

The Pain of Discipline Over the Pain of Regret

by Shane Idleman

The sermon teaches that embracing the pain of discipline is essential for avoiding the long-term pain of regret in our spiritual journey.

Duration: 59:19

Scripture: Psalm 94:12, Matthew 6:16, Romans 6:16, 1 Corinthians 9:26, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 1:7, Hebrews 12:11, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Discipline", "Fasting"

Description

Shane Idleman emphasizes the necessity of discipline in the Christian life, contrasting the pain of discipline with the pain of regret. He argues that true growth and spiritual maturity require self-control and the ability to deny fleshly desires, particularly in the context of fasting. Idleman highlights that while discipline may be uncomfortable, it leads to a more fulfilling and spiritually enriched life, whereas regret from a lack of discipline can have long-lasting consequences. He encourages the congregation to prepare for fasting by first addressing their physical appetites and urges them to seek a deeper relationship with God through discipline. The sermon sets the stage for a deeper exploration of fasting in the following week.

Transcript

I've got a message that's burning on my heart this morning. It's all week and the devil's been playing tricks on my mind telling me that nobody's going to be interested in this topic. Or they're not going to want to hear this topic, but for some reason I feel compelled to share it with you.

And we are going into Matthew 6. Matthew chapter 6, verse 16 if you have your Bibles. If not, there's one in front of you. Matthew chapter 6, verse 16.

And I'm actually going to just read that one verse for the day. And it's going to take me a little bit while to get there. I'm going to explain why.

The title of the message is The Pain of Discipline Over the Pain of Regret. The Pain of Discipline Over the Pain of Regret. Understand that you will feel one or the other.

Right? We either feel the pain of discipline or we experience the pain of regret. It's one of those two choices. And all the areas we've been discussing in this last series on when you give, when you pray, and now we're getting into drum roll please when you fast.

Oh, that's not really resonating well with us, is it? I'm okay with giving, I do that. I'm okay with praying, but now you're getting into my business, Shane. But all these areas require discipline.

Anything, anything, if you're going to accomplish anything in life, it's going to require discipline, is it not? Athletes, contractors, business owners, foremen, moms, dads, whatever, anything in life that's worth having, worth fighting for, worth working toward requires discipline. One of the things, even though I wasn't raised with a father who was a Christian, one thing I'm very thankful for is that he instilled a lot of discipline into my life. If we didn't have work to do that day in construction, he would say, go pull weeds until lunchtime.

And that's what I did, and discipline and chore charts and disciplining the body. And the more I read in the Bible, the more I see this aspect of discipline that is vitally important. Paul actually said, I discipline my body and I bring it into subjection.

I discipline it, I beat it, is really the literal translation, is I beat my body black and blue and I bring it into subjection, into my control versus my body controlling me. Now the danger with this type of topic is many people can go to the extreme end of it. And then it's all about works, it's all about haughtiness, it's all about doing, doing, doing, and we begin to worship discipline.

That's not where I want to go here. I want to show you that the pain of discipline is far more valuable than the pain of regret, which we know, just saying that doesn't sound right, does it? But throughout Scripture, God disciplines us, then we discipline our bodies. He disciplines us, we discipline our bodies.

Psalms 94.12, blessed is the one you discipline, the Lord, the one that you teach. So blessed is the person that God disciplines. And one of the things that's ironic is when we discipline ourselves, our bodies, then we're not going to be disciplined by God as much.

It's an ironic circle there, with God will discipline those he loves, if we're going in a wrong way, he disciplines us, but then we're supposed to discipline our bodies. Here's what I'm really trying to get at. If you don't discipline your body, if you don't control it, if you don't bring it under subjection, it becomes, and it's not your slave, then you become its slave.

You become the slave of your body, your appetites begin to control. You no longer have control of it, it now controls you. And we know that's not healthy, it's not scriptural.

Jack Hayford said this, you can't cast out the flesh, and you cannot discipline a demon. You'll get that in a little bit. Here, you can't cast out the flesh and discipline a demon.

Now I don't know what your thoughts are on theology in the demonic realm, but in a nutshell, you can't cast out the flesh. Flesh, stop doing that. Well, it's going to keep doing that.

You have to discipline the flesh. And if there's a demonic stronghold working in your life, you can't discipline that. You've got to go to the blood of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit and cause that demonic influence to leave your life.

Now for those who aren't charismatic, you're conservative, let me quote John MacArthur. How's that? We'll balance it out. True faith is never seen as passive.

It is always obedient. True faith is always marked with discipline. If you see true faith, you see discipline.

It goes together. One of the things I started to do many years ago was read MacArthur's study Bible and Jack Hayford's study Bible. And you can get both views and try to marry those different views on the Holy Spirit and different things.

But that was just a rabbit trail for you. Let me recap something I said last year. Sounds like a long time ago, doesn't it? A few months ago.

We cannot be filled with the Spirit and always giving into fleshly desires. It makes us very weak spiritually. The message of self-denial is not popular.

Any time I speak on this topic, any time, I am called legalistic, I'm called a moralist, I'm called works-based, and I'm simply reading what Scripture says and teaching what the Scriptures teach. The problem is many of those people are convicted and don't like this aspect of self-denial and denying self. That is the Christian life.

If you look at the life of Jesus, did He not deny self? You know what self is, right? Well, He actually didn't have sin in Him, but somehow He was tempted, but didn't sin, and it's a mystery there. But denying self is part of the Christian walk. That's why it's not popular.

If I was going to tell everybody I'm going to talk about this, we probably wouldn't have that many people here. I don't want to talk about discipline. Tell me about abundance.

