

# To Be Heard on High

by Shane Idleman

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*Shane Idleman's sermon emphasizes the importance of consecration, unity, and spiritual disciplines for being heard by God and experiencing His wonders.*

**Duration:** 57:03

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 7:14, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 6:6, Matthew 6:16-18, 1 Corinthians 6:12, James 1:22

**Topics:** "Prayer And Fasting", "Spiritual Humility"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, prayer, seeking God with all our hearts, turning from wicked ways, and pursuing self-denial to experience God's power and presence. The speaker highlights the need for unity, perseverance in prayer, application of biblical truths, and fasting as spiritual disciplines to draw closer to God and be heard on high.

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## Transcript

Joshua chapter 3, and a lot of you already know this, but for those who are new and might not know this, this is actually our first service together, tonight and tomorrow as one church. So two different locations, one church, this is the first weekend that we're coming together. I said that for this reason.

I'm going to talk about some things tonight that I've talked about a lot of times at Westside Christian Fellowship. I haven't talked a lot about this in Leona Valley, but I want to recap a few things. What I'm trying to do is revisit powerful truths and lay the foundation, because I believe, and it just might be me, but I believe that God's going to do some pretty wondrous things.

I think there's seasons in life. We were in a holding pattern season. It was a difficult season.

God was chipping off some things and getting us ready. And I feel that this new season, that God's going to do some amazing things with lives being changed and the church growing, but not numerically, but spiritually. I don't care about a big church numerically.

I care about a big church with the hearts in the right spot. So I'll take 300 or 400 people versus 3,000 if they're on fire for God. And so everything I'm talking about is not new, but I feel it's important to lay the foundation, lay the groundwork.

You'll hear often the words reemphasize, reinforce, restore, replenish. And as we're going forward, I'm going to start teaching in Matthew 24 and 25. It's on the end times.

Signs of the times. Jesus is coming again. That's going to be a long series.

And then I might even go into the book of James later or something. So this might be the last time that I can really pull from a topical type message in a while. It might be quite a while before I can fit in this type of message.

So a lot of this will not be new, but I want to reinforce, I want to reemphasize, and I want to recap a lot of things that really the church was built on and what's going to get us into that next level where God wants us. A couple of scriptures that stood out this week I want to share with you. Ezra 8.23, so we fasted and sought our God and he heard our prayers.

And the message tonight is to be heard on high. I don't know about you, but I want God to hear my prayers. And I just, even back there during worship, I wish they would have kept going.

You know, just worshiping and saying, Lord, this is all about you. I just want more of you. I want to be filled with your spirit.

You can take the money and the nice houses and different things. Just give me a family that loves you and a church that loves you and be filled with your spirit. And to be heard on high.

Do you want, I mean, we're praying. We sometimes think, you know, well, I don't know if God hears me, but there is a way to be heard on high and to have God hear and answer our prayers. And I also want to clarify that God can hear anybody at any time, two in the morning, the drunk, can't make it home, the person addicted to this.

But I think there's certain spiritual disciplines that we can begin to add to our lives that will allow God and us to, for us actually to be heard on high, for our prayers to reach a deeper level, if that's possible, and to really, because there's something known as seeking God with all of our heart, seeking God with all of our soul and with all of our mind and being drawn in closer to God. Another verse is Joshua 3, 5. And Joshua said to the people, sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And that's really the verse I'm wanting to start this whole endeavor with, is I feel that if we consecrate ourselves, that word really is, or sanctify, is consecrate, to set yourself apart so God can do many wonders in our lives.

And in Joshua here, many of you know, but some don't, that they were getting ready to walk into the promised land. And before they could get into the promised land, the reason it's called the promised land, it's the land that God promised them many, many years beforehand. And they were going to walk into this, and God was going to do many, many miraculous things.

So Joshua said, consecrate yourself, prepare yourself, get yourself ready, get your heart ready so that you can receive from God. So it begs the question, had they not consecrated themselves, had they not set themselves apart for God, would God have blessed them to the degree he did? I mean, talk about conquering your enemies. Walls just fall down.

Armies are defeated by just God. The God who holds everything together can just whisper. He can just snap and annihilate an entire army.

So Joshua's saying, prepare yourself. Now I do want to talk, before I read Joshua, briefly about something that some people are divided upon, divided on, I don't think we need to be. I just think there's different ways of looking at it.

But I don't think, well, let me just read what J. Vernon McGee said. All scripture is not written to me, but it is for me. So in other words, Joshua, what I'm about to read, was not written to me.

It was 2, oh gosh, how many years? 3,000, 3,500 years ago, but it is for me. So there's principles that we can glean from the word of God. All of God's word is for me.

But many times people try to take certain things, Joshua crossing over the Jordan and the Promised Land, and they just make this sermon into something it's really not. That Joshua represents this, that Jordan represents this. Okay, I can see the parallels there, but what I'm wanting to do is just pull out the principle from the story, and the principle is sanctify yourself, prepare yourself, consecrate yourself, because then God is going to do many miracles among you.

And I haven't seen God do a lot of miracles among people who are not consecrated and set apart. It just doesn't happen. God blesses the consecration.

