

Only the Pulpits Have the Power to Change America¹

One thing is crystal clear in America: If we truly want change, we must re-spark biblical boldness and flame the fires of biblical action. If we won't fight, then spiritually speaking, we will fade away.

I attended a large gathering of pastors in San Diego a few years back. During one of the opening sessions, it was said that the pastors in attendance could change the nation.

To some, that may seem impossible, but it's definitely within reach if pastors return to their true calling: To preach the unadulterated Word of God and awaken a spiritually dead culture, not coddle her back to sleep. As many in our culture are brazenly "coming out," shouldn't pastors come out and address the issues that are destroying America from the inside out?

I Only Preach the Gospel

Sadly, many leaders are uncertain about speaking on topics deemed political. "I only preach the gospel," they say. They fail to realize that the gospel affects all areas—from the unborn to the borders, and from LGBTQ+ issues, socialism, sex trafficking, wokeness, and wicked legislation—the gospel changes the heart, which in return, changes the nation.

Additionally, when pastors lack boldness about hot-button topics, it affects all areas of preaching. As a result, the "gospel" they preach is often a watered-down, non-offending, powerless message. If we lack the boldness to tell people the difficult truths of salvation, from repentance to judgment, we will also lack boldness when it comes to the outworking of the gospel in our society, as mentioned above.

Silence Hurts the Innocent

If we don't stand for those who have no voice, then who will? If we don't encourage God's Word in all areas of life, who will? Silence is not a virtue when the innocent are hurting and suffering. Being quiet in the midst of chaos is not a badge of honor; it's acknowledgment of defeat.

"I only preach the gospel," is often an excuse to remain disengaged. Granted, not everyone will have the same passion for hot-button topics, and many pastors are great

¹ <https://shaneidleman.com/2022/08/16/only-the-pulpits-have-the-power-to-change-america/>

encouragers, but we all must sound the alarm in these dire times. Sadly, many sermons sound more like elevator music instead of a battle cry.

If we are to spark another spiritual awakening (which is our only hope), pastors must once again feel the fire of the Spirit burning within. The pulpits can thunder again if we call the nation to repentance.

Get Uncion or Get Out of the Pulpit!

When speaking to a group of pastors, Leonard Ravenhill once said: “Get uncton or get out of the pulpit.” If you think that statement is too harsh, I would encourage you to read your Bible all the way through. Preaching God’s Word is one of the highest callings ever given to mankind, and God’s anointing is the key ingredient.

God loved His people so much that he would send prophetic voices to warn them. Blatant sin demands a strong rebuke. In Isaiah 56, the prophet rebukes blind watchmen who do not warn the people. They needed the Spirit’s uncton then, and we need it today as well.

If these words upset you, God may be trying to get your attention with conviction.

Don’t Confuse Patience with Approval

As I’ve said many times, we need boldness and brokenness – the hammer of God and the humility of the Spirit. Many bold preachers are angry but still arrogant; wound up but not worshippers.

Yes, we need more thunder in the pulpits, but we also need more brokenness in our hearts. We must weep before we whip (Ravenhill). We must begin here. More likes, followers, and shares, don’t mean that God approves of your hard and arrogant heart. Popularity doesn’t always equate to spiritual power.

On the flip side, it doesn’t mean that God approves of “woke” liberal views, either. Popularity simply means that you struck a chord with listeners, but only God can see the deep recesses of your heart. Don’t confuse His patience with His approval.

Ask the Hard Questions

Are you spending significant time humble and broken in the prayer closet? Are you repenting as much as you’re calling others to repentance?

Are you overflowing with the fruit of the Spirit or with arrogance and anger? Are you willing to say what God tells you to say even if it offends others? In your zeal to not offend, have you stopped to consider that you may have offended God?

Don't be Shamed into Silence

When it comes to truly changing this nation, it first must begin in our hearts. Spiritual awakenings often begin with thunder in the pulpit. We must follow Isaiah's lead and raise our voice like a trumpet (58:1)—calling people to awake and arise! (60:1).

We must confront issues that are destroying families, harming children, and setting us up for tremendous failure. Don't be shamed into silence! Remember that the "light of the world" must shine in all areas of life, not just flicker within the four walls of the church.

We can change our nation, but it first must begin with the fire, anointing, and unction of the Spirit in our pulpits. We need the thunder of the Spirit before the rain of revival can fall again.

Pastoring — The Most Difficult Thing Isn't What You Think²

"I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk, or a snooze in the sunshine ... I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy three pounds of God, please" (Wilbur Reese).

Spiritual Dehydration

One of the most crucial reminders for any pastor is that spiritual dehydration is not just a condition we observe in others, but a danger we ourselves face. If we become overly occupied with the tasks of ministry or our own self-concerns, we too can fail to draw from the wellspring of living water Christ spoke of. Many excuses can be offered for this neglect, yet the solution is direct and unchanging: "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst" (John 4:14).

² <https://shaneidleman.com/2025/02/22/pastoring-most-difficult-thing-isnt-what-you-think/>

Do You Really Want to Know Him?

Very few are truly hungry and thirsty for God. Although most of us quote, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled,” many have never truly *experienced* it. Paul said that He wants to know Christ in the power of His resurrection and in the fellowship of His suffering (Phil. 3:10). King David cried out, “One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” (Ps. 27:4). Hungering and thirsting for God is an all-consuming passion that drives every aspect of life.

One summer, I took a bike ride out into the desert with little water. As I turned around and headed back to my truck, I realized I was out of water. Each mile brought a new level of thirst and desperation. My thoughts were consumed with water; nothing else mattered. The scenery and quiet that I enjoyed minutes earlier had lost its attraction.