Tell me about reaping, not sowing. See, we like to reap, right? But do you know, the farmer has to work pretty hard before he reaps the benefit. He has to sow.

Have you ever seen a farmer? I'm talking about 100 years ago. That kind of farmer. I guess many of you haven't because you're not that old.

Nobody has. But I remember my family came from the farms of Oklahoma on my dad's side, and they were days of 12-hour days, sun-blistered faces, necks. It's where that word wreckneck comes from, I think.

I don't know. And your palm just blisters on your feet, blisters on your hand. You worked hard.

You sowed into the soil to reap. But somehow there's come into the church this aspect that we don't need to really talk about that anymore. That was good for Old Testament times.

That was good for the early church fathers. But Shane, that's not for us today. So it's not popular, but it is powerful.

And I remember a quote that Tom Landry said. You remember of the Dallas Cowboys? Many years ago, I think I read this 20 years ago when I was in cells 25 years ago and how it even applies now. He said, The job of a football coach is to make men do what they don't want to do in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be.

The application, I believe, is even greater for the church. The job of a pastor is to make men do what they don't want to do in order to achieve what they've always wanted to be. Most in this room want to be more, do more for God.

We want to grow spiritually. Lord, I want more of you. And that's good as a deer pants after the brook, as a Christian desires.

See, when I desire more of God, I do things to help fulfill that desire. If I don't desire Him, am I gonna do anything to propel and to fuel that relationship? Not a thing. So it's good to have that.

So to get to where we want to be, I'm going to have to tell you things that you don't want to hear and you don't want to do. But the whole idea of coaching or pastoring many times is to pull out of you what God has already placed inside of you. This is already in us.

So we have to pull it out to see the benefits. And this message, really, the pain of discipline over the pain of regret, is I'm actually gonna set the stage for fasting, what Jesus talked about. Because Jesus said, when you fast, when the bridegroom is here, don't fast, but when the bridegroom is taken away, they will fast.

It's interesting. If you ever noticed, now we tend to say, when you sin, and if you fast. But the Bible says, when you fast, and if you sin.

When you sin, you're gonna sin, when you sin, you have an advocate to go to the Father, and if you decide to fast. But the New Testament talks about when you fast, you're going to do this, and if you sin. But we like to twist that around so we can avoid this fasting aspect even a little bit more.

So I'm setting the stage for next week's message. I'm gonna talk to those who want to be a lean, mean fighting machine. That's my goal, is to get to that point, because I can't go right into what Jesus was talking about in regard to fasting if we don't have the foundation laid.

Because when you want to really fast, there's gonna be a little bit of self-discipline involved. Just a tiny bit. Right? A lot.

Fasting is denying the self-discipline. What contractor is going to start to put the house together without the foundation laid? I mean, I did that when I was a little boy. I'd start making things, and my dad would laugh, and it would blow over in the wind, right? But to really succeed in this area, we have to lay the foundation.

So that's the point this morning. Lay the foundation. Make sure you're here next week, because I'm gonna talk about the benefits, the spiritual benefits of fasting, and how this can radically change your life.

And I don't just say that to say it. I've seen it in my own life. The countless biographies, countless books, countless articles, early church fathers, Christ in the life of Christ, in the life of Peter, in the life of David, in the life of... You can look at Samuel.

You can look at Ezra. You can look at Nehemiah. You can look at Elisha.

You can look at Moses. It's a powerful aspect. It's a powerful tool that God has given us.

So let me give you a little scriptural support on the screen for this idea of the pain of discipline. And the reason I love this type of message is because this type of message, if you can grab hold of it, it will make you a better husband. It will make you a better wife.

It will make you a better father. It will make you a better mother. Because when you control your appetites, instead of your appetites controlling you, you are more filled with the Holy Spirit.

You're set on fire for God. You want to do more for God. And I think the many times, the reason people aren't filled with God's Spirit and aren't doing a lot for Him, don't have that passion, is because they are being dragged around by their flesh instead of them dragging their flesh around.

See, we're supposed to say, oh yeah, it's 6 a.m. and we're going to the prayer meeting. I don't want to. I don't care what you say.

Flesh, you're coming. You're coming with me. Come on.

Come on. Get in the car. Slam the door shut.

Oh yeah? Oh, you want to stop by Krispy Kreme? Guess what? We're not even going to eat this morning. How do you like that? You don't want to worship and raise your hands and come to the altar? You want to go home because you don't feel good? Get in there. Stay in that car.

See, you're dragging the flesh around. You're telling it what it should do. What's the opposite of that? It's dragging you around, telling you what you should do, controlling your life, your choices, allowing tons of mistakes to come in, tons of regret because I didn't experience the pain of discipline.

I'm experiencing the pain of regret. And as we all know, which one is worse? Discipline. Discipline hurts, doesn't it? I don't want to do it for a little while.

But regret is long-term. Here's some support, scriptural support. Romans 6.16. Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as a slave for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey? Either of sin resulting in death, which is regret, or of obedience resulting in righteousness, which is disciplining the body.

So it's interesting there. Either way, we are slaves. Did you know that? You're either a slave to righteousness and to Christ and to the work of the Holy Spirit and wherever you move me, Lord, I am your slave.

I am your doulos. We translate now as a servant in some of the newer translations, but that word actually means slave. So Lord, I'm your slave.

Holy Spirit, what do you want me to do? You want me to deny that? I'm your slave. Or you're a slave to the flesh. That's why people that crack me up that don't know the Lord and they mock Christians.

Oh, you worship God out there. You're a slave to the sin that you're caught in. See, you're a slave to something as well.