And what I mean by consecration is throughout the Bible, even Paul, Old Testament, even New Testament, Paul, they would say come out from among them and be separate. As a believer, it's a hard thing to do. We are in the world, I live in the world, but I'm not of the world.

It means there's a difference. So when you come out from among them, you are separate. You separate yourselves in the way you live, in the way you conduct yourself, because you want to be filled with the Spirit of God.

And then through that empty vessel that I talk about all the time, when a person's full of the Spirit, then God can guide them, then God can direct them, then he can lead them, because they're consecrated, they're set apart. It's almost saying, Lord, here's the key, I'll sit in the passenger seat, show me where we're going. And it's being set apart for God.

It's a very wonderful thing, and I would encourage you to do it. And it's really easy, everything that's pulling against you is probably pulling you away from the consecration. The Spirit wants it, but the flesh doesn't.

And these are two opposing forces. So let me read Joshua 3, beginning in verse 1. Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan. He and all the children of Israel had lodged there before they crossed over.

So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp, and they commanded the people, saying, When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Then there shall be a space between you and it, about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you should go.

For you have not passed this way before. And Joshua said to the people, Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And I feel that for this church, I truly feel that God is going to move in a mighty way, not only in the church, but in our lives, collectively and individually, as we follow this principle.

I mean, I can take you from Genesis to Revelation, seriously, and show you all types of stories where God blessed the consecrated man or woman. And I can take you throughout the Bible as well, and show you all areas where people who have not been consecrated have drifted away, and lost that anointing, lost that fellowship, have not been heard on. Do you remember, have you ever had an hour prayer session? Where

you're just praying, and then something happens years later, and you can't even get five minutes in.

When worship used to excite, and the tears were welling, you're like, God, oh my, your presence is here, this is wonderful. And now, it's like, no, come on, come on. Gabe, sing quicker.

That's all about leaving your first love, and coming back, and how you come back is you consecrate yourself. This is a very important topic. Basically, Joshua's saying this is a new season.

Prepare yourself, align yourself, and position yourself to receive from God. Now, another point of clarification. I truly believe, and here's where our preachers have to be careful.

If it's all about you gotta do, you gotta do, you gotta do, you gotta do, you'll run people into the ground. Because it's God who makes us stand firm in Christ. We rest in Him.

But if it's all about, oh, God, change me, and I don't have to do anything, I'm telling you the truth, this happens a lot, people, Lord, help take this 50 pounds off, as they go to Krispy Kreme and watch TV. And there's spiritual analogies there, too. God, help me with patience, help me, but I'm never gonna touch your word, I'm never gonna get in prayer, I'm only gonna go to church once a week.

So there's a balance there, because the Holy Spirit is the sanctifier. Please don't misunderstand, you do not change yourself, you simply submit to the work of God's Spirit. So God's Spirit changes us as we submit to His work.

Well, how do we submit to His work, Shane? I'm glad you asked. Sanctification. Right here, sanctify yourselves.

Sanctify yourselves, and God will do this to you. It's always, if you do this, God will do this. Oh, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, pray, seek, and turn, then God will heal their land.

See, the healing and the forgiveness is conditional based on what He's called us to do. Same thing in this area. If you want to know God at a very deep level, it's like I quoted Tozer last week, I don't remember the quote, but I remember the principle.

It was, you're about as full of the Holy Spirit as you want to be. All of us. We might not be as full as we'd like to be, but all of us are as full of the Holy Spirit as we want to be.

The more you empty yourself, the more you'll be filled with the Spirit of God. Hearing and obeying God go hand in hand. To be heard on high, we must sanctify ourselves.

And I talk to a lot of people, like, Shane, my prayer life is this, and my prayer life is not good, and my prayer life, yeah, but how's your sanctification? How is your obedience to God? And their life is not good in this area, and they wonder why their prayers are not as powerful as they could be. Now, again, I think a little kid can pray to God. I think a person caught in sin can pray to God, and he will hear the cries of his children.

But there's something special about a person being set apart and sanctified and called of God, and their whole life is about being filled with His Spirit. And there's a difference. I mean, all the old books I used to read, I've commented on this before, they would wrestle with God until 4 in the morning until their prayers were answered.

Like, well, how do you know your prayers were answered? Because they could sense it in their spirit. They could feel it. Have you ever prayed for something, you got up and you said, I know it, I know God's going to answer, and God's going to work through, because it's struggling, it's contending.

Let me read a verse on sanctifying ourselves. 2 Corinthians, Paul's writing to a church in Corinth. The city there is Corinth.

The church was not what you would consider a good example, necessarily. He says this, Therefore, having these promises, he just laid out a lot of promises in chapter 6, Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. So although God changes me, I have to submit to the changing.

He said, cleanse yourself. And there's a big movement out there, and people think that you really don't do anything. You just sit back and let God work.

And He does work, but He wants to direct an empty, He'll fill an empty vessel. Can I put much more water in this? Why not? What about if I pour it out? Okay, I'm not going to do that. But that's what God, that's consecration is, this.

