

Wisdom On Peacemaking

by Shane Idleman

This sermon emphasizes the importance of desperation for God's awakening, calling for a deep surrender and cry for revival. It challenges the reliance on worldly hopes and political solutions, highlighting the need for a desperate pursuit of God's presence and revival in churches. The sermon also touches on the significance of being a peacemaker, humbly resolving conflicts, and striving for grace in relationships. Additionally, it addresses the balance between biblical prosperity and poverty, emphasizing the need for stewardship, trust in God's provision, and the true source of salvation through grace alone.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 4:12, Haggai 1:6, Luke 12:15, Isaiah 55:10, John 3:16

Topics: "Desperation for God's Awakening", "The Role of Peacemakers"

Description

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Transcript

I would end up at that altar just crying, holy, do you understand that's our only hope? I hope you understand that is our only hope, that God has to awaken His people. Just quick sermons aren't gonna get any more, quick services, come to church every now and then. You've gotta begin to be men and women who fall on your face before God Almighty, begin to cry out to Him and say, Lord, holy, holy is Your name.

God, change me from the inside out. Awaken our nation, change our nation. We're desperate, and desperate people do desperate things.

We might cling to that altar. We might come to all my prayer meetings. We might fast and petition God to change our landscape.

It's desperation. That's the only thing that's gonna work. Everyone's talking about 2022 elections.

Well, okay, good, but do you think that's our only hope? 2024, hey, the next president might get us in more trouble than this one. And there's no hope in those things. And that's coming from someone who thinks we should be active and involved, for sure.

But ultimately, the hope is gonna be that God reviving His church. Can you imagine thousands of churches being revived and then going out? It's contagious. And that's our only hope.

It really is. I have no other hope. Shane, what about stock market? Nope.

What about Newsom becoming a Christian? I'm praying. I mean, you see how crazy. The Supreme Court justice nominee doesn't know what a woman is.

And I had to check that to make sure it wasn't fake news. I'm like, no, she didn't say that. These guys on Facebook.

And wouldn't you know it? Wouldn't you know it? I'm not a biologist. But see what it is, that's appeasement. I can't upset this side of America, so I have to be very careful in my language.

Well, how do you rule on cases that are gonna come against discrimination, sexual discrimination, or issues where you have to know what the genders are? And see, we're just living in unprecedented times. You see these things coming out in California, we might send it out an email of opposing some of these, AB means assembly bill, these things that they're trying to force on the families. It's just not good.

So leadership does matter. Politics matters because policy matters. Policies matter because people matter.

So these things do matter, but they're not the answer. The answer is having full churches, seeking God as often as possible, and crying out to God. So anyway, that was my rabbit trail for the day.

Wisdom on peacemaking and prosperity, pulling it from Genesis 13. But I want to ask the question, are you a peacemaker or a boat rocker? Do you rock the boat? Or do you strive to make peace? And that's the heart of God. Chapter 13, what we learn is Abram inherits the land and he was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

He was very rich in these areas. And Lot, who was related to him, had flocks and herds and animals, and they had tons of things. And God blessed them in this way.

But the land was too small and it caused strife. Anybody been there? Strife in the home, strife in the church, strife. Now, we often think sometimes all strife is bad.

And really, it's not always bad. The heart behind it is really what matters. But some strife can cause people to take action that God wants them to take.

For example, when I had to leave my profession, there was some strife that really caused me 22 years ago to leave and to get out of it. And that redirected me. Or how many of you have strife in your marriage and it finally breaks you? You finally want to work on things and make a difference.

Or strife in the church can motivate people to maybe look at their heart. Or so, strife, what is contentions, in this case, the land was too small. They had these flocks and all these animals and the herdsmen were arguing with each other.

There's no more room for us. And we also find in 1 Corinthians 11, verses 18 and 19, Paul said, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you. And to some extent, I believe it.

No doubt, there has to be differences to show you which one of you or which group of people is approved of God and which group of people is not. Isn't that interesting? So we think there shouldn't ever be any strife in the church. Sometimes there is.

And it really, what it shows, it reveals the heart. It shows that there are people in the church who are loving God, serving God, and those sometimes who are not and it causes some strife or it encourages you to look within your heart. And so verses 13, I'm sorry, verses eight, Abram said to Lot, please, let there be no strife between me and you and he encouraged him to choose whatever section of land he wanted.

Now I would think he would say, I'm older, you look up to me, here's the land I want. And Lot, you have to go elsewhere. But what we can learn from Abram here is this key to peacemaking, the desperate need for humility to put others first.

James 4.6, God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. That's an interesting verse. It's written to Christians.

It says, God opposes those who are proud and self-righteous but he gives grace to the humble. Strive to be a peacemaker, strive to be a peacemaker. One of the number one characteristics of a hard heart, one of the number one characteristics of a hard heart is this area of strife and not putting others first.

Do you ever demand your way? This is what I want. This is how I feel. I, I, I, I, I, and it is a number one characteristic of a heart that has grown hard because a tender, loving, gentle, humble heart is gracious and flexible, not in theology, but flexible and bending and wanting to build or mend a relationship, wanting to fix the damage that was done.

And so maybe you should look within your heart this morning. I did this week. Is there a hardness there, a hardness that has crept in? And it's all about you and you being right.

And we see here from Abram, this is a wonderful lesson. To be a peacemaker, to strive to be a peacemaker. And here's what I like about peacemaking.