Whatever you choose to obey becomes your master. Choose life that you may live. 2 Timothy 1.7 I wrote this down early this morning.

The problem in the church with many of us is not that we have too much discipline. It's we don't have enough. We've talked about this enough.

We're doing good in this area. We dropped the ball in this area. Fingers pointing at myself as well.

This area of disciplining ourselves, disciplining our bodies. We don't have too much of it. We don't have enough.

Now let me throw out the big disclaimer. Don't beat yourself up. Don't be sitting here going, oh, I can never measure up to what that guy's talking about.

Why did I even come here this morning? I can't handle this. I can't follow rules. No, it's not about that.

Don't beat yourself up. Don't get caught in this works, works, works because that's a dead end. Really what it is, it's yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit.

So when there's something confronting me, I say, Lord, I'm saying no. I'm yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit, help me in this area because He matures me.

He grows me. He grows you. He aids us.

He comes along as a helper, as a comforter, as a sustainer. So we don't put all this trust in flesh and effort and works. We put our trust in the Holy Spirit.

But I've got to do something. I really don't understand the other side of this equation where they say, brother, it's all up to the Holy Spirit. Okay, I've got about 45 scriptures here that challenge me then.

Make no provision for the flesh. Okay, throw that out the window. Flee sexual immorality.

Wait a minute. I thought the Holy Spirit was going to take it from me. I've got to flee and run and get out of here? Make no provision.

Let this mind be in you. No, I like this mind of being bitter and angry. What do you mean let this mind be? I thought the Holy Spirit was going to change me.

See, so it's a polar. Because there's churches where it's all about, brother, it's works, it's works, it's works, and discipline yourself and don't ever, you had a beer three months ago? How could you? You accidentally smoked a cigarette six months ago and felt bad. How could you? Discipline, discipline, discipline, discipline.

Get on this altar, you lame, like you're in the Marines, right? I can't believe you. And you just beat people up. Oh, I can never measure up.

That's not the right idea. But then this other side of just whatever goes, goes, and the Holy Spirit's going to change me. You know? There is, and I don't know what the exact wording would be, because it's not that we help the Holy Spirit, right? It's not that he helps us.

It's not that he needs us. He could just do this. But there's a pattern there that Scripture calls us to to discipline the flesh.

1 Timothy 1.7 For the Spirit God gave us, the Spirit that God gave you, do you have the Holy Spirit residing in you? It does not make you timid. It gives you power, love, and self-discipline. You yield to the Spirit.

Titus 1.8 Rather, he must be hospitable. Now this is talking about leaders in the church. Elders and deacons.

If a person wants a position of some type of leadership in the church, that could be children's ministry, worship, deacons, elders. I mean, if you're in a position of spiritual authority, this is actually qualifications for an elder, I believe. Deacons would fall into this as well.

But here's what he says. He must be hospitable. You're a nice person.

You're welcoming. You're joyful. You're considerate.

You're not a, you know, humbug, Scrooge. You know that guy? That won't fly in leadership. I mean, you just can't be Scrooge.

I take care of the money. No, you have to be nice and hospitable. One who loves what is good.

You have to love the truth and be willing to stake your reputation on that. Quite possibly your life in other countries. You love what is truth, what is good.

Who is self-controlled? What's the opposite of that? Right? You're not controlling self. Self is controlling you. So, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

There's that word again. We can't get away from it. Now, if you think I'm reading this going, I've met all these qualities through the last year.

I've never had to work on discipline. I've always been self-controlled. That's not true.

That is not true. I was going to tell you this story later, but it fits now. Maybe, my daughter will remember this, maybe three or four times a year, I try to make healthy brownies.

And I'm going to eat one little square a day, right? You know, you got the dark chocolate, organic dark chocolate, a couple teaspoons of honey, some almond butter, flaxseed, flour, eggs, salt, sodium, baking powder. I already have the recipe down. They even ask for avocado puree.

And it just makes it, it gives it a texture. I don't know. But wouldn't you know it, that whole thing is gone in that day.

That whole thing is gone. I mean, you're talking 1,500 calories. And my daughter, just in December, she goes, Dad, you ate all the brownies again.

I know. What is wrong with me? But see, I know. I can't get... Okay, three months later.

Okay, I bet I can make healthy brownies this time. I'll tell Morgan to hide them. But there's something, see, out of sight, out of mind.

You got to know yourself. That's why the Bible says, make no provision to fulfill the lust of the flesh. Make no provision for the flesh.

That means don't plan ahead how to satisfy the flesh. So I just don't make that stuff anymore. I even tried two weeks ago.

You find it even says, you know, the whatever, healthy cookies, chocolate chip, you know, organic, all natural, no this, preserve this. And that whole bag is gone within a day and a half. I'm like, Lord, what is wrong with me? Because you got to know, if I haven't left, because they whisper, sweet nothings, around

11 o'clock at night, I get up, how does my body know to get up? And if I fight that, I get some water instead, wouldn't you know it at one in the morning? Hey, remember me? Doesn't that sound good? With a big cup of milk, you can go back to sleep.

Yeah, that does sound good. I fall every single time. I've never been able, I've never been able to conquer that area when it comes to chocolate, chocolate chip cookies, brownies, I just can't do it.

So I guess I haven't learned in 48 years. But that's what I'm talking about, self-control, there's a self-control, now that probably wouldn't disqualify me as an elder, but it can open up doors. We had to remove Shane, he won't stop eating brownies.

He just won't stop eating brownies. You have to ask my daughter, because she's, Dad, you ate all the brownies again. I just remembered some of these.