Hope surged when I spotted my truck in the distance. Within minutes, I dropped my bike, sprung the truck door open, and devoured the remaining water. Dehydration and exhaustion quickly gave way to a refreshing sense of satisfaction. The extreme thirst that I was feeling was now satisfied.

That experience reminded me of the thirst God often describes in His word — those who truly thirst (seek Him) with all of their heart will be satisfied. This is not partial obedience, it's full surrender; it's not trying to squeeze God in, it's about allowing Him to fully saturate every aspect of our lives.

Ironically, we can obey the letter of the law, but not have the heart of Christ. We can break down the Bible, but our hearts remain as hard as stone. We rule our homes with a rod of iron but know nothing about compassion, gentleness, and humility. We often come to church to judge others rather than to truly seek God.

Don't Replace Conviction with Compromise

There are also those who have replaced conviction with compromise. As I have stated before, if you say, “I'm just not convicted,” it may be time for self-evaluation. If you are offended by a call to holiness, it might indicate that you need to seek repentance. Holiness is a mark of conviction and a surrendered life. Holiness is not a buffet-style option to be casually selected, but a defining characteristic of those genuinely filled with the Spirit of God.. As Hebrews 12:14 warns, without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

The lukewarm church disdains the heat of conviction; thus, it remains lukewarm. Lukewarm knows nothing of holiness, surrender, and the Spirit-filled life. It may have a form of godliness, but it denies God by its lifestyle (see 2 Tim. 3:5). Charles Spurgeon rightly noted, “There will be three effects of nearness to Jesus — humility, happiness, and holiness.”

One reason many don't genuinely seek God may be because some are not genuinely saved. They may have “religion” but not a true “relationship” with the living God. Second, many do not want to seek Him. The excuse is often, “I just don't feel like seeking Him.” But we must first discipline ourselves before desire comes.

We must first empty ourselves in order to be filled. We must first obey before receiving the blessing. We must first break before restoration begins. We must first pray before there is transformation. We must praise Him before there is peace. And we must first seek Him if we are to truly find Him.

Fire Does Not Fall on an Empty Altar

The fire of God, the manifest presence of God, does not fall on an empty altar; there must be a sacrifice on it. Paul wrote, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:1). Genuine faith is reflected in sincere humility, selfless love, true repentance, and a surrendered life.

Does your life reflect these characteristics? Are you truly seeking God? It's not too late. “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). For more, watch the sermon, [How to Find the Secret Place](#).

Stop Trying to be Popular — Speak as a Dying Man to Dying Men³

As our nation falls deeper into the abyss of sin, one would think that pastors would rise up and follow Paul's plea: “Be on guard; stand firm in your faith [in God, respecting His precepts and keeping your doctrine sound]. Act like [mature] men and be courageous;

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<https://shaneidleman.com/2022/05/04/pastors-stop-trying-to-be-popular-speak-as-a-dying-man-to-dying-men/>

be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13, AMB). But sadly, it seems that many are running from the battle rather than to it.

There is a very troubling trend in the evangelical church as a whole. We are in desperate need of genuine leadership—broken, humble people who are not afraid to admit that they need God; men who are more worried about prayer than about status and recognition; men who petition God rather than position themselves.

Many men want the recognition, but not the brokenness; the honor, but not the humility. The state of the family today is disheartening as well; men have largely forsaken their God-given role as spiritual leaders in their homes — that, no one can deny. And I believe that the pulpit is partly to blame.

Truth Offends — Get Over It

Today, the truth is often neglected, watered-down, or avoided altogether in the hope of not offending members and building a large audience. Judgment is never mentioned; repentance is never sought, and sin is often excused.

We want to build a church rather than break a heart, be politically correct rather than biblically correct, coddle and comfort rather than stir and convict. From LGBTQ issues to abortion, silence speaks volumes.

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15), yet, many avoid words such as sin and repentance. The good news about Christ can only be appreciated with the bad news as the backdrop. There are times when the saints must be fed, and there are times when the sinners must be warned (C.H. Spurgeon).

Are We Encouraging Sin By Our Silence?

Preaching, witnessing, and teaching must be done with God-given authority in order to truly be effective. When we fail to proclaim God’s Word faithfully, we run the risk of “encouraging sin” and “perverting the words of the living God” (cf. Jer. 23).

Pastors are to be pillars who support truth, not who avoid it. Truth is not “flexible” when it comes to absolutes—it’s solid and unyielding. Truth is a powerful force that liberates, rebuilds, restores, and transforms—ultimately changing us, not the other way around.

Where are the Isaiahs and Jeremiahs calling nations to repentance? Where are the Peters and Pauls who spoke with such authority that martyrdom did not silence them?

Though they are now dead, they still speak! Where are the Wycliffs who stood so unyielding for the truth that he was called The Morning Star of Reformation?

Where are the Tyndales and Husse' who were burned at the stake for simply declaring the truth? Where are the Luthers who, when asked to recant or face possible execution, said, "Here I stand; I can do no other"? Where are the John Calvins who shape the religious thoughts of our Western culture? Where are the John Knoxs who cried, "Give me Scotland [for the cause of Christ] or I die"? Where are the Whitefields who shook continents?

I say again, "Where are they?" Where are the John Wesleys who said, "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and we will shake the gates of hell?" Where are the Puritans like Richard Baxter, who said with such humility, "I speak as a dying man to dying men"?

Fill Me or Kill Me

As the church falls deeper into self-reliance and further from reliance on God, our need for bold leadership has never been greater. Change in our nation will only occur when there is a strong conviction of sin, genuine faith, humility, and sincere repentance, beginning in the pulpits. May God grant us the wisdom and strength to proclaim these truths.