You only have to worry about you. Does anyone ever get frustrated when things don't go like they thought? Like I thought we were gonna be friends after this. I thought this was gonna work out.

But I'm making peace, why aren't they? And we get frustrated. But Paul said here in Romans, if it's possible, or as much as it's possible, as much as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all men. So in other words, my responsibility, my responsibility is a lot different than the other person.

And if I get caught up on worrying about the other person, the Bible reminds me, well, just worry about me. Same thing in marriage, what we tell couples. You can't change the other person.

Can I get an amen? Did you know that men, women go into the relationship often thinking, I'll change them. And what do men say? I hope she never changes. And both happen.

He doesn't change, and sometimes she does. And the men can set the tempo or the temperature of the marriage. But the point I was trying to make is we wanna change the spouse.

Not my case, nope. Not our case, we got it down. But most marriages, right, gotta be careful here.

No, this happens in all, all relationships. We want to change the other person. So we'll shoot them text messages of Scripture.

You know what Scripture say, you know what Scripture says. And we wanna change them. But God says, no, you worry about yourself.

And let Me change them. As you humble yourself, the grace of God will be poured onto your marriage. But if you are proud, God resists that marriage, or God resists that person.

So when it comes to peacekeeping, the lesson we can learn is you just do what you can do. And often it doesn't fix it right away. Many times a person does get upset, or it'll get even more challenging.

Ever been there? But you hold that course as much as you can. And that's why He says, if it's possible. Sometimes it's not possible.

But many times it's possible. Just live peaceably with all men. You know what, Lot, you take that acreage.

You take those, who knows how many hundreds of acreage they gave, he gave to him. And you take the lower road. And isn't this interesting? We all know what happened with Lot.

He moved close to Sodom. The Bible says he pitched his tent near Sodom. And what did Sodom begin to do? Eventually now Lot's living in Sodom.

And I think that's another sermon, though, about living too close to the world. Too close to, Sodom's right there. Sodom and Gomorrah.

And he pitched his tent there, and then the influence of that city, I believe, began to draw him in. And he went into the city, eventually was living there, then God destroyed the city, and I don't think he left with much. Everything he had, and so Abram took the lower road, the humble road, because here's what happens.

We look at it from our perspective. Abram probably said, man, he's gonna choose all that land. Look how green it is, and that little stream running through it, and the mountains, and that's perfect.

That's gonna cost me, how am I gonna, that's a better piece of property. But he took something different, and then because of that, God blessed him because he took the lower road. See, with God's not concerned, he owns 1,000 cattle on 1,000 hills.

He's not taken back by our decisions. He's not in heaven going, why did they make that decision? Now I can't bless them. Boy, he got himself in a pickle now.

My hands are tied. God's always looking at the heart. And so one key to peacemaking is taking that lower road.

Maybe not winning the conversation. Maybe, okay, you know what, let's have it your way. That's how you wanna do things.

As long as it's not capitulating and harming people. I mean, I hope you understand I'm not saying that. But also we learn here, be a caring communicator.

Abram was a caring communicator. What does that mean? Well, he brought up the elephant in the room. Have you heard that saying before? When people try to avoid the elephant in the room? But Abram brought up the elephant in the room.

He said obviously this land is too small. And so part of being a peacemaker and loving others is you communicate those things that are obvious. Hey, this is a point of division.

This is a point of contention. We need to talk about that. Because if we just let it fix itself, how many of us know that rarely happens? Do problems fix itself? Just like cancer fixes itself? Usually some adjustments need to be made.

Some extremes need to be taken. And so we see here that Abram, he focused on communicating the truth. That's why in Ephesians, that famous verse, speak the truth in love.

And something that our woke culture has really forgotten is that when you love someone, you actually will say some hard things. I mean, everybody wants to be correct now. Politically correct.

That's gonna offend. That's what they ask now. That's gonna offend that group.

That's gonna offend that group. That's what politically correct is. Not biblically correct.

Politically correct. And that's why I believe that Supreme Court Justice nominee, she knows what a woman is, but she's, I don't know, I'm not a biologist. And that's why you find a lot of times, even in our current administration, that why they say things in the media, it's like, they're trying to, if I say this, it's gonna, this group and this group.

I mean, at some point, we just gotta speak the truth in love. And that's one issue with resolving conflict is saying, hey, this is an area of conflict. Let's speak the truth in love.

Let's talk about the elephant in the room. And let's make an attempt to restoration. And if they say, no, I'm not going there, and they're still coming at you, at least you've done all that you can do.

Because here's the thing, we can be right, but we can be wrong in our attitude. And God is looking at the attitude, but we wanna win the battle. And so again, it has a lot to do with the heart.

So again, focus on restoration, not on being right. And then a final point, are you known for your grace? Be known for your grace. Don't you love those people who are known for their grace? Not their rigidity, not their hardness.

Not, oh, you know such and such. But we're known for our grace. Colossians 3.13, bear with each other.

What does that mean? Put up with. You may say, why do I put up with you? It's hard to put up with you. The church sometimes, why do we put up with each other? But he says here, so I guess they had this problem 2,000 years ago.

People haven't changed. Bear with one another. And forgive one another.

If any of you have a grievance against someone, forgive. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And this is a good reminder that forgiveness is a decision, but trust is a process.

A lot of times we don't release forgiveness because we think, well, that means the other person is right. That means the other person won. That means the other person's position was the right position.

Now I have to concede. Actually, that's not the definition of forgiveness. The root word of forgiveness in the New Testament is really a release.

