

# The Cost of Carnality

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman discusses the destructive nature of carnality and its impact on a believer's spiritual influence and relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 47:34

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:14, Romans 8:7

**Topics:** "Carnal Nature", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the destructive influence of carnality in our lives, highlighting the war between our carnal nature and God, the need to put aside our carnal nature and be filled with the Spirit of God. It discusses how carnality leads to a profession of religion without practice, talking about God without walking with Him, and hearing God's Word without doing it. The sermon challenges listeners to surrender to God, be filled with the Spirit, and live a life that reflects the light of Christ, bringing comfort, clarity, and dispelling darkness in the world.

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## Transcript

You know, the subject tonight is pretty, well, I guess a lot of subjects here are pretty intense. And when we came up with the PowerPoint presentation or the image there, I'm thinking, you know, that looks a little, a little scary, you know? And that's kind of the point. Because carnality is a destructive influence in all of our lives.

And I'm gonna get into really what that is in a minute. But just know that it's not a good thing. When the Bible talks about the carnal mind, the Bible's actually saying, God is saying that our carnal nature, which is that nature that opposes God, is at enmity with God.

It's at war with God. So we have this dual nature. I have this carnality inside of me, but I'm also called to put it aside and be filled with the spirit of God.

And if we give into that nature, that carnal nature, there is a cost to that. And where do we find ourselves tonight? In Matthew again, right? Matthew chapter five. We're going through Matthew and we're looking at the words of Jesus.

So if you have your Bibles, turn to Matthew chapter five. And as you're going there, I wanna just read a quick quote from J.C. Ryle from a few hundred years ago. And he wrote this, "I must honestly declare my

conviction "that since the days of the Reformation, "there never has been so much profession of religion "without practice, "so much talking about God without walking with Him, "and so much hearing God's Word without doing them." And if you want a good definition of carnality, that's it.

That's it. That's what carnality does. There's a profession of religion, but there's no practice of it.

We talk about God, but we do not truly walk with Him. And we hear so much of God's Word, but we fail to do it. And that's what carnality does.

To me, carnality is almost like a facade. Because many people will hear what I'm saying, and then like we've talked about before, almost like therapy. Ah, I heard it.

That's true. That's a good point. And then we leave and nothing changes.

Why? Because the carnal nature does not like to change. It hears it, and then it says, I don't like that, so I need to change, but I'm not going to, so nothing ever changes. And a lot of times when we talk about if a person truly wants to change, are there areas in your life that you truly want to change? Let's be honest.

Anybody in here? Just me? Wish chocolate didn't taste so good? You know, those kind of things? But I'm talking about deeper issues, of course. But what happens is we want the change. What is that? That's the Holy Spirit convicting us of our need to make changes in these areas.

So as the Holy Spirit's convicting, what's our carnal nature doing? Oh, you don't need, no, start on Monday. You don't need to do that. Come on, everybody's doing, and that carnal nature kind of pulls us back.

So when we talk about change in the life of a believer, and change not occurring, it's because the carnal nature is taking over and influencing. Not the Holy Spirit, because when the Holy Spirit is ruling and reigning in the life of a believer, change takes place. It has to take place, because that's the job of the Holy Spirit, the hound of heaven.

He convicts and he challenges until that change takes place. And I want to be careful here. I forgot to, I was going to make a big note to remind myself.

But when I'm talking about carnality, I'm not just talking about actions. I'm talking about actions and attitude. Because Paul would go on to say, in many of his Pauline epistles, as they would call them, epistles to the church, that your carnal nature, this envy, backbiting, jealousy, unforgiveness, you fill in the blank, Paul would always bring that back to the carnal mind.

You're being carnal in your mind. You're acting like carnal Christians. So that's where that term comes from.

It's really a lifestyle, an attitude that goes directly away from God's call to a higher standard. So be encouraged. On one hand, you're going to fight that carnal nature from here on out.

I'm going to fight that carnal nature from here on out. But there's a cost to giving into it. And that's what I want to talk about tonight.

So with that said, let's read Matthew 5. And last week we talked about, blessed are those who hunger, blessed are those who are merciful, blessed are the pure in heart. If you didn't catch last week's message,

it should be on our website by now, hopefully. If not, let me know.

We can send it to you. But you need to go back and listen to last week's message because then Jesus goes right into rejoice and be exceedingly glad. Verse 12, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

And he talked about persecution. And then right out of the blue, he comes out and he says this. And this is one of the, chapter and verses are nice, because we can find things, but the Bible wasn't written in chapter and verses.

