not talk and not eat and this.

I'm not talking about this ritualistic thing. What I'm talking about is starving the flesh so I can have a deeper relationship with God. It comes from a heart that truly wants to know God more.

Fasting doesn't put God's arm behind his back so he goes, okay, you got me, you got me, I'll change my plans. Fasting aligns my heart with God's because I draw closer to the heart of God. Now, what that looks like, I need a whole sermon on that.

Maybe I will. But you need to seriously consider it because I believe Peter and Cornelius, because of this starving of the flesh, they were able to hear from God. And a voice spoke to him again a second time.

It said, what God has cleansed you must not call common. So basically, God is showing that it's not just salvation for the Jewish people, that God's saving grace goes to all mankind from China to Africa to America. God's love for all people.

And this, believe me, is a big deal because maybe young adults and maybe some of you who are older, one of the biggest challenges is feeling unloved. Right? I could never measure up. I mean, I've invited three people to church this week.

I could never set my foot in the church. And they're marred. They're broken.

God doesn't love me. They feel this disconnected. But they don't understand that God gave Christ.

Christ died for the entire world. John 3.16, for God so loved the world, not just the American church. God loved the whole world that He gave His Son.

So the reason people feel broken and depressed and shame and guilt is because the relationship's been broken. You talk to a couple who's going through a marriage breakdown because of adultery, and you see how they feel. What happened? The marriage was torn apart.

What God puts together, let not man break apart. Same thing, if our relationship with God is broken via not having a relationship with Him, we, that image, God's, see, you're made in God's image. Is that incredible? Just ponder that.

Read all the scriptures. Go to Google. It's real easy now.

All the scriptures about being made in God's image and according to God's likeness. So you, you, your body, soul, and spirit, you're made in God's image, God's likeness. He reached into the dust of the earth, and He breathed into that dust the breath of life and became a living person.

Adam, taken from the soil. God, so that you, we are made in the image of God. Let's not exalt that beyond what the Bible says, but let's not minimize it and think that we're drunk.

Well, that usually happens, right? But think that we're junk, and we can't be used of God, and we're garbage, and I'm just nothing. No, God says, listen, fix that broken relationship. Fix it via repentance and belief in my Son, who paid the price to build that bridge back and to fix that broken relationship.

All the message of the gospel is, is redeeming man back to God. Redemption, redeeming the good news. Good news, man, you've been broken, but there's a God who can fix.

You've been hurt, but there's a God who heals. Come back to the loving arms of your Father. The good news of the gospel.

My goodness, let me preach for a minute. This is incredible. Call me naive, call me emotional, but when a God reaches out and calls humanity back to Him, bridges the gap, pays the debt, will lead His people, will encourage His people, will always be there, ever-present help in time of need, at 2 in the morning or Sunday afternoon.

When God, I'm going through this, He's always there. He says, just call on me, and I will answer. I will hear your prayers.

Unbelievable. He said, you're made in my image and according. Let us make man in our image and according to our likeness.

So that shame and that guilt, that depression, don't you feel just dirty sometimes that you can't take enough showers? Because it's sin, it's death all over us. The condemnation, the wages of sin is death, and God paid that price. You've got to fix that relationship.

And so people who have that relationship fixed, like me, want to shout it from the rooftops. That's the whole point of preaching, is the good news of the gospel. Back on track.

Thank you for letting me vent. I don't know, sometimes I just feel that, I mean, the majority of our problems are not realizing, maybe not in this room, but out in the world, the majority of the problems are due to the fact that the relationship with God is broken. You get that in alignment, you get the foundation fixed, and you can build the house.

What contractor is going to start building a wall on sand? Go find one out there. Nobody. Nobody.

The foundation, once you get that, oh, God, you saved me. I love you, I repent of my sin, and you're washed, Acts 3.19, repent and be converted so that times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord, and no shower can get you this clean, you feel this refreshing presence of God, and now the foundation of your life is built. Now I can lead a church, now I can lead a family, now I can keep a marriage together, now I know how to be soft to my children, not yell at them, now I know how to overcome, because God is the foundation.

It solves everything. Verse 17, now, well, Peter wondered within himself what the vision was, I bet he was, he sees his vision, he's like, what was that all about? I have no clue. So, just a side note, I didn't say it at the first service, but if you're still waiting on God, don't give up.

Don't give up. What is that about, God? What are you doing? I don't understand this. This doesn't make sense.

Don't give up, because the enemy will come and see, see, see, God doesn't love you, he's, you, time to take, Shane Idleman, it's time to take things in your own hands. It's time to, you, you find that marriage partner, you go find it. Go to LA, hit the club scene.

You find it, you do it. Oh, goodness gracious. See, that's what that, that, tell her, you go fix that problem.

Wait on God, wait on God if he's doing something in your life. And so the men arrived from Cornelius' house, they knocked on the door, they told Peter about it, while Peter was still thinking about the vision, and these men came to the house, and God said to him, Peter, go with them and don't doubt anything. And somehow that just stuck out all week, doubting nothing, because I can become a doubter.

Can't you? God, I'm not sure. I know you created the universe, but, hmm, this is a little, and the funny thing, Morgan will remember, the funny thing sometimes about fasting is the reason I didn't do it for many years, I said, I'm going to die. I'm going to, if I stop food today, by Wednesday I will be dead.

And I, let's get the, let's get a trust written up, I'm going, I'm dying. I'm going to die. I know God's word says it, I know, but I'm, it's not, there's impossible.