We must stop confusing God's patience with His approval and preach with conviction from the pulpits again. Are you ready to change? It all begins with repentance, brokenness, and humility. Stop being concerned about the size of your church, how many followers you have, as well as the size of your budget, and start desiring the fullness of the Spirit—the boldness of the Spirit.

Our cry must be, "Fill me, or kill me!"

Appendix 4: An Open Letter to Silent Pastors – Fight or Fade Away⁴

A quote often attributed to Alexis De Tocqueville, the French author of Democracy in America, powerfully captures the spiritual foundation of a nation's greatness: "I looked throughout America to find where her greatness originated. I looked for it in her harbors

⁴ <https://shaneidleman.com/2020/11/18/an-open-letter-to-silent-pastors-fight-or-fade-away/>

and on her shorelines, in her fertile fields and boundless prairies, and in her gold mines and vast world commerce, but it was not there.”

“It was not until I went to the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her success. America is great because she is good, and if America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”

Over the last few decades, Americans have seen the destruction of the institution of marriage, the removal of God’s Word in several areas, and the embracing of CRT. Many pulpits are also silent about governmental abuse, the LGBTQ agenda, and the blatant murdering of millions of babies. This is an indictment against America and the pulpit is partially responsible – our silence speaks volumes. Are we watchmen or cowards?

The pulpit regulates the spiritual condition of God’s people which affects the nation. A lukewarm, sex-saturated culture (and church) simply reflects the lack of conviction in the pulpit as well as the pew.

Sadly, many pastors are exchanging truth for passivity, boldness for cowardliness, and conviction for comfort; they are not aflame with righteousness. We aim to be motivational speakers rather than preachers of righteousness.

Pastors and Christian leaders alike must take responsibility for the spiritual health of today’s church, and the nation. We don’t need more marketing plans, demographic studies, or giving campaigns; we need men filled with the Spirit of God.

Pastors, we are not just cheerleaders, we are game changers. We are called to stir and to convict so that change takes place. Granted, there are many wonderful pastors and churches—I appreciate their ministry, but, as a whole, the church has drifted off course. They have lost the compass of truth.

Four Ways to Reset the Compass

1. Return to the prayer closet. Without prayer, “the church becomes a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching encourage sin, not holiness...preaching which kills is prayerless preaching. Without prayer, the preacher creates death, and not life” (E.M. Bounds).

When God brings change, prayer has been the catalyst. Martin Luther prayed and the church was reformed. John Knox prayed and Scotland was revived. John Wesley prayed and America was restored. George Whitefield prayed and nations were

changed. D.L. Moody prayed and America fell to her knees. Amy Carmichael prayed and India received the gospel. And so it goes: when you pray, you move the hand of God.

The dry, dead lethargic condition of the church simply reflects an impotent prayer life. While 5-minute devotionals and prayers are good, they aren't going to cut it in these dire times. We need powerful times of prayer, devotion, and worship. "Without the heartbeat of prayer, the body of Christ will resemble a corpse. The church is dying on her feet because she is not living on her knees" (Al Whittinghill).

Sermons should not come from pop-psychology and the latest fad; they must come from the prayer closet where God prepares the messenger before we prepare the message. It takes broken men to break men. Unplug the TV, turn off Facebook, and get back into the Word of God, prayer, and worship.

2. Return to a separated life. If a pastor fills his mind with the world all week and expects the Spirit of God to speak boldly through him from the pulpit, he will be gravely mistaken. "The sermon cannot rise in its life-giving forces above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher" (E.M. Bounds). Who a man is all week is who he will be when he steps to the pulpit.

3. Worship must be a priority. A pastor who does not worship is not prepared to preach. Many sing "about" God but they have never truly experienced Him—head knowledge without heart knowledge. Styles of worship range from the old, beloved hymns to contemporary. All worship should be God-centered, Christ exalted, and doctrinally sound. And, of course, worship involves our lifestyle and how we live. But musical worship allows us to shift our focus and praise toward God.

Whether you prefer hymnals and organs or contemporary bands is really not the issue. The issue is: are you truly worshipping God in "spirit and in truth"? He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He is not a cosmic force, universal love, or a doting grandfather; He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. We must worship Him. He created, redeemed, and saved us. As one of the countless hymns declares so well, "O' The Blood: washes me; shed for me...what a sacrifice that saved my life, yes the blood, it is my victory!"

4. Preach the difficult truths – they set people free. The church cannot neglect, water-down, or avoid preaching sin, repentance, or the fear of the Lord in the hope of not offending or securing an audience. Difficult truths often offend, and rightly so, sin put

Christ on the cross. The goal of preaching is faithfulness to God, not crowd appeal. The church, as a whole, may have forgotten the fear of the Lord, but it doesn't follow that we should.

Let it not be said of us today that there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord because pastors failed to be preachers of righteousness. The burden of responsibility rests squarely upon *our* shoulders. It's our choice—stand, or fall!

But there is hope: “Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you...” (Zechariah 1:3). **That's a life changing promise – return to Him and He will return to you.**

The Struggle Is Real — Passive and Pushy Pastors⁵

The number of prominent pastors stepping down because they are very controlling and manipulating, and creating a culture of fear and intimidation appears to have reached new heights these days. Although this type of behavior is unacceptable, I'm hoping to shed some light so that repentance can take place in the pulpit as well as the pew.

Regardless of the pastor, the comments are often the same: “The leadership is secretive, controlling, and manipulating. They retaliate against anyone opposed to them! There is a culture of fear among the staff. The pastor has a lot of ‘yes’ men surrounding him.” All these comments demand that pastors and elders look in the mirror, reassess our calling, and repent if warranted—That's obvious. But on the flip side, these statements are sometimes unwarranted and unfounded when used by disgruntled members.