Well, that's why out of sight, out of mind, right? John Wesley, he founded the Methodist denomination. I don't think he'd be too pleased at the direction they've been going the last decade or two. But he required fasting for all his leaders on Wednesdays and Fridays, I believe it was.

And some people say, that was legalistic, it's too hard, they shouldn't require that. And I don't know if it should be a requirement, but his point was, if you read his journal, is that leaders, he wants leaders that have learned to discipline their appetites, rather than their appetites disciplining them. And I know hundreds of pastors all over the United States, a lot here, and I can tell you who's disciplined and who's not by what they allow, by their appetites.

Are their appetites controlling them? And it really affects your spirituality. It really affects my preaching to a very, very big degree when I give in in this area. William Penn, who founded Pennsylvania, he said, no man is fit to command another who cannot command himself.

Now, we all struggle, right? I was convicted of this. Many of you, I've talked to this story when I did a health seminar. Two years ago, I was 240 pounds, now I'm about 200.

So, I was convicted. I just keep giving, just eating too much. Of a good thing.

Like, I can gain weight on chicken breast and rice and pasta and potatoes. Do I need a second helping? Do I need chocolate? And I just, these appetites were beginning to control more than I wanted them to control. And I said, Lord, I've got to get back to that place of controlling.

And people laugh sometimes. Oh, they're ashamed, he can't do this. Well, do you know how much of a struggle it is? Because if I give in for that potluck, I give in for this dinner, I give in for this lunch, I give in for this get-together, I give in for this men's breakfast, heck, let's have donuts in the morning at the coffee, and you just keep giving in, then you begin to experience those bad choices.

So, you have to hold that ground sometimes. The pain of discipline or the pain of regret. 1 Corinthians 9.26, NIV.

I do not run like someone running aimlessly. I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and I make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself should not be disqualified for the price.

What is disqualified? Ineligible for an office because of an infringement. So, if Paul is preaching this, listen, he says, I discipline my body, make no provision for the flesh, flee sexual morality. Come on, Christians.

And then he just gives in to his appetite. You know, if you see me at Claim Jumper later today and I've got a big ale beer and a big piece of chocolate pie and a big steak, what is that? What is that? You're disqualified from your message today. Oh, I know, I preach it, I don't live it.

I mean, come on, who's going to live it? It's easy to preach it, but by disqualified means anybody can go against God and do whatever they want, but disqualified, they're ineligible in God's eyes if they keep giving up to the appetites, giving up to the appetites, giving up to the appetites. Paul's saying, listen, stop. Begin to take control of your body and begin to discipline it and let it become your slave versus the other way around or you won't be qualified to lead others.

So now that the stage is set, okay, the stage is set, let's present the main attraction. Fasting is what Jesus is going to talk about, not Shane, Jesus. It's where we're at in Matthew 6, Jesus saying this, okay? And you have to remember this, on this area of fasting, important doctrines are always attacked.

Important doctrines are always attacked. When I talk about the power, the filling, the anointing, the unction of the Holy Spirit, many say, ah, I see those guys on TV, I don't want that. Okay, well, don't let a counterfeit sidetrack you from going after the original, from the real thing.

So that's one reason why I think there's a big divide, what's the Holy Spirit, people are weird, it's because it's a very important doctrine. I think it was Leonard Ravenhoe who said, one hour of being anointed by the Spirit of God can change your entire life, can set the course of something completely different. Well, what about the doctrine of inerrancy of Scripture? You don't think this is attacked? Holiness, that's an important doctrine throughout all of the Bible.

Come out from among them, be separate, live different, my people are gonna live different than the world. But then what do people say, especially they tell me this, I get posed for faith, they go, that's too extreme. That's too extreme.

I can watch Desperate Housewives reruns and I can go to Fifty Shades of Grey and I'm gonna go watch Lady Gaga do her thing. I'm not gonna be like you, Shane, I'm gonna stay at home, can't do anything. Right, it's attacked.

It's attacked, holiness is attacked. Because important doctrines, so fasting has been attacked even recently, the last couple decades, it used to be in the forefront of a lot of Christian theology probably 50, 60 years ago. So when Jesus tells us to do something, the outcome is good.

When Jesus tells you to do something, the outcome is always going to be good. Okay, so here's the first verse where we're gonna stop. Matthew 6, 16, Jesus said, moreover, remember he just said when you pray, when you give, now he's saying when you fast.

So here's what you have, you go home, come to this conclusion on your own, read the Bible on fasting, I think there's 87 or 77 mentions throughout. And ask yourself, does this not apply to us today? So he's talking to his disciples, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites with the sad continents. And I just thought of Luke as well, I put this in here, 535.

In those days, they will fast. The bridegrooms here, they're not fasting, but when I'm taken away, they will fast. But going back to the hypocrites, he said, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting.

Assuredly, I say to you that they have their reward. So this is about motives, is it not? Don't look like the hypocrite, don't look like you're fasting. Don't let people know necessarily.

Basically, we shouldn't have a sad continents, we shouldn't have a sad appearance. And this is where I'm gonna stay actually for a little bit on this sermon. Because I wanna prepare you for fasting next week, and I don't think the reason most people can't, and the reason why I believe, I truly believe it's a lot harder for us than it was 2,000 years ago, is because when we start to fast, we start to experience withdrawals from nicotine, caffeine, sugar, GMOs, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, all these ideo.

What about the hormones in beef and meat and all these, believe it or not, there are tons of chemicals in the food. Man has altered the food completely. So when you stop this, you're actually going through withdrawals.