You're pouring out in order to be filled with the Spirit. And in order for God to hear our prayers in a powerful way and to open miraculous doors, I'm talking about weird doors, I'm talking about miraculous. Do you want the prodigal son to come home? Do you want the wayward daughter to return? Do you want healing to take place? Do you want to be healed in your mind, body, soul, and spirit? There's a lot of things we're praying for.

I believe that God will honor that. In Old Testament Exodus, watch yourselves that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. So we see two things, cleansing ourselves and watching out for snares.

Do you know what a snare is? It's a trap. In the forest, sometimes it's a little metal thing, a little metal wire. As soon as a deer or something steps in it, snare.

The parallel is this, when we draw too close to the world, to the things of the world, and we love the things of the world, and the love of the Father is not in us, that becomes a snare. Then once we're snared, now we're not set apart, we're not sanctified. As Joshua said, sanctify yourselves, come out from among them.

We can't because I'm snared by the things of the world. So those two concepts go together. And I love that verse in Proverbs 27.8. Like a bird that wanders from the nest, so is a man who wanders from his place.

I don't know why, but I think that's a verse for some of you tonight. Men and women, as a bird wanders from its nest, so is the man or woman that wanders from their place. See, your place, my place, is with God, in His Word, in prayer, in fellowship, in purity, in holiness, watching our eye gate, watching our heart gate, watching our thoughts, and we're set apart and we're staying in our place.

But if you get outside of that place, at what I call shelter of protection and covering, there's a shelter, there's a covering there, where God says, don't go outside that place. And as a bird wanders from its nest, what happens? That's where the cat gets it. Or the coyote.

They wander from their place. As the old hymn says, prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love.

God, please seal me, seal my heart. You know that old song? It's a wonderful hymn. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it.

Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, O God, take and seal it. Seal it for Thy courts above.

God's sealing, because that's the scariest thing, is there's an enemy in here. He's not just out there. He's in here, and there's this enemy within.

That's why the writer here said, seal my heart. Lord, I'm prone to wander. I'm prone to go to that snare.

I'm prone to everything that's not godly. My body's designed to do that. But the Spirit says, no, that's why you've got to sanctify yourself and cleanse yourself.

That's why it's a difficult process. It's warfare. It's very challenging.

So the first thing, I'm just going to talk about four things that I see for this church going into the future, here in Leona Valley, wherever it's at, that we must do if we want God to hear us, if we want to be heard on high. Because I also believe in a church that prays. And we don't just come and we hear and clap and we go home.

We pray. Is there anything wrong with our halls being filled with prayer again? Is there anything wrong with camping out at a few worship songs and not being in a hurry? And praying. Here's the four things we need to do.

Number one. None of this is new. I hope.

If it's new, we're in trouble. Truth is not new. You know the old saying, right? If it's new, it's not truth.

And if it's truth, it's not new. And we need to reinforce these things in our life because the snares creep in and pull us away. The first thing is to walk in unity.

We have to walk in unity. Jesus says in John 17 that they may be one, just as you Father are me and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. Unity is so overlooked.

And the reason is we like to do this and be disunited and get going and stay in this. And we think God's going to hear our prayers and bless us in a mighty way. But God says, Jesus, I want you to be united with each other the same way that God and Jesus are united.

That tells me I better choose my battles carefully. That tells me it doesn't matter what kind of paint we use, or the worship this or this, and all the worship wars, and should I be wearing a suit and tie, and why aren't you doing this, and what about bulletins, and what about this, and why are this, and what? That's not unity. Unity in the Bible is unity of the Spirit, unity of truth, and unity of faith.

And we come together, and we protect ourselves. That's what I really want, that we guard ourselves. We build ourselves up.

We don't pull each other down. We come united. You want to see God bless a worship service? Come united.

Come wanting to see. You know that person you don't really want to see? Oh, here they're here. Go.

Oh, there's a lot of that going on here. Go to that person. Go to that person, and make an effort to be united.

If we're pulling people down, pulling each other down, make an effort. God will inhabit the praises of His people that are coming from a pure heart focused on unity. There's no way around that.

It's hard to hear from God when you're disconnected from the body. And that's what disunity does. It disconnects us from the body.

It's kind of draining, isn't it? My wife knows. I told her actually tonight, but I ran into a pastor friend of mine, a little bit younger, started church about the same time. It was all like, why would you keep both campuses? Why wouldn't you just go out there? I don't understand.

That doesn't make sense. I'm like, I don't know. We're just waiting on God.

We're dropping to one and seeing what He wants to do. I hope that's okay with people. I mean, we're not trying to, you know, but I left there like so frustrated.

Like why not just say, well, let's see what God does. Let's pray about it. It's His church.

I mean, we're just not trying to rush ahead on either side. We don't have confidence in saying that, well, He just wants everybody to move to Leona Valley. Come on, let's go.

Or we don't know what He wants to do. That's why we're waiting on God. And by the attendance today, I think that's probably not a bad idea.

So that's what I mean. And I talk with people like, oh, that church over there and that church over there and that church over there. I mean, we just get so, we just, oh, it drives me crazy.

I mean, I've done it before. Don't get me wrong. But if there's a Bible-believing church, we should build each other up.