I'm releasing. I'm releasing how I feel. I'm releasing how you made me feel.

I'm releasing this hurt. I'm just releasing it. I'm letting it go.

So see, the person can still be wrong, but you're giving up the hold it has on you. Does that make sense? Can you, thank God, God forgives us. And so we're supposed to give that same forgiveness.

It's a release. And actually, many times the person doesn't know. The person is having fun, enjoying life, and you're holding all this unforgiveness in.

It's really hurting you, not them. And so what it does, it releases you. Be known for your grace like Abram was.

And then I want to shift here for a minute. That was on peacemaking, but because Abram was very prosperous and Lot was very prosperous, we need to talk about this topic, biblical prosperity. You ready? You got your seatbelt on? Because you know there's extremes.

This extreme, you guys can be the prosperity gospel. Prosperity gospel is basically like marrying someone for their money. I come to Jesus for what I get.

And that's what they teach. You should be successful. You should be a millionaire.

The largest home, the best vehicles, the prosperity gospel. What they do is they take some of scripture, because in Psalms, God says he's pleased by the prosperity of his people. Sometimes prosperity flows from serving God.

I just want to bless. Have you ever been in a financial pickle where you're living on your last paycheck? And it's hard, it's difficult. Life is more challenging.

So sometimes I believe God can bless his people, but that's not the prosperity gospel, it's not right. Because we don't cling on to Jesus based on what he can give me physically. We cling on to Jesus based on what he can give me spiritually.

Lord, I am lost, I'm a sinner. If it wasn't for your grace, I come to you fully surrendering my life. I'm repenting of my sin, and Lord, I'm holding on, and then thank God holds on to me.

That's why we come to Jesus, because we see our need for a savior. It has nothing to do with finances or prosperity. It shouldn't even be in the mind.

But that's what the prosperity gospel is. That's why they'll come up here and teach in a \$5,000 suit, the Rolex watch, a couple rings, and they'll see this is the man of God. This is how God can prosper you.

And they represent that. And it really draws people in. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but they'll look for teachers who will tell them what they want to hear.

Jesus is my get-out-of-debt-free card. Pay off my visa. That's the prosperity gospel.

However, you guys can be the, I don't even know if there's a word for it. It's this view, and the churches went through seasons of this, where the poorer you were, I don't know if this is good English, but it'll make sense. The poorer you were, or the poorer you are, the more spiritual you are.

Vows of poverty. Remember how the church went through? And the closer you get to the dirt, and you have nothing, the closer you are to God. And that's not necessarily true either, because I've seen a lot of spiritual pride in people who are poor.

A lot of spiritual pride. They take pride in their poverty. But like Paul said, Shane, what's the biblical model? Well, the biblical model is, I know how to abase and abound.

I know how to be excited with a little and with a lot. I know how to steward what God has given me. No matter what God gives me, I'm content.

Lord, if you want to bless me with prosperity, and maybe I will increase my style of living a little bit, maybe I'll have a little bit more clothes in this side, or I'll update my car, because it needs to get me somewhere. It's got 250,000 miles on it. But at the same time, I'm going to bless other people as well.

I realize you've blessed me to be a blessing. And so it's finding that middle ground, because you could go to those, there were movements you can read about, some of the monasteries and different things, vow of poverty, and there was a lot of spiritual pride. They really tried to fight the flesh with works.

And it was made out of, I don't remember what it was, maybe like leather and things, and they would actually hit themselves with it. And they would just, oh, and just whip themselves. And just these monks or different people, and they would actually look at it.

I don't remember the theological definition in systematic theology, but it's a belief that material possessions are evil. So a car is evil. It's evil.

But they just have to read the Bible. It's the love of money that's the root of all evil. So if we love money, and we're going to make decisions based on this love, and I've got to have it, that's where it becomes the root, the cause of much evil.

I mean, I can only speculate, but I think of what's going on with Ukraine and Russia has a lot to do with this issue. Of course, they didn't want them to be NATO, then we could have troops and nuclear arsenals on their border, you know, that's a biggie too. But there's also that the reserves, Ukraine is one of the top producers of wheat, and you've got the ports there, and the financial, and who knows, the love of money, that's what causes a lot of wars, as well, for oil and different things, the love of this.

And so I don't know exactly what the balance is, because I don't think anyone on this side of heaven can find the perfect balance. Because, you know, we gravitate towards a little bit more nicer things. Sometimes, you ever make that mistake? Like, I didn't have to buy that.

Just watch how many Amazon trucks pull down our street every day. Do you ever get there and like, why did I order this? I don't remember, why did I order this? But then also, you know, poverty. And here's why I want to be real careful, because unless you can really fully explain it, you want to be careful when you talk about these things.

You've heard the term poverty can be a curse. I don't know if you have, but technically, biblically speaking, you can show some support where God will withdraw as a reaction to besetting sin. In the prophet Haggai, for example, they said we make wages, but there's holes in our wage bag.

We have food, but there's never enough. Why? Because you're not giving to God. You're not putting God first.

You're not building His temple. You're building your homes. So see, that can be, and God withdrew.

He sent the swarming locusts, the chewing locusts, the consuming locusts, four different types of locusts. Why not just one? I can't imagine, four. Wiped out the land because of the sins of their people.

Brought them to utter poverty. So see, a poverty can be a curse. We get in trouble when we say it's always a curse.