They were just added maybe 500 years ago to help us find our place. But you have to really read, but to get everything in context, you have to read it in its totality. And if you look at the letters of Paul, one of the mistakes we make is Ephesians 1. Oh, okay, let me read that.

Let me chew on that for a while. What you should read the whole book of Ephesians. It only takes about 20 minutes.

And that's Paul writing a letter. It's almost like if somebody's writing you a letter, you don't just stop and say, well, I wonder what do they mean? You get the whole context there. So Jesus is going on in verse 13.

You, meaning us, are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It's then good for nothing, but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world.

A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. And I almost wanted to read verse 17.

I think it's in the PowerPoint, but that was my mistake because it is, to me, it's a transitional. It definitely fits here, but I want to pick up next week because that's a whole nother message when Jesus talks about, I came to fulfill the law, every jot, every tittle. I am the fulfillment of the law.

Do you think that your good works will exceed those of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and the religious leaders? You know, that's a whole nother topic, but what I want to focus in right now is verses 13 through 15, being the salt and the light. And as you see in your article in the bulletin, I believe, no, I don't think it was in the paper today. It'll probably be next week.

But I asked the question, are you affecting the world? Are you affecting the world? Are you affecting your neighborhood? Are you affecting your culture? Or is it infecting you? It's a very healthy question to ask. I try to ask it on a monthly basis. Am I being effective? Or am I starting to get infected? Because you know it can happen, right? A Christian, we're always on guard.

We are on battleground mode. We're in battleground mode. The devil wants to take us down.

So we have to have that stance. And are we affecting the world? Or is the world infecting us? And hopefully after this message, you'll know if you're affecting it or if it's affecting you. Now why is this so hard? Why is this challenge so hard? Are we affecting the world? We'd all say, yes, I wanna affect the world.

I wanna affect the world. But nine times out of 10, especially young adults who are Christians, don't affect the world. They're infected and they're pulled down.

You ever wonder why is this so hard? Well, a couple reasons. From here on out, we are in a battle, as I said. Life is a battleground, not a playground.

A carnal Christian views life as a playground. Number one. Number two is we're swimming against the current.

We're swimming upstream. We're going against a cultural mindset that is directly against God. So we're basically in a fighting mode all of the time.

It's an uphill battle. You ever hear that term? Well, that's what it is here. And you say, Shane, that's kind of negative.

That's kind of depressing. But remember a few weeks ago, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. I'm glad that the Bible tells me there's an enemy sent to kill, steal, and destroy.

I'm glad that it tells me this is an uphill battle. You're going to need Christ. You're gonna need the sword of the spirit.

You're going to need all this. Why? Because now you're prepared. And I think a lot of people, they just walk right into the enemy's camp.

They don't realize how easily we can be infected by the culture. And what happens, this is primarily when I used to speak to young adults and at young adults' conferences, I would tell them and show them how easily it is, and there's a lot of young adults in this type of service, too, is you're still, and we don't like to say this, but early 20s, you're still in a very impressionable age, worried about people's opinions of you, trying to figure out what has God called me to do. You're worried about what people think.

And once you get to my age, you don't care as much about what people think. You've learned, okay, that's not really guiding me in the right direction. And what happens is you are shaped by the culture that you're trying to relate to.

So you want, I want these people to like me. I wanna be, I don't wanna be a weird person. I want, who am I? Tell me who I am.

And that's why it's so important, the role of a father in a child's life. You shape that child. You tell that child who they are, who, what God has done with them, why God has created them.

They are special. You instill into them as parents these traits. And if you don't, guess who takes over? MTV, all this cultural influence.

They influence you. And what happens as young adults is you're searching in your identity and the culture and this, and you wanna be cool, you wanna be relevant. So what do you do? You open yourself up to the influence.

And the culture begins to influence and shape you. Paul would use a word conformed. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

It all starts up here. All starts right here, being conformed to that, that culture. And I only pick on MTV because just a while back, I was sitting on a couch in a hotel and had six different screens up there.

And all the stuff, I mean, it's like, it's just so perverted. The culture's so perverted. And if you open yourself up to that, you wonder why there's no passion for God.

I'm spiritually dead. It's because we are being carnal. We're fueling that carnal nature.