No different than getting off Xanax or Valium, I know that withdrawals are a lot harder with those things, but the body's going through withdrawals. Just stop coffee for one day, and everybody's gonna get out of your way. Right, so we can't, I've seen it, we can't really fast until we begin to get in a position to fast, because you, okay, Shane, I'm motivated, I'm pumped up, I'm starting tomorrow morning, I'm gonna fast, I'm gonna see what God wants to do, and you can't get it two or three hours because of the caffeine headache, because of the sugar overload, the sugar in the body screaming for more sugar.

It's screaming for more partially hydrogenated oils. It's screaming for more sodium nitrates. It's screaming for more MSG, monosodium glutamate.

It's screaming for all these chemicals that we're trying to clean our body from. So that's why so many people fail at fasting. Do you know how many times I failed at fasting? That's why, and I still fail at fasting sometimes, but five years ago I said, okay, Lord, I'm gonna start Saturdays, I'm gonna fast all day and then go to preach.

Oh boy, oh boy. I've started with one meal, then two meals, and eventually now the body's trained, I can go 24 hours, water only, it doesn't feel much different. But it took some time cleaning that stuff out of the system.

Because back then, Jesus, okay, I'm gonna fast, that just means I'm not having fish, nuts, and dates. There's no chemical withdrawal. There might be a glucose withdrawal from the sugars and different things and the dates of fructose, it's actually a good, healthy sugar for you.

But the body, everyone's withdrawing. I've tried to help dozens of people with fasting, maybe one or two out of dozens and dozens, and they just can't do it. So I said, you know what, we need to take a different approach.

We need to get ready. We need to get the body ready. Because then we get frustrated, don't we? I mean, I've tried fasting before, the longest I went is seven days, water only.

And I about just, the first couple days it just was very difficult. Then you have a breakthrough. And then around day six or so, I was cleaning the backyard, cleaning the house, and went on a jog with just water

because the body is designed to fast.

God has created you to fast. Did you know that? I believe that's how we were created. What you do is when you eat, when you consume something, primarily carbohydrates, fruit, different things, that is stored as quick energy.

It's called glycogen glucose. It's stored in your muscle and in your liver, about 1,500 to 2,000 calories. But instead of using that, we just consume and consume and consume and we put on extra storage.

So the body is meant to use that glucose. And when the glucose is depleted, guess what happens? I start to starve. No, you don't.

All my muscle goes away. No, it doesn't. It's actually preserved.

And human growth hormone, HGH, and different hormones, good hormones, are actually elevated when you begin to fast. Your body, even your mind says, okay, now I'm gonna stop burning glucose and carbohydrates that I have stored because the storage tank is empty. Now I'm going to go primarily into your fat reserves as fuel.

That's why you'll see the ketogenic diet, ketones and ketosis and these things. It's your body now switching how God designed it to go into a very clean fuel source of fat and you can go days and weeks off that fuel source. That's how the body was designed.

Doing that also begins to clean and clear out areas. Plaque in the arteries. Cancer.

For example, cancer, when you get a tumor, do you know sometimes a tumor can be good because it's a collection of the poisons in one central area. If you fast, there's studies out there, I can show you all kinds of studies, where it'll begin to consume that because the body is so smart. Why is it so smart? They'll say, well, we've evolved.

I say, no, God says we were created in his image, wonderfully made. So the body actually goes and not attacks the liver and the heart and the kidney for fuel. It goes after dead cells and diseased tissue for fuel.

So your body begins to consume the tumor and these dead tissues and these things. It begins to clean house. There's a cleaning that takes place.

So I believe people will be a lot more healthy if we took care of this wonderful gift that God has given us and got us through the cleansing process. That's what fasting does. Anytime Jesus says do something for spiritual reasons, it always has physical benefits.

Now even though the thrust of this message is on physical benefits, the spiritual benefit is what we're after, correct? That is the priority and that is the primary thing. But that's why this message, this first week is important because most people just can't fast. The reward is spiritual and physical.

Closer intimacy with God and feeling better. Doesn't it go together? I mean, think about this. Can you really pray and seek God when you have a headache and my pants are too tight? And my, pop, pop, pop, pop.

My buttons are popping. I got a loose, oh, I don't feel very good. I ate too much.

And you have this sluggish, lethargic body. Do you really think you can seek God to the same degree? Because when my body was sluggish and lethargic and 40 pounds over what it should be, when that happens, that means my flesh is the dominating, controlling aspect of my life. My flesh is controlling me.

And I'm full of the appetites. I've been giving in to appetite. So it's hard to seek God and deny the flesh when you've been feeding your body and feeding the flesh all week long.

So they go hand in hand. Remember, we are body, soul, and spirit. I'm not gonna get weird here, don't worry.

But we are body, right? What we put into the body. We have a soul, our emotions, our intellect. It's what we put into our mind.

I could do a whole nother sermon on negative thinking, bitterness, anger, resentment, how that is toxic to your body. So body, soul, and spirit, they all work together. So if those are off kilter, body's off kilter, mind's a mess, is the spiritual aspect going to be operating at full potential? That's why the Bible says, deny the flesh, gluttony is a sin, starve it from time to time, feed your mind with the things of God and then you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit.

It's a strong three-chord strand there that can't easily be broken. Now trust me, I wanted to delete this message all week because I know it ruffles feathers. And I'm not here condemning.

I don't want people leaving here saying, oh, Pastor Shane, I want people knowing that I'm trying to help you. My background is helping 30,000 people in health and fitness and I saw amazing results physically. So my thought is, why can't, why shouldn't the children of God benefit not only spiritually but be physically sound? Because when I feel good physically, I want to go to the hospital homes.