Oh, you're poor, you must have some sin. No, they could be very spiritual. Actually, the most spiritual people I know usually often are those living paycheck to paycheck.

If the truth be told, I think because it draws us closer to the Lord sometimes. We get in our, and sometimes God will allow us to go through a season. Maybe there's never that financial, maybe we just get through life with the washing machine working longer than it should and the refrigerator, and they just say, Lord, I am blessed.

I've got enough in my pantry for this week. I don't know where the rest is coming from, and that's where they live. It's okay.

That's not bad either. We just have to be careful. Does that make sense? When we start to label certain things, like, oh, you have to be prosperous or you're not in God's will, or you have to be poor or you're not in God's will, how do you pay for things unless God blesses you? A friend of mine just, I don't know him very well, but he was a gardener.

His daughter has Down syndrome. Somebody stole his gardening truck. He's like 25 years old, and he's like, I can't work, and so we wanted to bless him a little bit.

Another couple need a gas card. And so if nobody has any money, how do you bless anybody? See, see how that works? It's, you're meant to be a blessing to be a blessing to others. However, I know it's challenging because we, you know, our flesh gets in, and we want to buy things.

I'll give you a funny example of the first service. I don't know if I should give this because my wife was at the first service, so okay. But I think she'll approve this one.

If not, you'll find out Wednesday at the Q&A. But my son has been wanting, you know what Crocs are, shoes? Because baseball players, they just take off their cleats, and they just put their Crocs, and they're kind of big and ugly. They look like duck's feet, kind of.

She's like, I don't want you having Crocs. You're not having, they look silly, and you know how kids are. Mom, I made my own money.

Why can't I have it if I earn my own money? That's a good point. So I took him to get Crocs last night at Big Five, and wouldn't you know, I came home with a pair on my feet, too. Wouldn't you know it? And my

son, he goes, but Shane, Pastor Abram wears them.

He actually wore them to the first service, and he took them off and put other shoes on when I gave this example. But I'm like, these are comfortable. I can just slide my feet right in, and it's like better than flip flops.

And she's like, what, oh, those look silly. I'm like, well, I won't wear them to church. I won't wear them in public too much.

They're just big bulky shoes that are kind of like sandals, but you can slide, and I got the kind with fur inside. And they're just so comfortable. So anyway, did I have to do that? No, but there is some freedom there and flexibility and things, but I had to give you an illustration for my sermon.

So I get an excuse for that. So the prosperity gospel is just like marrying someone for their money. Define prosperity, biblical prosperity.

Successful and thriving. I mean, the Old Testament is just a plethora of examples. Pretty much anyone that God had His hand on, David, Solomon, some of the leaders.

Of course, you had Joseph, Abram. I mean, Isaac, Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel and came out of, even when they came out of, isn't it interesting? God told Abram, we'll get to that, I believe, next week. You're gonna be in bondage.

Your descendants will be in bondage for 400 years, and when they come out of that bondage, they will come out with great substance. And the Egyptians gave them their gold and their silver and their garments. They came out of bondage carrying all this blessing.

Because I look back and go, when did they ever use that? Because was God just making a point? He brought them quail. He opened up rocks for water. Their sandals never wore out.

He was their provision throughout those 40 years in the wilderness. Now, did they save it for the building of the temple and things? And when they, probably so. Obviously, that's where some of it went.

But we could see that God blessed them coming out. And it's incredible examples of this. And so, it's successful.

It's thriving, usually, economically. God often blesses his people. It's a reflection of his favor, but it's not always a gauge of his favor, if that makes sense.

So, do I teach, I don't teach a prosperity gospel or the poverty gospel, I guess you could call it. What we teach is God may prosper you. We do know that God rewards the hand of the diligent.

Look at Proverbs. God rewards a diligent, hard worker, not a lazy person. I believe that God blessed us early in our marriage with real estate investments and different things.

We had nothing. I was in construction living with my mom. But God would bless us and be a blessing to others and giving to the church.

And so, see, that's God rewards hard work. He rewards diligence. But sometimes people are doing all they can.

Maybe both parties are working and they're barely getting by. It doesn't mean there's besetting sin. Doesn't mean, oh, you're just not spiritual.

You don't have enough faith. You shouldn't live like that. I don't know God's sovereignty.

I don't know God's will. God might have them there at that difficult season so they appreciate maybe where they are. Maybe, how do we know, how do we know if it's hard for a rich man to enter heaven, how do we know that sometimes God doesn't allow poverty to draw us closer to him? Thank God for the broken road that led me straight to you.

Thank God for the poverty that led me straight to you. And we do see that riches are a competing idol for God. Jesus said, it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, Calvinists will have a hard time on that Scripture, but I don't. It's true. I have a lot.

I'm good. Why do I need God? And so it's hard for a rich man to see their need for a Savior because they don't see their need in physical things. They are technically their own God.

Enough money for finances. And that's why people like Elon Musk, I know he said something a while back maybe, but to me it wasn't a saving type of statement. These are the richest men in the world or even rock star, superstar.

I mean, why are they rarely coming to know the Lord? Because popularity. When you have everything, you don't really see your need. However, they see their need because they take a lot of drugs and they're depressed all the time.

There's no fulfillment. Jim Carrey was open about that. Robert, what's the man who took his life? Mark and Mindy guy, if you're for the older.

Robin Williams, and it just breaks my heart. Foo Fighters, you'll see in the news. He just died.

He's younger than me. He had 10 different types of drugs in his system in the hotel room. And so, but they don't turn to God because they have, so that's why it's hard for a rich man to find God.