We should pray for Journey and Hope Chapel here and Highland and Calvary Chapel and Grace Chapel. Yes, I know all the churches out there. I've lived here all my life.

The Vineyard. Pray for these churches. If they're preaching the totality of God's Word, they believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, that Christ is the only way, the only truth, the only life.

No man comes to the Father except through Him if they believe in these essentials. That's unity. We're coming together on the essentials.

That's unity. And God will bless that. Trust me, He's worked in my heart big time.

I could put down every church in this area a couple years ago. I probably still can. But He's working on me.

And unity, because when you say, Lord, I need help in this area, He says, good, now I can help you. But when we come with all of our little, you know, well, Shane, that's good, but they're not really preaching the truth. What does that look like? What's that look like? I mean, I'm too hard.

The guy on Avenue, whatever's too soft. This church is too kid-oriented and the worship services are too loud and this one's this. Well, what's right? It's called preference.

Preference. Be careful. Just be careful in this area.

Unity has to be fought for. You will have to fight for unity from the second you leave this building tonight. It doesn't come naturally.

It comes supernaturally. Unity. Unity.

Therefore, Paul said in Philippians, therefore, if there's any, here's a good word for us tonight. If there's any encouragement in Christ, if there's any consolation of love, if there's any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on the same purpose. Why do we love all these other scriptures but ignore these? Yeah, pound them with the truth, Shane.

Well, let's pound them with this. Encouragement. Love.

Build them up. And I know it's hard because my flesh doesn't like it. My flesh wants to tear down that church six miles from here.

But God doesn't bless that. He wants us to encourage. Now, if any of you think I'm trying to get weak on truth, absolutely not.

I'll fight that battle till the day I die. But that's not the problem right now, many times. The problem is unity and encouraging and having compassion and affection.

I think maybe it's from my perspective, but I've seen a lot of brothers shooting brothers and sisters shooting sisters. Are you Calvinist? Are you Armenian? You believe in the gifts of the Spirit or don't you? We just love to bicker. We love to argue.

Can you lose your salvation? Can you keep your salvation? What is it? I still have a guy that wants to get together with me and debate that for three hours. Why don't we take some gas cards to Beach Avenue and see if people need prayer and help? Think about how we're spending a lot of our time. Everybody wants to bicker and complain.

Trust me, I like debating. But that can't be the focus. And then we get caught up on these things.

And that's one thing I'm concerned about talking about the End Times series that I'm going to be doing is that we just get so focused on the End Times and forget about it. That might be years from now, folks. He might not be coming next week.

Do you realize your kids could grow up and have kids? And we're so worried about He's coming again. No, let's get out there and do something about it. Jesus said, do business until I return.

That's an accounting term as well. Do business, work, until I return. But unity has to be at the forefront.

I think there's just too much at stake to argue anymore. Just where we see our nation, where we see the church, there's just too much at stake. And I don't have time for it anymore either.

Of course, we will. Nobody's perfect. But look at the things we're fighting for.

Look at the things we're arguing about. Let me read just a quick excerpt about Bob Fu. He was tortured in a Chinese prison for his faith.

After his release, he and his wife were forced to flee to Beijing in the middle of the night. Both my wife and I knew that sooner or later we would face prison theology. That's what he told a Christian today.

Of his early days as a home church planner, he said that experience of Chinese Christians, we were always told that if you wanted to be a faithful follower of Jesus, you would have to take that course to be arrested, to do something. And do you think these guys are complaining about the little things? When you're going to jail, maybe, you're not complaining about the little things. Worship's too loud tonight.

I like the other guy. What's wrong with... We have to get back to just unity in the body. So I remember my wife Heidi and I prayed specifically, Lord, at least give us three years to set ourselves up with more solid ground.

We were still weak in the faith and wanted to prepare ourselves. Three years later, we were both arrested. And that's happening all the time in other countries.

And when you talk to them, or you read some of the things, it's like the things that we're arguing over, it doesn't even enter their conversation. And where are we spending our time and our energy? 1 Corinthians, Paul said, for you are still fleshly. You're still carnal.

There's jealousy. There's strife among you. Are you not fleshly? Are you not walking like mere men? There's a lot of scriptures on disunity and the need for unity in the body.

So I would just have you prayerfully consider some heart changes in this area and being united. Not discouraging. Not pulling each other down.

Not saying, have you heard? But let's build each other up. And God's going to bless a united body. And the next point, my favorite one.

I'll be quick. Of course you already know. We have to.

We must, as a church now, with getting these extra people, is persevere in prayer. We must persevere in prayer. All of us must return to the prayer closet where full surrender takes place.

And I would just encourage you. I know I'm not, obviously not everybody's going to apply this. But I just would encourage you, if prayer's been an afterthought, make it a priority.

If you've been lacking in this area, this is the best way to come out from among them and be separate. To consecrate yourself. Because in the prayer closet, you're one-on-one with God.

There's no lying and cheating and manipulating. It's one-on-one with God. Ian Bounds said, the church becomes a graveyard and not an embattled army when there's no prayer.

Praise and prayer are stifled. Worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching encourage sin, not holiness.