The problem: pastors are people: Why do they fall? For the same reason that all Christians fall: Each of us is drawn away by our own evil desires and enticed. We need to abort sin when it's conceived (see James 1:14–15). Sin has a life cycle — it either grows or withers depending on whether we feed or starve it. John Owen once said, “Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you.” Put Christ on the pedestal, not people. People will always let you down; Christ will not.

If a leader continues to ignore the warning signs of a hard heart, they will inevitably drift from God. Not all fallen pastors are wolves, false teachers, or unbelievers; they've been overcome by sin. They need to be lovingly confronted and lovingly encouraged. Have

⁵ <https://shaneidleman.com/2019/02/18/the-struggle-is-real-passive-and-pushy-pastors/>

we drifted so far that we have forgotten to exhibit the same grace we so desperately need ourselves? I'm not talking about sweeping corruption under the rug; I'm speaking of the ultimate goal of restoration—not necessarily to ministry, but to relationship. It's just as heartbreaking to see Christians bash a fallen leader as it is to watch the leader fall. **Hurt people hurt people.**

A misunderstood calling: Leaders may appear controlling because they are called to lead. They may come across as unapproachable because they set boundaries. They may be viewed as hard because they are called to defend. They may appear secretive because they must choose their words carefully. If they are not available 24/7, we say that they are “not there for us.” If they can't make every event or respond to every email, Tweet, and Facebook post, we label them as “unavailable.” Folks, we all need a *lot* more grace!

When it comes to money, churches need to handle finances like we handle explosives: very *carefully*. However, everyone will have different opinions on where the money should be spent; this cannot be avoided. When churches grow quickly, this becomes even more challenging. I've noticed that how money is spent will always be an issue. As long as the church is avoiding massive debt, building on integrity, and accomplishing the Great Commission, they are hopefully heading in a good direction.

This doesn't excuse financial mismanagement, but we must look at the whole picture. For example, I often hear this about churches in America: “The pastor is surrounded by ‘yes’ men.” Should we be surrounded by “no” men? God forbid! A healthy church is a unified church. This does not mean that it's okay to control the board or manipulate decisions, but this topic deserves a closer look. Many times when people make this statement, it's because they were denied a request. Instead of repenting of a wrong attitude, they use the “yes men” clause against the leadership. But sometimes their concern is very valid.

So yes, some churches have passive board members who do not confront overbearing pastors, and I'm not defending that behavior. However, the answer is not a passive pastor. Within the leadership of the church, there ought to be unity, which is only found in prayerful submission to one another.

Leaders walk a very fine line: Church leaders must be bold but also broken, firm but flexible, hard on sin but humble with others, demanding excellence but not pushy, motivating but not overbearing. Sadly, it's impossible to walk this line perfectly. We need to own our faults, apologize, and ask God to change us. But on the flip side, a wounded pastor who is constantly under the microscope—where every word and action is

weighed in the balances—can become passive to avoid pain. We begin to think, “I don’t want to deal with that issue; I’ve been hurt many times before,” and we become paralyzed.

The passive pastor gets steamrolled, and the abusive pastor is the steamroller.

Pastors will spend their lives trying to find the middle ground. Those who are abusive, manipulating, and controlling (the wrong type of control, that is) need to repent and seek restoration and rebuild broken relationships. Passive, weak, people-pleasing pastors also need to repent and spend time in the prayer closet. Ask God for boldness to lead, fortitude to make tough decisions, and the strength to continue. Bold, humble, gracious leaders are desperately needed in these dire times. The church, as well as our nation, desperately needs to hear “the voice crying in the wilderness” to awaken, convict, and restore.

It’s hard to walk the fine line between passivity and passion; balance and boldness. As they say, “The struggle is real.” As a child, I would isolate myself to prevent future pain (I still tend to do that today). I became an approval seeker, something you would find hard to believe if you heard my preaching. Angry people scare me and personal criticism hurts more deeply than it should. The deep pains of ministry can linger, and the enemy of our soul will use them against us. Thankfully, God makes provision for all our needs through His Word. He must be our anchor and our true source of hope.

The solution: if you are on the cliff or have already fallen, take time now and repent. It will hurt, but the fruit of repentance far outweighs the fruit of exposure that will surely come (see Numbers 32:23). God’s grace will see you through. A penitent person turns from sin. They accept full responsibility for their actions without blame, resentment, or bitterness. They seek forgiveness without conditions and stipulations. They take full (not partial) responsibility for their actions. There can be no “buts” when repentance is genuine. “I am sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me,” are often (although not always) healing words and signs of repentance. Excuses need to stop before healing can occur.

Begin to repair cracks in the armor by making God, not ministry, the priority. Deep healing needs to take place. Weep and worship while He heals and restores. Let the Bible study you; let it cut deep and remove the cancer of pride. When you read books written by others, stop glossing over Scripture because you “already know what the Bible says.” Pride is deadly and damning. Ask God to heal and help. You may call yourself “Spirit-filled,” but are you?

The key: to be broken and humble before God, exposing sin as soon as it begins, staying vigilant and remembering that your enemy goes about as a lion seeking to

destroy you. Every year, I try to read Paul Tripp's book on pastoral ministry, *Dangerous Calling*, and I encourage you to do the same.

Five Things Pastors Need to Stop Doing Immediately⁶

Pastors, we are not just cheerleaders, we are game changers. We are called to stir and to convict so that change takes place. Granted, there are many wonderful pastors and churches—I appreciate their ministry, but, as a whole, the church has drifted off course. They have lost the compass of truth—many are more concerned about wine tasting and craft beers than truly seeking the heart of God.