Because really we find God in our poverty. Spiritual poverty too. And also something about wealth, it can keep us distant from God because we buy more toys.

We buy more things. We're striving to keep this going. What we built, we work more hours.

So it really keeps us away from God too. And so that poverty state can be a wonderful way of keeping us close to God. If God has us there, maybe forever, maybe for a season.

I would never say it's not because we're not spiritual. I'd say it's where God has them right now. And God allows the church to take care of widows who may never be.

A widow may never be a millionaire. Or even have a large bank account. A widow may always depend on the church.

Doesn't mean she's not spiritual, you see? Doesn't mean she's out of God's will. I've just learned God has different people at different seasons. But it is a biblical principle that He rewards hardworking people.

If you have two people and one is lazy and one is hardworking, God's going to bless that person, usually. And so see, there are biblical principles too that we can follow when it comes to this idea of prosperity. Psalm 35, 27.

I don't know if I put it up on the screen in time, but I just came across this. The Lord takes pleasure. The Lord takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.

So when God says, look, they're working hard, I'm going to bless them with that area. And I want to bless them in that area. I want maybe, you name it.

I mean, how God blesses, there's a million different ways. I can give you tons of examples. But I want to bless them, they're hardworking.

And He likes, He takes pleasure in that. The example I gave, the first service I gave some of you a while ago, but I'll never forget. Me and Morgan went to buy our first home and the salesman tried to get me to buy it right then.

You don't want to do that to me. Because I taught salesmen, Zig Ziglar, Anthony Robbins, and all those, I, yeah, anyway. So actually, the more you pressure me, the more you're going to lose me.

But anyway, she was pressuring. I said, no, we'll just come back next week. If it's not available, it's not available.

It's the only house left on the lot they're getting ready to build. We came back a week later and she smirked. Told you it'd be gone.

Told you, too bad, sorry. Like, okay, well, we're walking out, right? I mean, think, and she stopped and she goes, but there's a house that just fell out of escrow in the old phase. It's bigger and it's actually \$15,000 less because you get the old price.

You want that one, but you have to be ready to move in now. I'm with my, living with my mom. I'm ready to move in today.

And so we just got a bigger house, more equity, moved in with a lot of equity right then because I think this, God loves to bless the prosperity of His servants in certain ways. But again, it doesn't mean that's always gonna happen. Then we had a time where construction tanked in 2008 and nine and we lived off pretty much all the savings until we had about one month left.

And I changed career paths there. And so we weren't saying, well, we're in sin. We must not be spiritual.

You see, you're right. I know how to abase and abound. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, even when I walk through the valleys of the shadow of death, when I walk through difficulties and challenges.

But here's the problem with prosperity. It's a blessing and it's a hindrance, like I just said. Whoever does not forsake all, Jesus said, cannot be my disciple.

Wait a minute, wait, wait, wait. Shane, you just said that, well, of course, as always, read it in context. We don't have time to turn there, but the man had many possessions and he wanted to follow Jesus.

And Jesus knew that those things were preventing following Him. I can tell, I see that a lot. We want people to get involved or things like, oh no, I've got so much to do or I own so much.

And the more you own, the more owns you. Isn't that true? If I got a motor home, I gotta get out there. If I got jet skis, I gotta get out there.

If I have a boat, I gotta get out there and go fishing. There's people with all those things. I got a new set of \$1,000 golf clubs, I gotta go out there.

I don't, don't worry. And so you see, the more I own, the more owns me. And so this man had all these things.

I wanna follow you, Jesus. He pinned it right on that motive. Sell all that and then follow me.

You can't have two masters. But so if we're following God, like let's say he said, what about if he would've said, we don't actually know how the story ends. We don't know if he became a Christian later.

But let's say he fought it for a while and he gave all that up for Jesus. And he began to follow Jesus. Maybe God would reward him with none of that.

Maybe he would just live with Jesus and have nothing, but now he has the greater thing. However, how do we know that he couldn't have been blessed? Like we see that in Job. That God brought back everything he lost.

And so for me, it's just trusting God's sovereignty. Lord, I don't know where this will go. I don't know if we'll ever own a house again.

I don't know if we'll ever, you know, investments or where's, you think your social security's gonna be there for you? Whew. You think retirement's gonna pan out? 401K's, all that's gonna be very healthy here in 20 years? I would not trust in anything except God alone. And there are people who took their life during the recession.

I knew a couple contractors who took their life. They lost everything. I'm thinking, why don't you just go back to work? I mean, yeah, that stinks, but you got your life and your wife.

Just go back to work. But see, that's our God. And when our God dies, do you remember those people when it crashed? Jumping off the bridges and buildings and taking it because Fortune 500 company, they lost everything.

But when you lose everything, you can gain everything if you turn everything over to God. As you pursue Christ, prosperity may follow, or it may not. That's the only balanced view I can give you.

I couldn't come up here and give you the prosperity view like, oh man, a lot more of you should be prosperous. What's going on? That's not biblical. But I do know a lot more people could be prosperous if they stewarded their finances well and if they worked more and harder.

And not anybody in this church that I'm aware of personally, but I know out there, I remember one guy, we were working construction and 22 years ago, he's just sitting out front smoking marijuana every day. And so, we can tell by the smell, don't worry. And so he's sitting there and we asked, hey, we need a labor every day.

It's \$20 an hour. And he goes, oh no, man, I'm good. I get a check coming every month.