Preaching that kills is prayerless preaching. And then I added, the dry, dead, lethargic condition of the church simply reflects an impotent prayer life. And that's why I said, reemphasize, refocus, re-motivate.

We've got to re-motivate the troops. I don't want to get off on some end-time series for two months and forget about what God has really called us to do. To be united.

To take it in prayer. To worship Him with all of our heart. And it's hard to hear from God when you don't talk to Him and listen patiently.

It's hard to hear from God when you don't talk to Him and listen patiently. Listen, people, this is a spiritual discipline that takes work. You've got to schedule time somewhere.

I don't care when it is, but you go away from whatever you're doing. You can put on worship. Put on earplugs if you need to.

And you sit before God and your flesh is going to want to get out of God. Your flesh is going to hate. You're going to be hungry.

Why am I hungry? And I've got to do this. I've got to get an email. Leave your phone.

Turn it off. And spend time in the prayer closet getting worshipping God because that's how you're heard on high. It's not microwave Christianity.

You don't say, God, what's the answer to this? Oh, God, thank you. It's struggling. It's fighting.

It's, God, what are you saying? And you're persevering. That's the key word. Persevering in prayer to be heard on high.

I like what Isaiah said. I read this yesterday. I wanted to read it to you.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak and to those who have no might.

He increases strength. Even the young shall faint and be weary. Even the young men shall utterly fall down.

But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They'll mount up wings like eagles. They'll run and not grow weary.

They'll walk and not faint. He's not weary. He's not asleep.

He's not distant. He's right here. He's an ever-present help in time of need.

But you've got to call out. You've got to persevere in prayer. How much time do we give the media? Jane, you've said this many times before, and I'm going to keep saying it until it happens.

So I tell my kids, Dad, you already said that you're right, but your room's still dirty. So we're going to say, clean your room until that room is clean. But we can't move forward as a church unless we persevere in prayer.

Sometimes I want to give you examples and kind of what I do, but I don't know what your schedule's like, and I don't want to force what I do on other people, but you've got to get into a place, and you put on worship, and you pray, God, help me. God, get my heart right. Lord, I repent.

If there's anything I'm holding on to, God, cleanse me. God, pray. I pray for my marriage.

Lord, I pray for Morgan. Be with her. Sustain her.

Guide her. Fill her with your spirit. Don't let her become discouraged.

God, I pray for my kids, every single one of my kids. Lord, guard them from the enemy. I pray against sickness.

I pray against deception. I pray against all that the enemy is not welcome in this house. Lord, guard our family.

Strengthen us with your word. Let us have a wonderful day today filled with peace and joy, a day that we can serve you. And then, is there anything else to pray for? The news.

Church. Our nation. Friends.

People, you could sit there, and you just pray, but you've got to consecrate yourself. You've got to pull away from the things of the world, because if I go to bed with Fox News, I'm not going to wake up with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I'm going to have bad dreams, and ISIS is coming.

I'm too busy for God. Now I get to bed way too late. I have no time for the word of God.

That's the biggest trick of the enemy, I truly believe, at least in my life, is no time for the word of God. No time for prayer. No time for the word of God.

He doesn't care for your busy little body. But you start getting into this. You start changing.

You start affecting the lives of others. There's a book I have by Steve Farrar. It's entitled Finishing Strong.

I'd recommend it for men. They interviewed 280 of the top Christian leaders who fell into sexual immorality. Any guess what the number one top of that list was? No more devotional life and prayer time.

I'm too busy. So you don't think the enemy's going after your time with God? That's more sacred than anything. I hope I don't upset anybody, but I think that's more important than what you're doing here right now.

Because really my job is to motivate you so you either get up early in the morning or later today, and you get into the word of God. You fall before him, and you're filled with the Spirit to fuel the flames that God has already put inside of us. That's the top reasons.

The top four reasons I think are no more prayer time. They're too busy. So I never want to get too busy.

You've got to guard that time. Oh yeah, your schedule's going to be a lot different than other people. I get made fun of all the time.

Oh, you've got to get to bed early. Oh yeah. Yeah, I do.

What are the options? Bed early or a bunch of junk in my mind? Because nobody's sitting around at home just looking at the stars for three hours. They're looking at the stars. What's that? Dancing with the stars.

That's what they're doing. Now, these things in and of themselves, but if anything, I believe if anything is pulling you away from God, anything, it's not a God thing. Well, it's a good thing.

It's not a God thing. And you will. People just, oh, that's weird.

Yeah, that's, consecrate. I'm coming out from among them. So let me just tell you, here's a quick thought.

Whatever your worldly friends are doing, you're probably doing the opposite. What they're posting, what they're viewing, their time frame, their schedule, this, why are you doing this? Well, because I'm consecrating my life. And you're being set apart.

It doesn't mean you don't enjoy life and do things, but there's a difference in those who are following God. The third thing that we have to, as a church, and I want to word this correctly, is apply the truth. Because a lot of people have the truth, but they don't apply it.

We have it, right? And it's hard to hear from God when you don't know the heart of God. Because you can read it and not know the heart of God until you apply it. Let me give you a good point.