The pulpit regulates the spiritual condition of God's people which affects the nation. A lukewarm, sex-saturated culture (and church) simply reflects the lack of conviction in the pulpit as well as the pew.

Pastors and Christian leaders alike, must take responsibility for the spiritual health of today's church, and the nation. We don't need more marketing plans, demographic studies, or giving campaigns; we need men filled with the Spirit of God.

This is not a letter of rebuke (I'm in no position to do that) – it's a tear-stained plea that we once again seek the heart of God. Here are five issues we need to overcome:

1. Stop watering down the gospel. The truth is often watered-down in the hope of not offending members and building a large audience. Judgment is never mentioned and repentance is rarely sought. We want to build a church rather than break a heart; be politically correct rather than biblically correct; coddle and comfort rather than stir and convict. The power of the gospel is found in the truth about the gospel – the edited version does not change lives.

2. Stop focusing only on encouragement. We all need encouragement, that's a given, but most people feel beaten down because they're not hearing more about repentance – “repent and experience times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” (cf. Acts 3:19). To truly help people, we must preach the difficult truths as well as the joyful ones—preach the cross and the new life, preach hell and preach heaven, preach damnation and preach salvation, preach sin and preach grace, preach wrath and preach love, preach judgment and preach mercy; preach obedience and preach forgiveness. Preach that God “is love,” but don't forget that God is just. It is the love of God that compels us to share all of His truth.

⁶ <https://shaneidleman.com/2018/08/02/5-things-pastors-need-to-stop-doing-immediately/>

3. Stop getting your message from pop-psychology or the latest fad. All of us must return to the prayer closet where brokenness, humility, and full surrender take place. God prepares the messenger before we prepare the message. Without prayer, “the church becomes a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching encourage sin, not holiness; preaching which kills is prayerless preaching. Without prayer, the preacher creates death, and not life” (E.M. Bounds). “Without the heartbeat of prayer, the body of Christ will resemble a corpse. The church is dying on her feet because she is not living on her knees” (Al Whittinghill).

4. Stop trying to be like the world. If a pastor fills his mind with the world all week and expects the Spirit of God to speak boldly through him from the pulpit, he will be gravely mistaken. “The sermon cannot rise in its life-giving forces above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher” (E.M. Bounds). Who he is all week is who he will be when he steps to the pulpit. We are called to the separated life guided by the Holy Spirit not Hollywood.

When God brings change, separation and prayer has been the catalyst. The dry, dead lethargic condition of the church simply reflects our lack of being filled with the Spirit. While 5-minute devotionals and prayers are good, they aren’t going to cut it in these dire times. We need powerful times of prayer, devotion, and worship. Again, God prepares the messenger before we prepare the message. It takes broken men to break men. Unplug the TV, turn off Facebook, and get back into the Word, prayer, and worship.

5. Stop asking, “Will this topic offend my audience?” and start asking, “Will my silence offend God?”

Why Are Churches And Pastors Avoiding The ‘S’ Word?⁷

Many are aware of 2 Chronicles 7:14 which says “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways...,” but often avoid the last command: “Turn from their wicked ways”.

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<https://shaneidleman.com/2015/07/25/72515-why-are-churches-and-pastors-avoiding-the-s-word-pastor-s-hane-idleman/>

It's no secret that there is a significant shift in the church today to avoid sin and repentance. God's Word says to confront, confess, and turn from sin, whereas many encourage us to ignore, overlook, and continue in it.

One popular TV preacher actually said, "I don't talk about sin," and was proud of it. Silence about sin minimizes the cross and makes it less offensive. But the cross only makes sense in light of the consequences of sin. "To convince the world of the truth of Christianity, it must first be convinced of sin. It is only sin that renders Christ intelligible" (Andrew Murray).

The gospel—the good news that Jesus came to save sinners—is an insult to the world. Jesus Himself said that His message of redemption would be offensive. He spoke the truth because of His love for the lost, and we should seek to do the same. The good news can only be appreciated and properly understood with the bad news as the backdrop. How can we discuss God's love, mercy, and grace without mentioning his justice, righteousness, and holiness? How can we discuss heaven but not hell; relationship but not repentance; a Savior but not sin? We can't.

The one word that changes everything is repentance. Richard Owen Roberts said, "You can be certain that at the forefront of every significant recovery from backsliding...the doctrine of repentance has been among the precious truths that God has quickened and used." Repentance is one of the first commands in the gospel and it may be the most important word that a person hears. "Wait a minute. What about love?" Yes, thank God for John 3:16, but love doesn't nullify repentance; it encourages it—the love of God leads us to repentance.

Many mistakenly believe that Jesus didn't mention sin—after all, He was "a friend of sinners." However, Scripture reveals quite the opposite. For example, in John 5:14 Jesus exhorted a man to sin no more or a worse thing would happen to him. He also told the woman caught in the act of adultery to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

In Luke 10:13-14, Jesus reprimanded cities that did not repent and turn from sin, and in the fifth chapter of Matthew He said to remove anything that causes us to sin. It's clear that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Why, then, is there a move within the Church to avoid mentioning sin? John 12:43 may reveal the answer, "They loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

I'm not promoting a works-based religion; I'm demonstrating the importance of having a genuine relationship with Christ—a relationship that produces godly fruit. Genuine faith

is reflected in a transformed life, a love for God and His Word, sincere humility, selfless love, true repentance, and a disconnect from the world. Does your life reflect these characteristics? As you can see, a correct view of sin is vitally important.