And he's just sitting out there. And so, but we needed some, but see how much more could he have broke that bondage? But because he was lazy and slothful. Just sit up there and watch us work all day.

Now, I know that's difficult, it's tough to work, but that's God blesses hard work. And so see, that's a truth we can't ignore either. Luke 12, that's what I mentioned before.

A right heart doesn't serve money. They don't love it. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart will follow.

And I do know, I know people who have, they would be considered millionaires. Maybe a few come to this church, but you wouldn't know it, the way they live. It's just the same as everyone else.

It's not focused on the money. Then I came out from, when I left 24 Hour Fitness, it was first called Family Fitness Centers. And they were managing partners.

And those guys over four, five, six gyms, \$25,000 to \$100,000 a month they were making. And you knew it. They would tell you every opportunity.

See my new Hummer? When it first became popular? See my new house up in Moorpark? Thousand Oaks up on the top of the hill with the pool? And just all about that. And see, we knew who their God was. And of course, all of us want to chase that God.

And God knows how to humble us. Oh, here it is, Philippians 4, 12 through 13. I knew I saw it somewhere.

I know how to be abased. What does that mean? Low. Humble yourself under God's hand and in due time, He will exalt you.

If you exalt yourself, He will abase you. That same type of word. So Paul says, I know how to be down and nothing.

I have nothing. But I know how to abound, to have abundance. Everywhere and all things, I have learned both to be full and then to be hungry.

To abound, no problems going on, and suffer. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I want you to take away one thing from this service.

Of course, many things. But please use this verse in context. I can do all things for Christ who strengthens me.

I'll see somebody post something on Facebook with a picture of Mike Trout, and they want to be Mike Trout and make a million dollars. I can do all things. Or somebody, a Ferrari.

I can do all things. Or I'm gonna conquer and be a CEO. I can do all things.

No, it's not anything you want. It's actually, there's no period really. I mean, there's a period, but it's a whole flow.

I can do whatever God has called me to do. Whether it's abase, abound, plenty, or not much. Whatever God's sovereign will declares, I can go through it because Christ is strengthening me.

That's the context of the verse. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. So we have to use that one in context.

Because you know how we can just pull that one out and just put it on anything we want. I can do it because of this verse. Well, make sure it's in context.

So here's a couple things when it comes to prosperity, or I should say poverty. A couple things we want to look at. Is God teaching me something through this? I do believe, I would have to say, well, I don't want to give out a number, but we help people out a lot with benevolence.

We have for 12 years. And I don't know if I'll talk about that for all the time. But a lot of times, I can tell that that challenge is a result of their attitude.

Or they're in sin. Or there's a disconnect with God, and God is using this to chastise. To get them to break their heart.

To get them to repent. And so we have to ask that question. Is God teaching me something in this? I know He taught us when we went through a very difficult season that we weren't trusting in Him.

We actually stopped tithing. She doesn't know, maybe I didn't. I stopped tithing for a couple months because it's getting too low.

I know you can't afford not to give. And so God taught me, I'm not trusting Him. Maybe He finally got us down to one more month.

What are we gonna do? I don't know what we're gonna do. What are we gonna do? When that happens, you get in arguments? Or is there a lot of peace in the home? And so it really shows you what's in your heart. Is God trying to teach us something through financial challenges? God wants us to help others, but also not enable them, especially when it comes to kids or family members.

And we've talked about, on this point, people ask, Shane, what's the deal with the 10%? And we see, if we keep reading, and you reference it with Hebrews 7, that Abram actually gave 10% to Melchizedek, who was the high priest, foreshadowing of Christ. We don't have time to go into that really. I believe it could have been Christ.

But he gave him 10%, and that's where the first, you see that first mention of 10% tithes. And then you see the Old Testament throughout Jewish history, giving of 10%. It's actually somewhere around 30% is what they actually gave.

And so you always hear it, we're not under the law. Right, we can't require 10%. Now, that's true.

We don't teach, you know, you should be giving 10%. Like some churches, they check, do you know some churches check your tax record? Okay, now drop off your tax record. Let me make sure that lines up with what you said or what you gave, and they check and reference it.

Now, here's the thing, we don't teach that. We don't believe, really, that the 10% is taught in the New Testament church. What we believe is taught is in Scripture.

It's God loves a cheerful giver. So, that's up to you and God. God loves a cheerful giver.

Now, I do, we use, we always have, I recommended that 10% is a good number. If you make \$6,000 a month and you give \$600, that's a good, versus \$6, you know, it hurts a little bit. And maybe, you feel it.

And David said, I'm not gonna give God that which cost me nothing. So there, I believe there's a cost involved. And that's why they used to bring sheep.

Let's say we had to bring a sheep to sacrifice. They'd find the sheep that was about ready to die. It's got, it's dragging its leg, and it's got blemishes all over, and like, this is the sheep.

This is the sheep we wanna give to God. And God rebuked them for it. Because see, it doesn't hurt him, he's gonna die anyway.

Or what about the farmer who had two cows? His cow gave birth to two calves. He said, I can't believe it, honey, we've got two, not just one, we've got two, they're twins. We're giving one of those calves to the Lord.

We're giving one of those calves to the Lord, and we're gonna keep the other one. She's like, praise God. Couple months later, one of the calves dies.

And the farmer comes in all depressed. She's like, what's wrong? He goes, the Lord's calf died. I've done that before.