When it says, love my enemies, okay, that's what it says, but until I do it, I'm not going to understand the heart of God. James 1.22, be doers of the word and not hearers only. Deceiving your own selves.

Deceiving your own selves. So when we know what the word of God says, but we don't do it, we're living in deception. The word of God says, in all things, in prayer and supplication, make your requests be known to God.

Spend time praying. Jesus said, when you come to the Father, pray like this. And we know these things, but we just don't do it.

We're living in deception because we think we know, just because we know it, doesn't carry the weight. We have to apply it. And it's really about motivation, isn't it? This is all about motivation.

If I announced, if I had a big stack, look, here's \$10,000. If you can read the Bible, if you read the Bible every day for an hour, in three months, this is yours. Anybody not going to do that? What do you mean? Why? What's the difference? Motivation.

Motivation is the key. And I want to read a story I came across this week about motivation. The legendary Alabama football coach, Bear Bryant, some of you know who that was, right? He had a young man on his fourth string team.

That's not doing very good. His name was Henry Peterson. He had never gotten to play.

And just before the Alabama-Auburn game, Bryant got a call from Henry saying his dad had died and he needed to go home. On Friday, Coach Bryant got another call from Henry and said, Coach, I got to

thinking about it and I can't let the team down. I want to be there on Saturday.

Sure enough, on Saturday afternoon, Henry was ready to play. He walked up to Bryant and said, Coach, I want you to start me today. Bear Bryant said, Henry, this is the Alabama-Auburn game.

I can't start you. You've never played. But Henry persisted and Bryant, never knowing why, heard himself say, Okay, Henry, I'll put you in on the first play.

Henry Peterson ran for four touchdowns in the first half. He nearly beat Auburn by himself. The coach walked over to him at halftime and said, Son, I didn't know whether to kiss you or to kill you.

You've been sitting on my bench for four years. Coach, why didn't you tell me you could play? Henry looked up at him and said, Coach, did you ever see me walking arm in arm around campus with my dad? Coach Bryant said, Yes, I think I have. Well, Coach, said Henry, my dad was blind.

Today was the first time he ever got to watch me play football. Motivation. Motivation.

Folks, you have a Heavenly Father closer than any father you've ever known who wants to spend that. You've got to be motivated. Your Heavenly Father, He can see you.

He can hear the prayers of His children. He can hear the cries. He's not hearing me.

How do you know unanswered prayers are not just the motivation we need to spend time with Him? If He'd just answer the prayer, answer the prayer, we'd say, okay, thank you. But He says, God, I don't have the answers yet. I don't know what's going on.

I'm in turmoil. He says, that's okay. Draw near to Me.

Draw close to Me. Wait upon Me. And as you're waiting and drawing, I will hold you.

I'll secure you. Don't worry about that. I created the heavens.

I've got that financial problem in the bag. Just draw closer to Me. What's the old song? Thank God for unanswered prayers.

Thank God for unanswered prayers. Before God Brooks ever sang it. Thank God for unanswered prayers.

Because without that, I don't know about you, but if God wasn't holding some things away, I don't know if I'd press in harder and harder. We have to apply the truth in this area. Your true Father wants you to know Him.

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. And obviously, He's not talking about just knowing the truth. That word there in the Greek language, it's an intimate knowledge of.

Basically, it's applying. You shall apply the truth, and because of that application, the truth will set you free. And here's the key with this point on applying the truth.

All of you are going to say, oh, shame. We all know that. Right.

But it's important to note. Applying the truth involves this. Doing what we know to be right when we don't feel like it.

Because if we feel like it, we'll do it. Have you noticed that? So anytime you're wondering, I know what to do, I just don't want to do it. Do it.

That's applying the truth. I know I need to pray to God tomorrow morning. I just don't feel like it.

Well, welcome to the club. Neither do I, and it's called the flesh. It's called sleeping in.

It's called relaxing. I don't want to apply the truth. My spouse is going to think this, or my friend's going to think this, and then I have to admit I'm wrong.

Yeah, welcome to the club. It's humiliating. It's humbling to apply the truth, but how bad do you want it? See, I'm trying to motivate people to be desperate for more of God.

I'm not trying to win a popularity contest. I'm trying to help you press in. And this is actually, I'm going to read an excerpt from Matt Moore.

He wrote on the Christian Post. He was somebody who struggled with homosexuality, and he came out of that lifestyle. I don't know if it's still a struggle for him or not, but here's what he wrote.

I'm convinced you cannot live the life of faith and obedience Jesus calls you to without setting aside time daily to draw near to God through the word and prayer. In early 2013, my walk with Jesus was a mess, and I came terrifying close to walking away from him. Why? Because I had a lackadaisical approach to seeking him.

The apathetic nature of my devotional life left my faith malnourished and no match for the passions of my flesh and the deceptions of Satan. But by God's grace, and at the prodding of wise friends, I started taking this quiet time stuff seriously. Every morning I latched onto rocks of biblical truth with trembling hands, climbing higher and higher out of the pit of spiritual numbness.

And every evening I lunged into the fiery furnace of prayer, letting God burn away calluses of unbelief that had grown around my heart. Without a doubt, seeking the Lord daily through the word and prayer is why I'm still here today. Folks, the weapons of your warfare are not carnal.