How can you go without food? You're just going to die. But then we doubt other things, right? We doubt that God says do this. I remember a big struggle.

I was praying a lot when Saturday night service was growing and we didn't have enough room, so we had to go to second service. Well, it was, just for some reason, it was, we took surveys and different things, and people wanted, you know, later in the evening, I thought, well, 4, 4 p.m., 4 p.m. Saturday, it was just kind of something that was sinking in and registering in my spirit, and I was praying about it, it felt good, but then all the doubt comes in, 4, 4 p.m. on a Saturday? Well, who's going to come to church? That doesn't make any sense, and then doubt, doubt. Well, God told me, no, He didn't.

I don't know, you're right. And then all this doubt comes in, but I finally went through with it. Thank God we agreed on it, and it would be, there's almost the same attendance as the later service, but that's how I'm saying God can bring in doubt in my own life.

What about your kids? Your kids will never be good. Look how rebellious they are. They're not going to serve God.

Look at what, you're a terrible parent. You're a terrible mom. You're a terrible dad.

You don't have enough time for them. It's because of you they're this way, and here comes all this doubt. But see, something somebody said many years ago has really helped me, that I'm just a steward of my kids.

That's their father. See, God doesn't have any grandchildren. I'm God's steward to help shape.

God, He's rebelling. Your son's rebelling. I'm trying.

I'm trying, but he's rebelling. Or your daughter, she's out again late. What do you want me to do? You're the steward of what God has given you.

So when God says to do something, don't doubt. Fight that doubt as long as you can. And they said Cornelius, a centurion, a just man who fears God and has a good reputation, he's here, and a holy angel has summoned him to get you, Peter.

So then they invited them into the lodge, and the next day Peter, I'm kind of paraphrasing everything because it's quite a bit to read, and the next day Peter left with them to go back to Cornelius' house, and you're going to want to know what they talked about next week. That's what I'm going to talk about next week is what they talked about. But I think I've talked enough about angels and different things.

And then actually, well, I'll just say this. I did read it the first service. In verse 24, actually Peter goes into Cornelius' house.

He meets Cornelius, and Cornelius falls down and worships him. And Peter says, no, get back up. Get back up.

But we do the same thing, don't we? We worship people. Cam Newton, LeBron James, Mike Trout. Oh, we know.

We worship. We have idols, and people came back for prayer at the first service. I have idols.

Who is it? Who do you have? Facebook. I can't get off of that thing. Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest.

I'm always on it. I've got this idol. I've got this thing I'm worshiping.

Move those things. I went off for 20 minutes on that with the first service. You'll have to listen to the video if we have it.

But this area is very important. Do not worship man. And I went on to say earlier that don't even look at a pastor as a spiritual... Oh, look at... My job is to point you to that.

Come down here, guys. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to rally.

We're going to point you to Christ. Point you to the cross. God's Word up here.

Don't look at me. Don't look at anybody because people say, oh, church let me down. It will.

I've never met a church that has not let me down. I've never met a Christian who has not let me down. Only Christ has not let me down.

You look to Him and to Him alone. Stop making excuses. Because then we use... I was hurt by the church, so I'm never going to go.

Some Christians are mean, so I'm never going to go. There's hypocrites in church, so I'm never going to go. I know that guy down the street.

He says he's a Christian, but he never gave me back my lawnmower, so I'm never going to church. What is... Yeah, exactly. We're on the same boat.

People, look to Christ. Look to God. That's the... Always look to Him.

I mean, if you follow me around for a week, you're going to go, that guy... I shouldn't even tell you, but this morning I was driving. This guy was driving really slow, right? I'm like, and I turned and parked. So he went and parked and goes, why did you pull in front of me like that? I'm like, well, you're driving five miles an hour.

It's plenty of time. But I'm convicted, right? I'm like, oh, I'm sorry. You're right.

I should have waited. Oh, my gosh. Man, people, right? And he's probably going to be like, you're a pastor? I mean, what? But see, that comes up, right? So be careful in this area.

Be careful. I'll get to the end here for those of you who are hungry. Closing, two points of application.

Salvation. You can be sincere yet wrong. You can be sincere yet wrong.

Think about this. You can be good but not good enough. You can believe that there is a God but not know Him.

You can be very sincere but sincerely wrong. Also, know the Father, know the Son. We're going to find out next week.

That's what Peter was telling this family about Christ. If you say, I believe in God but I'm not sure about Jesus, you cannot separate the Father and the Son. So the point of application is, do you believe? Do you truly know Him? Because the more people I talk to, the more I realize they don't truly know God.

They have a concept of God. Or they'll say many times, Jesus is a good teacher. He was a good teacher, right, Shane? You know, don't let me go off on that tangent again.

But, no, He's the Son of God. He is God. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That's why that name upsets so many people. Because there's power in that name. So as we're closing, remember this.

Deception is real. Deception is real. That gentleman I met who thought he was going home and enjoying the next 20 years of his life, I don't know if he's still alive today.

Living in deception. So is there anything in our lives that we're living in deception in? Do we think we know God? Listen, just because you belong to, well, I'm Baptist. I'm Pentecostal.

I'm Methodist. I'm Anglican. It doesn't matter.

Have you truly repented? Do you truly know God? You can be, because people are sincere. Shane, I'm sincere. I pray from time to time.

I read my Bible. But it's possible to be sincerely wrong. ■ ■

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