And there's no such thing as a carnal Christian. That's an oxymoron, right? When we're feeding that carnality, we can't be filled with the Spirit of God. They are opposing forces.

The Bible uses a strong word. It says that the carnal mind is at enmity with God. Look up that word enmity.

That's not like a little, well, we can negotiate. Well, now we're friends, there's a peace treaty. Enmity is at war.

And that's what I don't like. My carnal nature is at war with God. That's very scary because you give it too much.

That's why you've heard that word stronghold or giving the enemy too much ground is that carnal nature will begin to influence you and draw you away from God. That's just straight Bible. So with that said, the context here is you are the salt.

I am the salt. If this influence leaves, it's difficult to get it back, which is seasoned again, right? You are the salt. If your influence leaves, it's hard to get that influence back again.

The definition of seasoned, I'm sure many of you are wondering, seasoned with salt, what's he talking about? Well, what does salt do? It flavors, right? It preserves and it purifies and it cleanses. You have to think of this back, especially in Paul's day, in Jesus's day, salt was used for many different things on wounds to cure meat, meat that was decaying and dying, this decaying meat that you know, that's what happens with me, right? Leave a hamburger outside for a couple of days, you're not gonna wanna eat it, even overnight. What's happening? It's decaying.

So the salt goes in and what does it do? Now it's preserved. It can last longer, the salt stops that decay. And now we have things called sodium nitrates where a Twinkie can stay on the shelf for 15 years.

So we've went beyond the scope of salt, of what salt is used for and we've even perverted that. But anyway, that's a health and fitness message, it has nothing to do with tonight. So salt flavors.

So there's a sweet smelling aroma about our life, there's something different. The world should say there's something different, I don't necessarily like it, but there's something different. Haven't you ever heard that before? There's something different about you, there's a difference there.

I've never seen anybody lead somebody to Christ who looks just like the world. They don't want the world, they've had enough of the world, they wanna know what's the difference, what's the distinction? Why use that sweet smelling aroma? Where's the difference at? Why do you not watch the same things as me, as the world? Why do you not talk the same way? Why do you not do this? Why don't you do, why is there a difference there? It's that sweet smelling aroma that Paul talks about. That's one of the things that salt can do, it flavors, it also preserves.

Do you know as Christians, we're called to preserve a standard? That's why we get all worked up when all this legislation comes against everything that goes against God. Remember a few weeks ago, the new law in California, that a little 10 year old boy, if he feels like a girl today, he can walk into a girl's bathroom.

Well, the Christians should be saying hello, not on our watch, that's not right.

This whole thing with gay marriage, it's not about bigotry, it's about nothing, it's about loving God's standard, loving his holy word. And as Christians, we're the salt, we're the light to say, not on my watch, hello, that's not right. That's a preserving aspect.

And this is why there's a big debate in the church, church politics, this and that, you shouldn't talk about these things. Well, that's why people wanna talk about it, because if I'm the salt, I can't ignore abortion, I can't ignore gay marriage, I can't ignore little kids being able to go in other kids' restrooms and being taught that same sex marriage is okay and experimenting. I can't ignore it.

Oh, it's only about the gospel, yet I'm supposed to ignore all these other things? The salt permeates everything, everything in our culture. Now, granted, this pulpit is not to become a political platform, but it is called to be the salt and to speak boldly into the issues confronting our culture. Embryonic stem cell research, let's create life simply to destroy it.

I mean, can we not talk about these issues? That's what their culture is doing. We're drifting from God. The church says, hello, come back to him.

That's the goal of being salt, is to preserve and to bring back and to hold that holy standard. We can't ignore that, but also to purify and to cleanse. So as a salt, you're supposed to walk into an environment, and there's a purification process.

You know, many of you in the workplace, oh, here comes such and such. We can't tell that joke. We can't talk about, oh, here's Holy Roller.

There's a purification there. And on this point, this is where you've heard me say before, men, especially men or parents, you've gotta make your home a holy sanctuary, not a breeding ground for Satan. They go, oh, what's that guy talking about? That's exactly what I'm talking about.

Your home is either purifying and honoring God, and it's a holy place where worship takes place, kids are built up, the marriage is restored, or it's a breeding ground for Satan while we're allowing these things to come into our home. Think about it. Let me read a few points from the article in your bulletin.

We've lost our influence on the culture, and instead, the culture has made an indelible influence on the church. It's the church who's putting all these movies on the top 10. It's the church who's made the porn industry a billion dollar industry.