They're mighty through God. These are the weapons. We are fighting the enemy unarmed, unprepared, and untrained.

We're just going out there on knowledge alone. He loves knowledge alone. Pharisees had knowledge, but they didn't have the weapons of their warfare.

And the final point I'm going to close on, this point is interesting because the other three people say, Amen, brother. And on this point they say, Not again, brother. But this has probably made one of the biggest differences in my life, and I want to share it with you again since January 1st isn't coming around for a while.

And that is pursue. You've got to pursue self-denial. Denying self.

You're not going to turn this TV on tomorrow and hear a sermon on this. You have to deny self to be heard on high. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and He heard our prayers.

See, what fasting is, is you are starving the flesh to be sensitive to the things of God in the spirit. And I was praying, Lord, give me an analogy to help people understand what I've experienced and what this is for. And one of the things that came to mind is it's like turning off all the noise.

You're ever at home and I'm like, Was that a baby? Like if you have a baby. Is the baby crying? Stop, stop. Turn off the TV.

Turn off the radio. Stop talking. Shh, shh.

It is a baby. He's crying. Let's go.

It's the same thing with God. You've got to turn off all that noise. Turn off the noise.

And the body, the flesh, needs to be starved sometimes. That's what fasting does. I highly recommend this book.

I might have copies at home if anybody's interested. God's Chosen Fast, written 1960s. He said this, If humility is the basic ingredient of true holiness, and it is, the soil in which grace flourishes, and it is, it is not needful that from time to time, or is it not needful from time to time that we should humble ourselves with fasting.

Fasting is a divine correction to the pride of the human heart. It's exactly what it is. When I fast, pride, it can't exist.

It's a divine correction to the human heart. It's a discipline of the body with a tendency to humble the soul. If you have been brought low through personal defeat, if there's a call in your soul to a deeper walk, to renew consecration, if there's a challenge of some new task for which you feel ill-equipped, then it's time to inquire of God whether or not He would have you fast.

And here's why. The purging of the flesh purifies the soul. I'm not talking about purging the wrong thing, right? When you're throwing up the... But when you purge, when you purge the flesh, it purifies the soul.

Here's why. They are competing appetites. The flesh and being filled with the Spirit of God, they are competing appetites.

They are not together. They're different appetites, hungers, and desires. I want the flesh, so I feed the flesh.

I want the Spirit, so I starve the flesh to be filled with the Spirit. But what happens when I starve the flesh? I'm sorry, starve the Spirit, and I'm filled with the flesh? These appetites are against each other. A full stomach does not produce a full heart.

You might say, Shane, hold on. You're getting way out there. No, let me clarify, of course.

Yes, it's good to eat and fellowship, but there comes a time and a place when you've got to tell King Stomach to go to sleep and be quiet. Leave me alone. Leave me alone while I seek God.

And as you starve that competing desire, the other desire begins to become the more dominating influence in your life. You starve the flesh to be filled with the Spirit. I do not like that principle, in case you're wondering.

But I love it once the fruit of that is manifest. Why is this such a hard discipline? Especially nowadays, that's old church. No, that's New Testament church.

When Jesus said, when you pray, when you give, and when you fast. So was he incorrect? Was he mistaken there? Paul fasted before he went on his journey. Peter fasted, received revelation.

Cornelius fasted, God answered his prayer. People fast to starve the Spirit. It's not some weird thing.

It's saying, flesh, I've had enough of you. You've been dominating too long and causing too much damage. I'm starving you.

It's a wonderful way to end addictions. It's a wonderful way to be closer to God because we think, here's the thing, we think we're waiting for God. God's waiting for you.

We think we're waiting for God. God, I'm waiting for you. No, no, he's waiting for you.

God's not going anywhere where he's around the corner, he's around Saturn, he'll be back this way next week. We're not waiting for him. He's waiting for us.

How bad do you want it? How close of a relationship do you want to draw closer to God and pull closer to God? God, you starve the flesh to be filled with the Spirit. I mean, just think about this. After a big meal, do you want to sit down with your Bible or do you want to sit down with something to think about? Now, please eat.

And if I could add, eat healthy. People are like, oh, don't go that direction, Shane. I won't, but they go hand in hand.

Our physical health and our spiritual health are married. They go hand in hand. How you treat the physical, how you treat the fasting, the taking care of what God has given you lines up with the spiritual as well.

We cannot seek God with all of our heart and not set aside time for prayer and fasting. It's just not possible. And here's a good test where God probably is speaking to your heart in this area that you need to do it is you don't like what I just said about fasting.

You like your McDonald's and diet soda and you're not about to give it up. Well, I'm telling you, I'm telling you not only is that not healthy, your flesh is dominating. If your flesh takes you to In-N-Out and your flesh takes you to Krispy Kreme and then your flesh takes you to Chick-fil-A and then your flesh has you order Sharky's pizza or whatever it's called and then you go to get the root beer float and then it's just your flesh is just driving you all around town.

I'm kind of hungry, I've got to stop. No, that just means you're hungry. You don't have to stop.