I'm nicer to my children. I'm nicer to my wife. I'm nicer to the staff.

I'm nicer to all of you. I live life more joy-filled because I'm filled with the Spirit. So see, it permeates all areas of our lives.

And often when I pray for people, I sense that they need to make changes. And I don't know if it's God, if it's just gifted me in this area because I don't have gifting for healing or prophetic words or any of that. Words, I don't have any of that stuff.

Just preaching and I just can tell sometimes when people are just, they need to make some changes. Because people come in there and we pray for panic attacks, angry outbursts and anxiety, right? Lord, help me with angry outbursts, panic attacks, but stop going to Starbucks twice a day. Don't stop by the cigarette shop and don't go to the sugar factory.

Right? Because those things, isn't it funny? A hundred years ago, you thought you were cool if you smoked. Charles Spurgeon, big cigars. That was cool.

That was saying nothing wrong with it. Now what do we know? See, so we can't discount wisdom of what we know today and how to take care of the body. Pray for my arthritis, my joint pain and my heart problems.

Okay, but stop eating the foods that inflame it. See, there has to be a matter of wisdom that comes in here yet at some point. And I believe 90% of the healing that I've seen over the years was a result of good

stewardship.

People getting their body back in right position with God. Now, let me throw this out there before I lose someone. No one is perfect, right? No one is perfect.

We go in the direction of wisdom and God does heal us miraculously. Even when we're rebelling in this area. He heals us miraculously.

But the exception only goes to validate the rule. God says, I'm going to heal you despite what you don't know or what you might be doing to your body. I'm going to heal you.

I'm going to have a healing occur. I don't want to put too much emphasis on the physical. You see what I'm saying here? It's all about getting the body.

No, but I believe that God commands us to be wise stewards of this wonderful gift that he's given us. I've seen the difference. You've seen the difference.

We know how it affects our spiritual life. Does it not? Does giving in to the bodily appetites affect our spiritual life? Random example. If all of you last night had six strong beers and you gave in to the lust of the flesh, how much would you want to worship God this morning? The pain of regret would be lingering.

We'd be having a headache. How quick can I get out of here? So I'm trying to show you that bodily appetites, how we give in to the flesh, more often than not, affects our spiritual worship. It affects who we are.

And this is just maybe it's me, but it's very hard sometimes. If I'm at Walmart or amusement parks, I don't know if you know the statistics, but more than 12 million U.S. children now are obese. And I see at Walmart, this little eight-year-old, 60, 70 pounds overweight, and it just breaks my heart because it's not healthy.

It's not good. And for us to sit and say, this thing doesn't matter to God. It's all about the spiritual things.

I think that is a lie from the pit of hell because the enemy uses the lust of the flesh against us and will use it to destroy the body. The enemy would like nothing more, nothing more than me to never talk about this, go stuff my face and get as drunk as much as I could, die of a heart attack at 50, and this church dissolve. He would love that.

So he works in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. This is a huge area because it's giving in to lusts. And I thought of parents and grandparents.

We create the environment for health in our homes. Paul said in Romans, make no provision for the flesh. Again, we're going to talk about fasting, so I'm setting the foundation.

Make no provision for the flesh. We can't negotiate this area. And I don't know why I just put this down, but parents, you can start to make an example.

Kids and grandparents, you can make an example. Put healthy things there, not junk food. Create an environment.

Your kids will scream the first couple of days, there's nothing to eat. There is. Look in the refrigerator.

There's cucumbers. There's celery with peanut butter. There's carrots.

There's apples. There's oranges. There's blueberries.

There's raspberries. There's all kinds of stuff. Protein powder that's healthy.

No, see, there's nothing to lust after. There's no Captain Crunch. I just read the back of one of those cereals the other day in Vons, and I cannot believe the garbage that is in there.

Three different types of food colorings. Sodium carbonate or bicarbonate or something like that. Sugar's at the very top, and it's not good sugar.

It's refined sugar. It's high fructose corn syrup. All these things that are very detrimental for the body.

See, we know it. We know it. Ask any doctor worth their salt or at least one that knows about nutrition.

But here's the cry, right? It goes out. But it's too expensive. Well, so is your \$150 Starbucks habit and your Nell appointments.

Dad, so is eating out 10 times a month, not to mention new pairs of shoes and clothes. Just, we have to have it every month. See, it's not too expensive.

It's about prioritizing. I talked to a family four years ago about they were not doing good financially. And they want some financial counseling.

And they wrote down, they say they spend about \$1,200 a month eating out. Excuse me? Rewind this a little bit. \$120, right? No, \$1,200.

Well, I can kind of tell you why you might be experiencing some financial difficulty. Well, it's hard to make things. It's expensive.

Well, that looks pretty expensive. You give me \$1,200. No, give me \$600.

And I can go and I can get you set up for a couple weeks on really good things that help take care of the body. And here's why this subject is important to me. We talk about good stewardship of money, don't we? We talk about good stewardship of money.

And there's churches all over. There's a church I can name, a big church. They did a whole blessed series on financial giving, financial stewardship, four-week series on finances, money, finances.

But why when it comes to this topic, do we not talk about it? To me, I'd rather steward this correctly and kind of miss the money aspect than steward the money okay and be dead and not able to steward that correctly. Because it's all stewardship, isn't it? Financial stewardship's important. So is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Boy, if we went and read that scripture, I won't convict you anymore. But Paul says the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. What kind of temple should you be? Taking care of the things that are vastly important.

So here's what happens. Those who don't want to fast are often in bondage to food or they don't see the benefit. That's an Old Testament teaching they say.