It's the church. Shane, what are you talking about? Well, 90% of America confess that they are Christians. Probably the number's much lower now.

But my point is, Christians are influenced by the culture because there's no difference, there's no distinction. Come out from among them, be separate. It's the distinction that makes a difference.

Let me say that again. If you take one thing away from this message tonight, let it be this. It's your distinction that makes the difference.

Why? Because God honors that distinction. He honors it. That's being filled with the Spirit of God.

In times past, the hero was the Father, not Edward from Twilight. The greatest influence in the home was the mother, not Bella. And kids once quoted scriptures, now they're casting spells.

Didn't you talk about this last year, Shane? Yeah, but it's absolutely relevant today because it's showing you how the culture influences the church. I've seen young adult Christians with porn star stickers on their trucks and cars. Like, that's cool.

See, that's not cool, that's perverted. What's happening? The culture is influencing the church. And now we have all these books on marriage where the porn industry's influencing the church.

The Christians, can we do this? Can't we do this? Can we do, what about this? Everything's influencing the church. The church is called to come out from among them, be separate, stand, set a guide, draw a line in the sand, and say, here and no further. This is what we stand for.

This is the purifying effect. This is the cleansing effect of the church, of Christians. Yeah, you can call us lukewarm and narrow-minded and bigoted and all these things, but Jesus said you have to be the salt and the light of the earth.

And if you lose that seasoning, you might as well just be cast out onto the side of the road. That's what they did with bad salt. Just throw it in the field.

It's not good for anything anymore. See, you have to remember that. Your effectiveness in this world is directly related to your spiritual condition of your heart.

You will not affect anything if you're being infected by the world. We call that playing Christian. You say it, but there's no power to back it.

Have we all played Christian before? Of course. The guy up here preaching to you has played Christian. As I said before, I'm preaching to myself.

These are always for me before you. Then I edit them down a little bit. At this point, you might think, wow, I can never measure up.

And let me reassure you that God does not let your relationship with Him hinge on measuring up or following all these rules, or I gotta do that, or I gotta do this, or oh no, this. What you do is you follow hard after Christ and let that relationship take center stage and then everything falls aside. You cannot be a carnal Christian and follow Christ wholeheartedly.

They are opposing forces. So what happens in a person's life is they stop following Christ and they give over to that carnal nature and we have the cost of carnality. So that's what I wanna talk about is the first cost of carnality in your bulletin.

We lose our influence. Now, I'm gonna expound on that a little bit. What I should've said is we lose our godly influence.

And instead, what do we produce? We produce worldly influence. Think about that. We influence others.

So when we're not the salt and the light, we influence others, especially parents. Parents, we influence those. If we're not being the salt and light, guess what we're going to influence? Those same characteristics in our children.

And I remember one of the top questions I got when I was leaving the fitness industry 12 years ago or so, it was an epidemic, I'm sure it still is, was childhood obesity. And that's on the rise and all these things. And I said, well, guess where it's starting? Uh-oh.

If there's childhood obesity in a four-year-old, a five-year-old, a six-year-old, a seven-year-old, it's happening at home. What people are allowing, what's happening. Their influence is an influence in infecting the kids.

So anytime I see childhood obesity, I blame the parents more often than not. Now, genetic predisposition, certain circumstances, of course, I would never make a blanket statement, but the whole point of this is to say that the home is influencing the children, the parents are influencing the children. So this is vitally important.

The cost of carnality is you lose godly influence on your kids. And if you're a young adult, you lose that godly influence on your friendships. And instead, you become like them.

Might say, well, Shane, how do I know? How do I know? How do I know? How do I know if this friend, how do I know? Well, it's a very simple question. Ask this. Is the direction they're leading you the direction you want to go? Is the direction that the friendships and the influence is pulling you, is it the direction towards God, or is it in a direction towards carnality? That's all you have to ask yourself.

That simple question, you'll know what direction that relationship is pulling you. And basically, the definition of carnal is allowing the flesh to lead and influence. So to sum it up, to be carnal means I'm allowing my flesh, whether it's anger, irritability, envy, jealousy, all these things, I'm allowing my flesh to lead me instead of putting those things in check and allowing the spirit of God to lead us.

If we would make it our goal to know Christ more personally, we would preach Christ more powerfully. Did you catch that? If we would make it our goal to know Christ more personally, we would preach him more powerfully. There would be a greater influence there.