You can go another couple hours or half day. You're not going to die. Well, Shane, I'm diabetic.

Okay, well, there's medical things. I'm just talking in general. Watch how much your flesh will dominate and control.

Right now, it's going to control where you go after this. What about if I said we're just going to stay here for an hour and do worship? The flesh would say, no, mm-mm. I've already got chicken on the Barbie lined up

at Outback.

But see how it controls? What fasting does, it starves the flesh. It starves it. And then the Spirit of God, I can't explain it, but there's a difference there.

There's a stronger anointing. There's a stronger, the worship is clear and your heart's broken before God. The flesh is just dead to the things of the flesh and you're filled with the Spirit of God when you control those appetites.

That's what it is. It's an appetite. I mean, are we supposed to eat five times a day? There's something on every corner? Fappa cappa trappa drappuccino? And we're not designed to consume all these things.

And the body, I'm just telling you, I've never seen a person on fire for God, filled with the Spirit, doing wonderful things, who at some point, at some way, doesn't tell the flesh to be quiet. If not, it'll dominate. The flesh will control.

And of course, I wouldn't want to end this service without talking about what I think is our life verse for this church. And that's why we put it up there, 2 Chronicles 7, 14. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear.

To be heard on high, I will hear from heaven. I will forgive their sins. I will answer their prayers.

Pride must die in you or nothing of heaven can live in you. Andrew Murray said, Pride must die in you or nothing of heaven can live in you. If my people pray.

Again, Jesus said, My house will be called a house of prayer. God's not too busy. He's not on vacation.

He's not sleeping. He's here. He's here right now.

If my people who are called. You know what? I probably shouldn't even say this. Sometimes I just get so broken before God, thinking, Man, he's not saying raise a million dollars and do all these things.

He's saying, If my people. Would you just humble yourself? Would you just pray? Would you seek me? Would you turn from your wicked ways? How? Why? That's not hard. It's hard because of the flesh.

But God is just saying, Listen, folks, Humble yourself. Humble yourself. How long are you going to keep fighting and arguing and bickering? Humble yourself.

Stop running from me as if I'm going to fill you with my spirit and you're going to be moved to the mission field and be miserable. He just says, Humble yourself. That's all I want.

God says, I want you to humble yourself. I want you to pray. I want you to seek me with all of your heart and turn from those things that are destroying you.

Then I'll hear from heaven and heal your land. Why? That's not difficult. Trump's going to fix that.

Clinton for the Democrats. I'm going to read that and go, That is so simple. Church is boring because the power of God has vanished from many congregations.

Listen, I talked to people, I invited people at the Little League field to church today. I could tell them, Oh, it's boring. It's boring because the power of God has vanished from many churches.

If people would walk in and hear that worship, if they would walk in, hear the word being preached, and prayer being proclaimed, God would move again. If my people seek, if my people seek me, and I don't want to belabor this point, but that word there in the Hebrew language is like losing a child in a crowded mall. You've heard me talk about this before.

How are you going to look for that child? Are you going to go eat lunch and then resume your hunt for the child? Are you going to go to the bathroom and run a few errands? If you seek me with all of your heart, well, Shane, see, here's the thing. Shane, I can't do that. I don't feel that.

I can't do that. This is too much. Right, right, me too, me too.

That's why I said, God, I need you to do this. I need you to move into my heart. I want to seek you with all of my heart, but my flesh wants to hold me here like concrete in my shoes, and I need you to break through my prideful, arrogant heart.

I need you to move in me so your word comes alive. I need to pray. I need to fast.

God, I need to pull in closer to you. You do it because I cannot do it, and that's a prayer that he will hear, and that's a prayer he will honor. You can't do it.

I hope nobody's sitting there going, yeah, I seek God perfectly with all my heart. No, you don't. It's impossible.

It's impossible. So, God, I think the motive behind this is saying, God, I can't, but I want to. Please, God, I want to.

See, seeking God with all your heart really involves emptiness, laying prostrate on the floor, crying out to God, saying, Lord, I am empty. I am completely empty before you. I'm trying to seek you, God, now fill me with your spirit.

I mean, is there any harm in camping out at worship for a while? Is there any harm in hearing our hallways filled with prayer again? Is there any harm with our heads bowed low again and hearts empty before God? Are we desperate enough to seek him with all of our heart? Listen, I don't want to go into the next season teaching and expositional and going through the Bible. I don't mind that, but the heart of God is to seek him. If a sermon doesn't draw something out of you, what's the point? Encourage, to put courage inside of you.

And that's how you're heard on high. If you want to be heard on high, if you want to be filled with the spirit, unity, embrace, persevere in prayer, and look to the truth, begin applying it. A lot of you in this room, I know for a fact, you know the truth, but you're not applying it.

You're not. Let's stop playing games. You're not applying it.

Shane, give us one example. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. We would be out of business for marriage counseling.

Wives, respect your husbands. Be gentle. Speak softly.

Love each other. Unity in the home. See, we know it.

We know it. But folks, we've got to do it. I don't know about you guys, but I want to seek God with all my heart.

I don't want to be in a hurry. I want prayer to be on our lips when we leave here. I want God to just have his way.

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