So fasting cleans house. When the flesh is restrained, anxiety, fear, unbelief, doubt, lust, jealousy, bitterness, and anger are all minimized. Did you know that? Because they are fleshly outbursts often.

When you starve the flesh, the things that come out of the flesh are also minimized. And I'm gonna tell you a medical myth that's been around for a long time. They say that fasting is bad for you.

Fasting is bad for you. It's actually very healthy for you. It's actually very beneficial for you.

Be careful when getting advice from those who profit from the advice. I just read somewhere, I'm not gonna say a lot of names, but when major research comes out on things in our country for the meat industry, dairy industry, sugars, diabetes, major publications, major articles, you can find out who they're sponsored by. Coca-Cola? McDonald's? Nabisco? Does this feel around? Nestle? They're paying millions into university grants for the universities and the studies to come out and tell us certain things.

Now if that doesn't rub you the wrong way, I don't know what to tell you. So we look at these studies and go, I mean, oh, wow, I can have six cups of coffee. That's not bad.

Who paid for this? Oh, Starbucks did. And I did some numbers. If all of us fasted, it's not gonna happen, so don't worry about it.

But if everybody in America, and I even said not even everybody, 50% of people fasted one day would cost the food industry \$3 billion in one day. So you have the medical industry, the food industry, and what they call big pharma, right? Pharmacies want you to get over your diabetes or they wanna give you insulin. Do you think they wanna help you with your blood pressure or sell the statins? I mean, this is wisdom, folks, wisdom.

The wisdom of God. God's ways can help in all these areas. I'm not minimizing that.

I'm saying just be careful. Be careful. It's your body.

You can say, no, here's what we're going to do. I remember many, I probably shouldn't say this. I already, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll have to remember for the second service not to say it. My wife, remember, some doctor, he had a foreign accent, brought my little six-year-old, six-month in there, said we need to give her this shot, this shot, this shot, this shot, this shot, DTaP, influenza, Hepatitis B. I said, no, you don't.

Hmm, hmm. Well, nah. I said, no, you don't.

Bye-bye. Find you a new pediatrician. Have you researched this? Do you know anything about it? Do you know how it affects the body? Do you know at this age you don't really need these things yet? They don't know much at all.

Not saying they're bad. It's just educate, they're very educated in the things of the world. Here's a pill to fix this.

Here's a pill to get your blood pressure down. How about fasting and eating correctly? Has it ever dawned on you? I mean, the pill has toxic effects. When we take certain medicines, it has a toxic effect.

I get fired up on this because type 1 diabetes is insulin. You don't have insulin. You need to get it or you will probably die.

Type 2 is diet-related. Type 2 is we created this disease. Doctors will say it's a progressive disease.

You might get blind. You might have to lose a limb. I'm going to get you on more insulin, more.

You're actually feeding the very thing that's destroying you. You're getting too many carbohydrates, too much insulin, so your cells are being overloaded. What happens now? It's called insulin resistant.

They're resistant to the insulin. So let's go get more insulin. Doctor, why am I gaining 20 pounds, 30 pounds? That's just what happens when you have diabetes.

Do you know there's a book out there, and I hate recommending books because people say, Shane, he talked about evolution. Right, it's secular books, even secular books. The Complete Guide on Fasting shows how this doctor eradicates type 2 diabetes by fasting, by removing the thing that's causing it.

So what kind of pastor would I be if I knew all this but never shared it? Honestly, what would I, I know, I've seen people reverse everything. You go and your doctor, I've got high blood pressure. They give you medication, right, blood thinner to thin the blood so the heart works less.

I can get you to thin your blood by losing 40 pounds, increasing garlic intake and plant-based foods, a little bit of raw this and raw that. I can help you get to that. Well, how? God's design.

God's design, starve the flesh and be filled with the Spirit. When you starve the flesh, it's a spiritual benefit. But guess what? Just for kicks, I'm going to actually give you physical benefits.

I'm going to clean the arteries. I'm going to remove tumors, Alzheimer's. All those things can be because you're pulling the toxins.

Most disease is created by what we consume. And the house is never clean because we never fast. Why do you think everybody's getting the flu because it's going around? Or because our body is so sick and so toxic that it cannot fight these things.

That's why. I know people that fast often. They don't get the flu and cold very often.

Very rarely. They very rarely do. They get these things.

Because the body's cleaning itself. And I know it's hard. I'm a fellow.

I could be sitting in that front pew. Boy, this flesh sure is hard. It is.

The pain of discipline or the pain of regret. And don't we often give in to the regret? More often than not. I do.

You go, why did I just do that? Why? What happened? So be encouraged. I'm not here beating up. I'm trying to show you how important this is.

There was something I want to mention. Oh, many of you know about chemotherapy. I know people that are taking it right now.

We've had family members obviously pass away of cancer and friends. And what does chemotherapy do? The goal is to stop or slow the growth of cancer cells. Correct? That's the whole point.

I'll be careful here. It's a medication that kills the cancer cells. But it also kills the healthy cells.

And it's not a very reliable thing that happens. But the body has a natural God-given way to do this. Fasting actually goes after the diseased tissue and the diseased cells and allows the living ones to flourish.

You look at how God created us. Alright, I'm closing up here. But again, I want to get this point across.

That we are body, soul, and spirit. The spirit is the priority. Paul says bodily exercise profits a little bit.

Spiritualness, godliness is good. But I've seen such a big connection. Body, soul, and spirit.

All three need cleansing. Proverbs 14.30 A heart at peace gives life to the body but envy rots the bones. So not only what we're taking in here but what we're taking in here.