There would be a greater influence in our lives. And as a side note, I just actually put this this morning, and my heart is not to beat up, really, this area. My heart is to challenge and to convict.

But a carnal pastor can still give sermons, but he will lose unction, authority, boldness, and spiritual power. The world will love him, but the sheep will leave starving for more of God. You see how influence works? The cost of carnality, we lose our influence even as pastors.

Because who I am all week is who I will be when I step to this pulpit. Anywhere across our landscape, who a person is all week, do they fight that sinful nature or do they feed it? That's who they will be when they step up to the pulpit. And I can always tell a carnal pastor, a carnal preacher, carnal speaker, the world loves them.

Why? Because he's saying the same influence that they have in their own heart. When the world begins to not like, Jesus said, if you follow me, the world's gonna hate you. Was Jesus wrong? Was he out of step with our culture? Was he misquoted there? So it begs the question, does the world love the way that we do church? If they do, something's wrong.

Now, should we be welcoming, accepting, loving places of worship? Of course. But if the world loves what they're hearing and enjoys hearing that Christ is the only way, the only truth, the only life, unless you

repent of your sin, you're gonna spend eternity in hell, separated from... Are they gonna like what we're talking about? No, they're not. Why? Because the carnal nature and God are at war with each other and the world is carnal.

It's going against God. So you can always spot that. A person should not love, the world is not gonna love the pulpit.

Now, from time to time, you'll say encouraging messages. Pretty much include a broad group of people. But for the most part, they don't like what's being said because what are we doing? We're challenging the idols in their own hearts.

We're challenging their idea and their definition of God. They think they're God, right? I've got God right here in this little box. Here's my religion.

Here's what I think. And I say, well, that's nice what you think. The word of God says this.

Well, I don't like that. So that's one of the first cost of carnality is we lose our influence. What's the second cost of carnality? Our relationship with Christ suffers.

Now, this is important. If the first one wasn't bad enough, this one's the kicker. Our relationship with Jesus Christ suffers.

You remember what I said last week or a few weeks ago when Jesus talked about the church, that he said to return to me? But you're not hot or cold, you're lukewarm. That's what carnality is. It's lukewarm.

Jesus said you're good for nothing. You're carnal, you're lukewarm, you're wavering, you're unstable, you're uncommitted. Those are all the terms throughout the New Testament.

Why do they use those terms? To upset us? No, to draw us back. That's what Jesus said. Turn back to me, return to your first love.

You're carnal, you're lukewarm, you've left your first love. Turn back to me. That's what carnality is.

So not only do we lose a godly influence, our relationship with Christ suffers. As I said earlier, carnal Christian is an oxymoron. Our relationship with Christ is built on holiness, purity, and a disconnect from the world.

You cannot give your heart and passions to two people. You want a practical example? Yeah, I'm married to Morgan. Can I also try to be married to somebody else? How would that go over? Wait a minute, that's what we do.

You cannot follow two things. If Christ be one of them, you cannot follow another, Spurgeon would say. You cannot love two masters.

You either be loyal to one and despise the other, or hate the one and love, you cannot. But that's what we do. That's why a carnal Christian is a miserable Christian.

That's why they want me to hurry up and finish this message, quite frankly. They don't like it. They don't like to be challenged.

They like their lukewarm living. A call to holiness and purity is an irritant in their eyes, they don't like it. I'm carnal, I like the darkness, don't upset me, leave me alone.

So we came to the wrong church for that reason. We want to expose those things so healing and repentance takes place. But that's why the relationship with Christ suffers, because when you give yourself over to a carnal lifestyle, Christ is being cheated on, adultery.

The bride of Christ is cheating in our modern vernacular on Christ, because He's not my one and true love. I'm not falling hard. Well, I like Him on Sundays, but the rest of the week, I want my other spouse.

Graphic, but true. Is it not? That's what carnal is. We cannot, I mean, we see this even in the Old Testament.

Elisha, right before God called down fire on Mount Carmel there in the Old Testament. Elisha told the people, a whole group of people, how long will you falter between two opinions? Another translation says, how long will you waver between two opinions? If God be God, follow Him, but if Baal be God, follow him. Stop wavering back and forth.

Let God be true and every man a liar. Follow Him with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all of your strength. That's following God.