Believe it or not, many within the church are seeking to replace the word “repent” with “rethink.” According to them, we need to rethink our narrow view of the gospel and our restricted view of biblical hermeneutics. This re-scripting seems ridiculous, but it’s true. They argue that “repentance” may not actually mean what we think.

In reality, it’s no surprise that they take this position: In order for Christianity to appear palatable and less intrusive to our culture, many feel that we need to rethink, redefine, and rename difficult truths, including repentance. If your church rarely mentions sin and avoids talking about repentance, some hard questions need to be asked.

Repentance is a true gift from God that affects everything in our lives. If our priorities, our passions, our goals, and our desires are not aligning with God’s, have we truly repented? I only say this because so many today have religion and not a true relationship with Christ. They are simply going through the motions. They have never truly repented, and thus, they lack passion for God.

It’s been said that if your religion has not changed your life, change your religion. Of course there are hobbies, activities, and certain friendships that will continue, but if our overall nature is not changing, or at least heading in that direction, we should reassess our commitment—was it genuine: did we truly repent and turn to God? Do we truly “know” Jesus Christ (relationship), or do we only know “about” Him (religion)?

John 10:10 says that Jesus came to give us life, freedom, and a relationship with God. Are you experiencing this abundant life? Or are you bound by sin, rules, compromise, or tradition? That can be changed: 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that if anyone is in Christ they are a new creation. The old has gone and the new is here. You must trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

If you’re a believer, but find yourself trapped in sin, misery, and depression, there is also hope. God continually calls His people back to Him. If you return with all of your heart (repent), He will return to you. That’s a gift of the greatest value; a promise that will never fail.

Reasons Why Younger Christians And Pastors Avoid Politics⁸

In my opinion, failure to recognize diverse gifts may explain why many people are divided on the issue of religion and politics. For instance, John MacArthur, James Dobson, Chuck Colson, Tony Perkins, Jim Garlow, and D. James Kennedy have/had different ministries, but all fall under the umbrella of Christian service. God creates, within each of us varying desires, talents, and levels of interests. If God has called a man to preach and teach His Word, that will be his passion. If God has called a Christian to pursue politics, that will be his or her passion, and so on.

Problems arise when we become judgmental and fail to respect our differences. Activists should not expect everyone to share their passion for politics, and those who believe Christians should stay out of politics must understand that God clearly calls some Christians to the political arena. God established the concept of government, why would He not desire godly leadership?

The top five comments I've heard that prevent involvement are:

1. The Moral Majority (1980s) forever linked the church to the Republican Party.

We vote for principles, not a particular party. We need to be principle-driven rather than party-driven. "He who rules over men must be just" (2 Samuel 23:3). We need more humble, God-fearing leaders. The Lord hates pride, arrogance, and self-centeredness. Without humility and a teachable spirit, it's difficult, if not impossible, to govern properly. Humility does not mean that leaders become passive pawns, but that they live in total surrender to God; they're more concerned with God's opinion than opinion polls. It's been said that the quality of our government depends more upon the character of our leaders than upon our laws. But be careful—many use "religious talk" and twist the Scriptures to support unbiblical initiatives. Judge what they *do* more than what they *say*.

2. Christians are "always against something." They just vilify abortion and gay-marriage. Christians are not magnifying certain issues at the expense of others; we are underscoring the enormous importance of them. All issues cannot be equal. If everything is a priority, then nothing is.

Those who are bold and strongly contend for biblical truths are often seen as "always against something." But if we're *for* marriage between a man and a woman, then we

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<https://shaneidleman.com/2014/10/30/103014-5-reasons-why-younger-christians-and-pastors-avoid-politics-pastor-shane-idleman/>

must be *against* gay-marriage. If we're *for* the sanctity of life, then we must be *against* abortion. If we're for equality, then we must be against the slave/sex trade, and so on. Speaking the truth in love often results in being "against" some controversial things. This can't be prevented, nor should it be. We are called to make the truth popular but to make it clear.

We must contend for foundational issues: "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

3. Politics is bad, offensive, and divisive. We cannot gauge what we say by whether or not it's offensive. The laws of a nation establish the foundation. The government cannot remain neutral, or separate, from the foundation on which it rests. Granted, many governments, including our own, often fall short; that's why we should strive to be on God's side rather than always assuming that He is on ours. God ordained the institution of government, but He does not approve of every form of government.

We don't have to abandon our ethics or compromise our principles to be involved in politics—what good is salt left in the shaker, or a light that is hidden? "Politics" is not a bad word. In simple terms, politics refers to governing or leading a group of people. Politics alone won't save America, but in order to implement change, honor God, and help others, we must take action; hence the political process.

We cannot change a person's heart by forcing a set of laws or rules upon them, but we can restrain evil and deter wrongdoing. To suggest that God does not want us to elect godly leaders and promote godly legislation runs contrary to His nature (cf. Romans 13).

4. The church and the state are to be separate. The Courts have used the infamous "separation" phrase to ban religious activities, primarily those promoting Christian principles. Sadly, many believe that "separation of church and state" appears in the Constitution, when, in reality, the phrase does not appear anywhere in the Constitution. Be very clear on this point, especially if you are a student in a public school or university, or even a "Christian" university.

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, used the phrase in 1802 in a private letter written to the Baptist Association of Danbury, Connecticut. The Baptists feared that the government might someday try to regulate religious expression. Ironically, we are seeing this today. This is crucial in understanding the spirit in which the First Amendment was written.

In other words, the Colonists, like the Pilgrims, did not want the government imposing a national religion or denomination on the people—they wanted to worship freely. Mr. Jefferson wisely agreed with them, as did many of the other Founders. His statement was intended to protect religious expression by building a wall of separation between the church and the state, solidifying the fact that the federal government could not strike down religious freedoms.