The mental diet as well. And please hear my heart. It's just to help.

It is to help you. I'm not beating up. I'm not judging.

I actually wrote down the difference here. I'm not attacking. I'm offering solutions.

That's the difference. Someone who's judging and attacking you is judging and attacking how could you. I'm trying to help and offer solutions.

That's the difference. It might come across the same way. I guess maybe the fear of man on these sermons like this.

Because people inevitably, whether it's radio they hear it or internet or YouTube, or hear Pastor Shane says I'm fat and doesn't like me and doesn't want to be around me. Where does that come from? See that's not true. That's not true.

That's the enemy planting seeds of doubt and lying to you. I would never ask my own. I love all groups of people.

I want to help all groups of people. I was called lead britches. I was called overweight.

I was. I struggled with it most of my life. I know.

I know. If somebody's been free of something, right? They feel better. They're on fire for God.

I've been there. I know it. I can help you.

Don't you think they're going to get a little excited? Don't you think they're going to want to help you come out of that? I see so many people hurting in this area. Yes, God can heal, but you got to get off the addiction. All these things that we're addicted to.

Lord, heal me of this. Okay, but get rid of the addiction as well. Clean the house.

And a mental fast and a stomach fast go hand in hand, right? Fasting the body, fasting the mind. Here's what I'm getting to. I'm going to close.

I said that five minutes ago. I know. Here's the first step before I get in next week's sermon.

You're not going to want to miss next week. I'm just telling you that right now. Schedule everything around church.

The first step that we're going to start this week, I'm ahead of you on this, so I know that, but it took me five years of getting ready, is get the body ready. This is the first step for next week. Get the body ready.

Fall forward. Get back on track. Begin today or tomorrow.

Start cleaning house. Cleaning things out that you know, because you can't fast and not deal with the addictions. Just try sugar for the day.

I've tried it. I don't want to rip somebody's head off. Just no sugar for the whole day.

You will turn into a monster. You're like, where did that come from? Is that inherent in me? Phil, is that in me? Leave me alone. Don't talk to me.

What happened? The withdrawals because the flesh craves the thing that is destroying you. You can link most disease. Whatever you're addicted to is eventually wanting to destroy you.

Lung cancer. Liver cancer. Food.

Diabetes. See, what you're addicted to is destroying you. Same with me.

The things I want will eventually destroy me. So you have to clean house in this area. So that's the first step.

I'm not going to say anything else other than get the body ready. If you want, you can go to our website and search for what does the Bible say? Health. What does the Bible say? I spent an hour and 20 minutes talking about this on a Saturday.

So get it ready. Get ready for next week. Fall forward.

You're not going to do things perfectly. Begin to wean off. If you're on caffeine, go to half.

Sugar, go to half. Go to half. Go to half.

Junk, go to half. Get rid of the stuff. Start to wean off of it.

I mean, you can go cold turkey if you want. Good luck. Right? And here's what I tell people in this situation.

Pray for heaven, but expect hell. Because you're getting the body. Do you think the enemy wants this? He wants us sick and depraved in this area.

So next week, we'll talk about the spiritual benefits. Lean, mean, fighting machine. Medical supervision, I do recommend it.

But they will not be supportive many times. So tell them, here's what I'd like you to do. Monitor.

They can monitor. For example, if you're on blood pressure medication, fasting and cleaning house automatically lowers your blood pressure. So if it's automatically lowering your blood pressure, also taking medication that lowers it, then you get into an unhealthy level.

The blood pressure is actually too low. So I do recommend medical supervision and finding those who can monitor you closely. All right.

Disclaimer. And a powerful point here that we need to take home. When we do these things, God doesn't love us more.

You got it, right? He loves you. It's not about loving God. He doesn't love you more.

But let me tell you this. As God is my witness, I love him more. Just during worship, hearing the kids sing amazing grace and full service.

Man, 20 years ago, I was on a highway to hell. This church shouldn't even be here. And now look at what God just honors his word.

And you have little kids singing. Where would they be if West Side Christian? And I'm not saying Shane. I'm saying the Holy Spirit did it.

So God doesn't love you more. But I love him so much more when I'm fasting and praying. When the bodily appetites are in control.

I love him more because I'm more filled with the spirit. That's why many people are upset at God. They're not in church.

They're distant because the flesh, like a corpse, your flesh is dragging you around. Come on. Come on.

Come on. And you're not dragging it around. So I want to be careful.

You don't please God, but you will love him more. I fumble and I fall often, but get back and prepare for warfare. Robert Murray McShaney, I love this guy from Scotland, a couple hundred years ago.

He said a holy minister, a holy pastor is an awful weapon in the hands of God. But I want to take that home. A holy member, a holy Christian is an awesome weapon in the hand of God.

If you want to see God, I mean, I should bring this. I have a little illustration. There's a little sledgehammer and I've got a huge 25-pound sledgehammer.

That's the difference with prayer. You're going to break down some strongholds, but when you bring in fasting, when you bring in killing the flesh, being filled with the spirit, now your prayer is targeted. Now you're focused.

And we're going into spiritual warfare next week. We sang a song this morning early at 6 a.m. When I see that cross, I see freedom. How glorious, how wonderful.

My Savior's scar is victorious. My chains are gone. My debt is paid.

See, this doesn't have to be difficult and hopeless because victory has already been won. When God says, no temptation has overtaken you, but what is common to man, and I will provide a way of escape that you may be able to bear it, you can take him at his word on that. We are set free, so don't go back in bondage.

Fight the good fight. Fight for your families. Fight for your own health.

Fight for spiritual things. ■

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