Playing Christian, having a carnal lifestyle, coming into church acting as if, is not following God. That's all of our might, all of our strength, all of our heart, everything is bent towards Him, not perfectly. I struggle weekly like everybody else, if not daily, that carnal nature that just wants to play around, doesn't it? Just want to play patty cake, patty cake, patty, until it just pulls you.

Come on, come on back. You don't need to study sleeping. You don't need to, come on, you should go there.

You should, come on, just pull. It's like luring you to sleep. Delilah, come on back.

Come on back, remember the good old day? Come on back. Just all the time, it's a constant battle. But that's the cost of giving in to it.

There are costs to our actions. And one of the greatest things is our relationship to Christ is hindered. And then he goes on to say, you are the light of the world.

A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that others see your good works and they glorify your Father in heaven. And there is something here, I actually wrote it down when I got here at four o'clock.

There is something about godly ambition that is good. You can have godly ambition. You can say, I wanna do something for Christ, and I want the world to know, not to give me the credit, but to give Christ the credit.

Let my light so shine before men that others will see it and glorify God. So it's the stance of, well, I can't say anything, no, have a healthy, God-given ambition. Let that light so shine before God, but then be in such a state of humility that you always point to the cross.

That's what he's saying, let your light shine, it's okay. You know the little kid song, I've got this light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. But that's so true, we've gotta let that shine.

What does the light do? If Jesus wants us to be the light, what does the light do? The light dispels darkness. So when you walk into an environment, when you walk into a situation, when you walk into your workplace, do you dispel the darkness, or does the darkness come upon you? Try it sometime, just open your window early in the morning, just open the blinds. Is the darkness and the light competing? Oh, now the darkness is still, well, is it competing, or is the light just flood in, the darkness has to run? It can't stay, there's nowhere to go, there's nowhere to hide, because the light dispels all of that.

That's why Paul tells us to expose the unfruitful works of darkness. How, Paul? By being the light of the world. Our character, our attitude, our stance, everything is reflected in that.

Everything, being the light of the world, dispels darkness, what else does light do? Well, ask any little tiny kid, it brings comfort. Daddy, leave the hall light on. Can I leave my bathroom light on? Why, what is there about, it's just a light in the, right there, because now I can see clearly.

Now I have the light on, it dispels darkness. I can see clearly, it brings comfort to a person. Does it not? So we should actually bring comfort to a person.

Believe it or not, a lot of these messages do bring comfort to people. After it gets over the, uh, ah, uh, at the ultimate end is it brings comfort and hope and conviction. It's not just hellfire and brimstones, it's trying to get people back to a loving relationship with Christ.

So when you preach the light, it brings comfort once you surrender to it. But it doesn't, if you keep trying to close the blinds, I don't want that light in here, I'm going back to sleep. Close those blinds, turn that light off, I'm going back to sleep.

But once you allow it to come in, it brings comfort. And also, what else should we be doing? We bring clarity. Oh, now I can see, now the, now I can see, the light brings clarity, does it not? So when we speak on the issues of our culture, we should be able to bring in clarity, we bring in the light of God's word.

Issues dealing with marriage, finances, everything, the word of God, our life should bring clarity. That's what being the light is, it illuminates, it makes things, things stand out. It's almost like, you know, how you pull out that battery, or that flashlight and the batteries have been in there a couple years.

Just barely, I mean, just barely get a light there. What happened? That's what's happening in the lives of many people. That light that's supposed to be illuminating and shining and guiding is no longer there.

It's just barely flickering. That's why Jesus calls us back to Him and away from and out of that lifestyle. We are a reflection of what we worship, right? Whatever is influencing me is coming out.

So when I'm talking about being the light of the world, what's gonna come out, what's gonna be reflected is what's coming in. Same thing with you. What's coming in, what's coming into you, what's coming into your mind, all these things.

This isn't rocket science. It's what's coming in, it's coming out. That's what you're reflecting.

So why do so many people say, I'm a Christian, but I'm not the light in any way, shape, or form? Well, what's coming out of you? Everything you've been putting in. That's simply what's been coming out. The

cost of carnality, number three, and this is where we're gonna close.

Our lifestyle tarnishes the name of Christ. A carnal lifestyle. I'm not talking about slipping and falling and making a mistake now.

I'm talking about a lifestyle. A carnal lifestyle will tarnish the name of Christ. And you have to remember something, especially young adults, again, on this point.