The government cannot establish a national religion, but it can openly and unapologetically acknowledge the sovereign hand of God. Acknowledgement is not establishment.

5. The Gospel doesn't allow for politics—it's not our mission. The No. 1 problem in America is not a political problem, but rather a spiritual problem called sin. The primary goal of the church is not to become a political movement, but a spiritual influence. Politics won't save America anymore than a dumbbell will save someone drowning. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore our God-given civic responsibility and the enormous impact that politics has on our society. America's leaders play a big role in shaping the direction of the Country.

God's Word says to confront, confess, and turn from sin—political hot buttons cannot be avoided. Many argue, "We shouldn't say or do anything political. All we need to do is preach the gospel." Be careful here; although the gospel is our primary focus, this shouldn't be an excuse against action. God has blessed and sustained America because of our spiritual foundation. Should we now neglect it?

Why would God ordain a government such as ours in the United States of America and not ask us to be involved? Although my primary calling is preaching, I thank God for Christians who are involved and who influence America's political climate. I wish that there were more. As the moral and cultural war rages between our shores, the need to be awakened from our spiritual slumber has never been greater. "Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is tested" (Martin Luther). This battle is for the very soul of our nation. It's our choice—stand or fall.

Recognizing and Removing Revival Roadblocks⁹

“We’ll have Church when God comes, but not until then. All of our religious activities mean nothing without His hollowed presence ... The week is full of activities — we know how to keep the programs going. We know how to play our part. The machinery continues to operate, but the mountains won’t move until He comes” (Gene Easley).

We Have a Responsibility

As a person passionate about spiritual awakenings, Gene Easley’s statement above is spot on — we *must desire* spiritual renewal. Yes, revival is a sovereign act of God, but God calls us to participate and to respond. **In short, He’ll provide the fire if we provide the sacrifice.** (See Jer. 29:13; Hos. 10:12; 2 Chr. 7:14; and Psa. 51:17).

Although my original intention in writing this article was to share it with pastors, I changed a few things so everyone can relate to this vitally important topic.

Pride Quenches — Humility Ignites

I try to avoid labels: I’m neither Pentecostal nor Conservative; I’m simply a person hungry for more of God and His Word. But over the years, I’ve noticed a troubling trend: We are either so eager for revival that we manipulate it, or we’re closed off because of abuse within Christendom — either extreme hinders a deep work of the Spirit.

Fortunately, the Scriptures list roadblocks that can prevent a mighty downpour of the Spirit, and what we can do to reignite the flames. Leading the list is *pride*: Everything, from being concerned about the opinions of others, to not recognizing our own spiritual need, falls under the banner of pride. If you believe that you don’t need a deeper work of the Spirit in your life, then you’ll stay STUCK in neutral. *Humble yourself today and reignite the fire of the Spirit — “break up your fallow ground,” it’s time to seek the Lord* (Hos. 10:12). **Brokenness is the path to revival.**

Choosing Popularity Over Holiness

Many want to be known as cool and relevant, with a large following on social media. God may make you relevant and expand your reach, but your passion must be pursuing Him. He honors pursuit, not popularity. We must “come out from among them and be

separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). God doesn’t rain down revival on the lukewarm; **He revives the barren as well as the broken** — those with a fire burning in their bosom (Jer. 20:9; Isa. 57:15).

Manipulation of the Spirit

Trying to “work up the crowd” never works. **We can’t work up revival; God must bring it down.** When leaders manipulate the atmosphere and embellish what’s taking place, it quickly quenches the Spirit. Don’t boast about great crowds and unverified experiences; humble yourself before God does.

Many even use seasons of outpouring for their own glory or to increase their revenue streams when it should be just the opposite. Repent today if you’re operating with ulterior motives and a lack of integrity.

Allowing Sin in the Camp

We must keep sin on a very short leash, and if you’re a pastor, you *must* lovingly confront it when warranted. Whether there is sin in your heart, or in situations that you are aware of, iniquity affects the infilling of the Spirit. For instance, when we allow gossipers, critical hearts, sexual sin, and wrong attitudes to go unchecked, it will always stifle revival. Granted, confrontation must come from a humble heart, but it *must* come. **God will not bless a non-confrontational leader when silence flows from cowardliness.**

I also believe that one of the biggest hindrances to revival is allowing liberties to become a cloak for vice (1 Pet. 2:16). And one of the biggest culprits is alcohol. It’s shocking when worship leaders and pastors post their favorite beverage, Bible study groups can’t wait for wine-tasting events, and church leaders are cavalier about their own use. ***I’ve never met anyone in the midst of revival that allowed this destructive liberty to go unchecked.***

Pastor John MacArthur states what many of us feel but seldom discuss, “It is puerile and irresponsible for any pastor to encourage the recreational use of intoxicants — especially in church-sponsored activities.” He continues, “The ravages of alcoholism and drug abuse in our culture are too well known, and no symbol of sin’s bondage is more seductive or more oppressive than booze.”

I couldn't agree more. Many will look back and regret the damage that was done to lives, churches, and their own testimony, and how it severely hindered the work of the Spirit. *Stop quenching the Spirit by flaunting liberty.* (More [here.](#))

Fear of Letting God out of the Box

Revival is not a response to our plan, but a response to God's plan. Pastors, what God wants to do must be the passion behind our calling, not the flow of the service. We must be open to what He desires. Sticking to the program is safe — it's comfortable to know when the service will begin and end, how many songs, the length of our sermon, the number of announcements, and so on. I get it, but we are *stewarding* a worship service for the living God, not a business meeting.