Haven't you? I still struggle sometimes, like when we do a coat drive for the homeless ministry, we'll do this again, I think, in the summer. I'll go through, and all the stuff that I'm not gonna wear anymore, it's been hanging there for six months, and oh, look how spiritual I am. And I remember, some of you are here, Morgan might remember this, but God convicted me of that.

It was at a service, I think, and there was someone from the homeless ministry brought him, and I just got this black, new, \$100 leather jacket. I just bought it like a month or two ago, and I'm fighting it all service. Might have even been Lancaster, I don't remember.

And I'm fighting it, and finally just gave it to him. He was crying after the service. I'm like, oh, that hurts a little bit.

But that's the idea. So that's the idea, but that's why 10% is a pretty good number. Somebody wants a good number to shoot for, that's a good number.

And I've seen over the years, any time I say that, somebody comes up to me afterwards, Pastor, I don't have to give 10%. It's usually 99.9% of the time, that person with the hard heart. Because you just challenged their minimal giving, and now they're upset.

However, we understand we can't say, you should be giving 10%. That's what the Bible teaches. We can't, I mean, I can't say that with the right heart, knowing that the New Testament model seems to be, God loves a cheerful giver.

And I have a feeling, sometimes it can be over 10%. Or maybe somebody, 5%, or whatever they can afford. Because I don't believe, even though it's a good number, not everyone can do that.

Because where they're at financially, they've gotta give what God, \$20. It's the same, maybe \$2,000 at someone else. So it really depends on what God's doing in their own heart.

But I do know this, the only reason we wanna teach on tithing offerings, is you know, we don't pass the plate. We don't make it a big deal. We rarely talk about it.

But I also know how important it is. So that's my struggle. Like I want people to know, because if something's gotta hold on your pocketbook, that's not good.

That's not trusting God. That's what it boils down to. Can we be honest? What does it boil down to? I don't trust, I see my bills, and I see what I have.

Mm-mm, this isn't gonna work. And so because of a lack of trust, I mean, I can't tell you how many times, where I, even before I met Morgan, I think it happened the year before I met her, I went from making really good money, 24-hour fitness, to zero. And that flagged the IRS.

Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep. So now I'm getting an IRS edit. IRS audit.

And actually got back, I don't know, a couple hundred dollars more than they thought. But they're like, this is impossible. You didn't just give up everything, and they're searching all the paper.

And so I guess, I don't know, some of you would know more of the rules. I guess when you make nothing, or so low, you can go back prior year before that, and go back and get refunds from those years. And they sent me a big check, the IRS.

Like what is, and I even called them. And they're like, no sir, that's correct. Wow.

But see how God can do that. Now I don't mean the IRS is gonna do that all the time. But there are things where putting that as a priority.

You're amazed at the doors God can open. I know one time, again, back to buying our first house, Morgan, remember this too, the lender and the real estate agent were like, no, you guys can, we can open up, we can make it broader. We can look at more expensive homes.

You guys qualify. You don't have to stay in this price range. So what we have to, we give to our church, this amount, 10%.

Like, oh yeah, you don't have to do that though. The bank doesn't care about that. That's not a real bill.

Right, is what they said. So we can increase your budget now. For a minute, they're like, oh, that's true.

Yeah, but then, no, no, we gotta make this decision and live down below our means. And so, again, God can open doors by putting Him first and giving to Him. You can pray for the rain, but we also must plant the seed.

What would happen if the farmer just prayed for rain? Is this gonna rain on rocks? And you know what will grow is weeds. But so, we have a responsibility. Lord, bless me, but I have to plant the seeds by giving.

Giving to God can open the heavens. That verse that we love to quote, that if you give back to God, He'll open the heavens and pour out a blessing you don't have room enough to receive. It is true.

That's a true principle. What about Haggai? This is what I was talking about. You sow much, but you bring in little.

You eat, but you do not have. You put wages into a bag with holes in it. The people are complaining, what's happening? Because they were not putting God first.

So how can I ignore that? I can't ignore that and say, many people are probably going through financial difficulties because they're not putting God first. And that's just a biblical principle. So, what I wanna close with, though, is this point on many think that giving to God, they give money.

I know Bill Gates gives a lot of money. Philanthropist, and Musk, and Bezo, and a lot of people give money. And because of that, they think, I've talked to people, too.

It's been a while, but oh, Shane, I give a lot to God each year. I'm good with God. You give a lot to God, so you're good with God.

Or, they're a peacemaker. Hey, I'm a good person. I don't rock the boat.

I'm a peacemaker. I'm a good person. How can a good God do something to a good person? Well, we have to remember, being a good person, giving, none of that matters.

The only thing that matters is Ephesians 2. Eight through nine. For by grace and good works. Who erased that? That was never in there.

For grace, you have been saved through faith. That's it. And that's what happened in 1517, in October 31st.

1517, Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the church doors in Wittenberg, Germany. Protesting, that's where you get your word Protestants. If you're a Protestant, protesting that we are not saved by faith and doing all these works and penance and giving a coin so my relative can be sprung from purgatory.

We're not, none of that is biblical. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, through Christ alone. That's what the whole point of the Reformation was built on.

The main point, did you know that? The big, even today, the big difference. The big difference. What Paul is gonna talk to them about, what I would talk to Mormon missionaries about, or even solid Roman Catholicism, Catholics, whatever it is, there's yes, but, Jesus, but, you have to belong to our church.

Ask a priest if you never take the sacraments at that church if you'll be saved. Ask. I mean, they might, well, the bottom line is, there's no salvation outside of the Mormon church.