The messenger must reflect the message. Did you get that? The messenger, me and you, must reflect the message. So when Jesus is talking about the light of the world, the messenger must reflect the message.

You want an example for that? How many of you have seen pictures of the dead soldiers coming back from Afghanistan earlier in Iraq? Have you seen them coming? There you go, thank you. And they're coming back, and the presence there, and people are there, and they're paying their respects, and they're unloading from the airplane. What would happen if the President of the United States decided to send Elmo to go greet those families? What's that? What? How inappropriate would that be? The messenger must reflect the message.

Same thing with us. The messenger, we must reflect the message. There's so much compromise.

In other incidents, I talk about this before in one of my books that I wrote a while back, is this group that has conferences warning people about the dangers of pornography, and I applaud them for that, but in front of some of the churches, they use a large 30-foot tall inflatable sexual organ to promote their conference. So I'm thinking, well, a minute ago you had me, now you just lost me. You see, what happened there? The messenger must reflect the message.

Think it through. And you'll see, I was watching a program a few months ago where they're having strippers come to Christ, which is a good thing, strippers for Jesus. Well, you don't wanna show before and after pictures on the website.

Why? The messenger must reflect the message. But in our zeal to relate to the culture, especially young adults, we've gotta relate to the culture, we gotta relate to the culture, we gotta relate to the culture. Let's put a 30-foot out front.

Let's, no, no, no, that's not relating, that's compromising. So what happens is, if we're not that light, the cost of carnality, our lifestyle, tarnishes the name of Christ. We're not called to compromise the light, but to get it as pure and radiant as possible.

So I have some ideas for you on this. If you don't wanna compromise the message, before asking if an event, a website, a promotional idea, or advertisement is culturally relevant, you should first ask, does it glorify Christ? Is it consistent with our Christian character? Will it send the right message? Will it cause others to stumble or think less of the gospel? Because I see it all the time, brother, we gotta be culturally relevant, we gotta relate to the culture, and what happens is you dumb down the message, so it makes it look more appealing. See, if we could just get the Bible to be more appealing, Shane, if we could just take out some of that, ah, you know, just, well, then it loses its flavor, it loses its seizing, it's no longer a light set upon the hill.

Do you realize that the Bible is absolute truth, given for all men for all times? It sits as a light upon the hill. It does not come down off that hill. It doesn't make changes.

It doesn't ask our opinion. It is set as a light upon a hill. That's what it does, so you don't have, I think one of the problems, actually, is that it's not culturally relevant.

The problem is that we're not proclaiming all of it. That's what the full effect of the Bible, the full effect, if you can think like a, you know, the big tanks that you see the army uses, that full force, the full force for the Bible to go in and change a person's life is you have to speak its totality, because the truth lies in its completeness, not in little pieces, what you think somebody might wanna hear because your neighbor might get offended and you don't wanna upset anybody, right? Perfect example. I don't even know if I should say this.

It's too late now. Well, I'm hoping this isn't the case, and if it is, I don't know anything. But I crack up sometimes when people are texting me, you know, earlier on Saturday, saying, hey, I'm bringing my Mormon friend.

Don't say anything about Mormonism. Like, well, you probably should have told me that because I just, you know, if it comes up on different religions, you know, the power's in the truth. Or I love, I'm bringing somebody, can you not be too intense? Maybe we can kind of work them into the kingdom, you know? So why am I saying all that? Don't text me any of that because let's just let the truth fall where it may.

And that is the stance of a lot of churches. We don't wanna upset anybody. We just need to welcome them.

And maybe after six months of being here, then we can, did you, hmm. Have you ever heard the word hell? No, okay. Not right now.

How about repentance? No, you don't wanna hear that one either. Hmm. Judgment? No, that's not good.

Okay, next year. Next year, come and I'll tell you all about all that. Now, I'm poking fun.

It doesn't mean that we're just supposed to ramrod people and just nail them and just, you know, argh. But we're supposed to be led by the Spirit of God to speak the truth of God. Sometimes that means love and grace and gentleness and understanding.

But sometimes that means let's bring out the hammer of God and lovingly confront certain situations. That's why being filled with the Spirit is so important. You're led by the Spirit.

You're controlled by the Spirit. If not, guess who's leading you? The carnal mind. That's why this is so important.

Okay, I'm closing here. So let me have your final attention. Our culture is looking for authenticity.

Did you know that? Interview young adults. That's why they don't like religion. And everybody's worried.

Kids are, you know, young adults are walking away from church. What are we gonna do? It's because they see the fakeness. They see the phoniness.

The culture is starved for authenticity. They understand that a compromised life sends a compromised message. A.W. Tozer rightly noted, where does Christianity destroy itself in a given generation? It destroys itself by not living in the light, by professing a truth it does not obey.

Wow. That's a quote to highlight. Where does Christianity destroy itself? Where? Where is Christianity going to destroy itself? It destroys itself by proclaiming a truth it does not obey.

By professing a truth it does not obey. So let's close on this point. The cost of carnality.

Christ in me shines out or the world does. You catch that second part? Christ will shine out of you or the world will shine out of you. Well, Shane, how do I know? The greater influence.

The greater influence will prevail. When you tell somebody, give your testimony, all you're saying is explain what Christ has done to you. This great influence in your life.

Tell me about it. This is why nobody, very rarely, do people talk about Christ a lot. He's more of an afterthought.

Oh, I didn't know. Why? Because He's not the greatest influence in their life. Whatever's your greatest influence is gonna come out.

Whatever's influencing you right now. And we can just go down the list. You know, the media, the Facebook, friends.

All these other things that are not Christ, they're carnal. That is going to come out. And what's the test? What's the gauge? If you don't like what I'm saying, you probably need to hear what I'm saying.

So if you're kind of wiggling in your seat, going, God, I thought this guy's over by seven. Let's, I don't know, I don't like this. That's a good test.

I love that test because it tells me, it tells you the condition of your heart. If you're saying, amen, I need to work on some areas. Great thing.

If you're saying, man, that guy's a little rigid. That's just Bible. That's just Bible.

And you will never know the Spirit-filled life until you take that step of full surrender and search Him and seek Him with all of your heart. This carnality will destroy our relationship with Christ and others. It destroys our prayer life.

Oh, did I forget to mention that a carnal Christian cannot pray? Oh, they might, two-minute little thing on the way to work. Or quick, oh, Lord, bless this food. Please help me get that job, amen.

But they know nothing of a true prayer life. You wanna know why? Because that carnality is confronted in a prayer closet. The hound of heaven is not only loose, the Spirit and illumination of God's Word is penetrating the heart, and I have to change.

I have to repent from this carnality. That's why a carnal Christian will not repent. I mean, will not be, is not a person of prayer.

Why, when a church has a prayer meeting, there's about 10 people when there's 400 that go to a church. 10 people, 400, why, why, why? You ever think of that? Next week, I'm gonna talk about seven steps to financial prosperity. Tell your friends, we'd be full house.

I guarantee if I said next Saturday, I'm not really giving a message, it's gonna be a time of prayer and worship, we'd probably have half, if that. Why is that? All it's doing, it's a reflection of the heart. That's all

that is.

What's in me is coming out by these things. And finally, it destroys spiritual power. It hinders the filling of the Holy Spirit, and this is huge.

When you want the power of God in your life, and you wanna be filled with the Spirit of God, carnality actually quenches and grieves that. Everything that God calls us to is compromised when carnality is in control. Whether it's your attitude, my attitude, or our actions, they work together to bring us down.

So the carnal man, the carnal woman, who is set on the things of this world, who has a carnal mind, a carnal nature leading them, they are compromising everything that God has called them to. And that's why the cost of carnality is so great. So with that said, I'm gonna pray, and then the worship team, you guys can come up as I'm concluding in prayer.

Lord, I do ask during this time of worship, that these areas of our lives that you are convicting us of, Lord, we want a greater influence of you and your word in our lives. Lord, we wanna remove a lot of society's influence. Lord, not legalistically, but heartfelt consideration, Lord, to what you're calling us to, a higher standard.

So I pray right now, dear Heavenly Father, you begin to convict us of those areas, Lord, that we have given over to carnality, we have given over basically our spiritual power to the enemy, we've just become dead, we've become complacent, we've become lukewarm. So I pray that you begin to renew those spirits tonight, Lord, renew those hearts that want that fire afresh, that flame anew to be seasoned again with that salt so they can make a difference. Lord, I pray that deep repentance takes place now, that even media choices are changed tonight, Lord, DVDs are thrown out, Netflix is canceled, Facebook is put on hold, Lord, whatever it is, Lord, that is causing a person to walk away from you, I pray that you convict us tonight of these areas and that deep, meaningful change occurs.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

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