There's no salvation outside the Catholic church if you get to the core of their beliefs. Because that's works, doing. A man always likes to add things to Christ's work.

Just saw a big debate on Facebook, recently, with some top, well-known names, going back and forth on, you have to be baptized to be saved. But that would be me throwing out the gospel invitation. Turn from the wrath that is to come.

Repent and be believed and be saved. The person starts crying, yes, I'm saved. Oh, thank God, thank God, God, the blood has set me free.

Wait, no, no, no, not yet. Not yet, no, no, don't get too excited. Now you have to go be baptized.

Then, see that's my issue with baptismal regeneration. That's what it's called. The Bible emphasizes baptism.

It's important. But that is not the saving mechanism because then I would baptize unbelievers. It's a reflection of what God has done in your heart.

I believe I've been set free. Now I want to get baptized. And there's no good work.

There's nothing you can do. I thank God for that. No matter how poor you are, no matter how wealthy you are, if you come to the cross, you come to Christ as a broken, undone sinner, desperate for a Savior, I need to be justified by the blood of the Lamb.

No other name under heaven and earth can save me. It is by grace alone, through faith alone. I believe in God and He's gonna count it to you as righteousness that you will be saved.

That's the Gospel out of core. Man could not save himself. Man cannot pull down God.

God comes down to man. He died on the cross. He took the penalty of sin, death, and He took it upon Himself.

And now we who the Son sets free is free indeed, but you gotta believe and exercise your faith. For grace you have been saved through faith. It is not of your own doing.

It is the gift of God. Not a result of works. So that no man may boast.

Think about that last statement. No man can boast, because he hasn't done a thing. So it forced that slave trader, John Newton, to write that famous hymn that's sung more than any other hymn in the world.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I was lost, but now I'm found. I was blind, but now I see.

God's grace. It's amazing. Amazing grace.

How sweet the sound. That's why when people really realize what God has done for them, sometimes they can't stop weeping. And we judge them.

What's going on with that person at the altar? They're so emotional. No, they've been touched by the grace of God. You haven't.

Don't mock them because of their experience with God. No, I'm not saying, well, I'll have to cry. But I've been touched by the grace of God.

You are a child of God. If you're a believer. But if you're here this morning and maybe you're convicted, you don't know.

You don't know if you have that relationship. It's also very clear that you've been saved by grace. You just have to acknowledge that.

The Bible says repent, which means I've been wrong. I've been wrong and I'm going the wrong way. I'm turning my thoughts and my actions.

I'm turning, I'm repenting, and I'm crying out to God. I'm repenting. I've been wrong.

I'm turning to You. I believe in Jesus. He saved me.

I need a Savior. I can't save myself. I'm a mess.

I'm lost. If you look inside your own heart, how depraved are we? There is so much wickedness and evil in the human heart. And we acknowledge that instead of I'm a good person.

Now, you might be a good person compared to your neighbor, but compared to God, Christ, there is no one. No one does good. No, not one.

We all fall short of the glory of God. So take that time this morning, if you don't have that relationship with you, maybe this is why I really pushed on this last point, is because God, I've learned over the years, we can become dull and hard-hearted. I know, here goes another pastor again.

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. It's the most important thing you'll ever hear, but the enemy will try to tune you out spiritually speaking. I don't want to hear that.

I've heard it. I know, I know, I know. And we keep pushing God away.

I remember the first time I heard about God and His wrath and His glory, His holiness. I mean, I was just, I was shaken. I think I was 12 years old up in Lake Arrowhead.

I mean, it's like riveting. It's like, oh my gosh, is this true? And then repented and at 12 years old, and that's where discipleship is so important. I got disciplined by the wrong people.

I got disciplined by Mickey's big mouth. You don't know what that is? It's good, it's a liquor. And Budweiser and Coors and marijuana and bong loads and crystal meth and got out of the wrong influence.

And this prodigal son was eating with the pigs until God just completely wrecked my life in order to rebuild it. Thank God for broken roads that lead me straight to You. So I don't know where you're at, but if you're on a broken road, God can restore it.

If you're confused and desperate and fearful in these times, God can give you security. Listen, I know these are desperate times. We don't know what's going on here.

Christians, persecution. Who do you think they're going to come after first? Hello? Loud mouth truth tellers that are bold. They hate me.

I know, it's fearful if you focus on them. And I also started recently, I don't know how much to share, but people with martyrdom, I'm like, I've almost read it just, that and then cancer for five years. You know, die for Christ.

You know, and you start to just really reflect on the brevity of life and what's important. So anyway, I don't want to end on a sour note. But focus on who Jesus is.

Do you need that relationship this morning? We want to pray with you in the prayer room. We actually filled up the baptismal in case you want to get baptized. Say, I want to, even if you're a Christian, you say, I've never been baptized.

God's convicted me to get baptized. Talk to Pastor Abram next door. We would love to baptize you.

Or if you say, I don't care anymore. I don't care anymore. I want to be baptized.

I need to give my life to Jesus Christ. Did you know that's the point of baptism? They would walk down into the chilly Jordan River in front of their Jewish families and they'd say, I'm denying this Jewish lifestyle. I'm rejecting everything I've been taught and I am bowing my knee to Jesus Christ.

I'm representing His death, burial, and resurrection. I'm coming out in the newness of life. It was life changing because they were not ashamed of the gospel.

He who denies me before me.

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