Granted, having consistency and a plan is necessary, but we must be willing to forgo "the plan" when warranted. I recently experienced this on April 6th, 2025, when I felt a deep desire to continue in worship at the second service and forgo preaching. I wrestled with God for over twenty minutes: "Lord, is this really what you want to do?"

As I prayed, the atmosphere confirmed my desire, but I had a new hindrance: *the opinions of others*. I decided to trust God and announce that we were continuing in worship and that people were free to leave. To my amazement, only a few people left. To say that God met us that morning is an understatement! (You can watch a recent clip about this event [here.](#))

In closing, we must pray for a spiritual awakening, repent of apathy, and begin to pursue God like never before. **Today's choice determines tomorrow's reward ... tomorrow's awakening. *How bad do you want revival?***

Women Pastors ... What Does the Bible Say?¹⁰

Let me begin by saying that I know and appreciate many women who have been recognized as pastors. They are diligent, steadfast, and hard-working. Our country has done a great disservice to women over the years by not elevating and supporting

¹⁰ <https://shaneidleman.com/2019/03/04/women-pastors-what-does-the-bible-say/>

women in roles of leadership. Alexander Strauch echoes this same concern, “In the minds of contemporary people, excluding women from church eldership is sexist, discriminatory, and one more example of male dominance. But this need not be the case. No one who truly loves people, who is sensitive to God’s Word, and who is aware of the painful dehumanization that women have suffered (and still suffer) worldwide would want to discriminate against women.”

Women are one of the greatest gifts that God has given the world. But in our passion to promote women, which is something I wholeheartedly agree with, have we overstepped the Scriptures? It’s not uncommon for the Church, as a whole, to over-correct itself when abuse occurs.

First, we must understand that the loving, nurturing role of a woman is vital to the health of the church in the same way that it is vital to the health of a child. God has designed the male-female relationship to complement one another; one gender is not better than the other, but we do have different roles. To reject these God-given differences can lead to an unbalanced view.

Second, many misunderstand male leadership as God designed it; it’s not a glorified position, it’s the position of a *servant*. A servant is called to protect, lead, and guard the church. We are to serve those God has entrusted to us. If there is a loud noise at home in the dead of night, do we encourage our wives to investigate? I hope not! God has called men to the position of servant leadership and protector.

Third, we see from Genesis 3:16 and many other places, that God ordained a leadership role for the man. However, when men cower back from their leadership responsibilities, women will step in. Men must rise to the call of servant leadership. This type of leadership is not domineering or abusive; it’s kind, gracious, and humble. Pastors are to serve those in church, not lord over them. God’s design is not focused on “better than” or “superior” even though abuse has tarnished it.

But what does the Bible say?

Some use Chloe in the New Testament as an example of women being pastors. They say that she was a house church leader according to 1 Corinthians 1:11, but the Scripture doesn’t say that; it says “from Chloe’s household.” Another woman referenced is Priscilla. She and her husband, Aquila, ministered together. Another example is Lydia in Acts 16 whose entire household was baptized and her home became a meeting place for early Christians.

Although these women are mentioned, the context does not support the role of elder/pastor. The terms for pastor, bishop, or overseer were not used to describe them. Deborah, in the Old Testament, is another example used to support the idea of women as pastors. She was a powerful Old Testament figure who judged the nation of Israel for a season, but we cannot use this text to support the New Testament role of pastor, or “bishop,” of a church.

If a church decides to use the word “pastor” for a woman in leadership, they should make it crystal clear that she is not over the men in the church in regard to spiritual leadership. But why even risk confusion? In the Greek, the word for bishop is episkopos and the word for pastor is poimen; both terms refer to the same office, and they both come from masculine nouns that mean to shepherd or to care for.

The qualifications for male leadership are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The Bible does not outline character traits for female pastors, nor does it use the words episkopos or poimen when describing their role. For those who agree with the position of women pastors, where does the Bible list the character traits needed for this role?

Men are given the positions of pastors and elders because God gave them the role of leading and dying for their family and the church. I believe that Christ coming into the world as a man was strategic for this very reason: to lead, shepherd, and die for. It has nothing to do with the culture of Paul’s day because the male/female role began at creation; it’s not about which role is “better,” it’s about design. How did God design us? First Timothy 2:11-13 talks about women not usurping the headship of men (cf. Genesis 3:16 again).

Can men learn from Bible teachers such as Kay Arthur, Priscilla Shirer, Anne Graham-Lotz, and others? Absolutely. But they should not be the spiritual covering over the man usurping his role. We need more female authors and speakers; both genders complement each other, not compete; we are equal in Christ, but have different roles. “To restrict women from church eldership would be unjust and discriminatory if it were done arbitrarily by males for their own selfish ends, but if such restriction was part of the Creator’s wise plan, then it’s not discrimination” (Alexander Strauch).

Jesus honored and supported the dignity of women; He treated them the way they should be treated, but He never reversed roles. Jesus called Paul, He commissioned Peter, and He encouraged John to lead the church. Women can, and should, teach, administrate, and organize but under the direction of Scripture such as in women’s ministry, children’s ministry, office management, and countless other positions. But we should avoid using the masculine noun “pastor” when outlining their role.

Male leadership should look to the wise advice and counsel of women before making decisions. Their advice and suggestions are priceless. Women are a true blessing to the church; the glue that keeps everything together. We would not survive or flourish without them.

If the Bible supported women pastors via direct mention and a list of character traits they need to possess, I would be among their biggest fans. My view has nothing to do with opinion, male dominance, abuse of authority, or male chauvinism, but everything to do with the principles given in Scripture that allows each role to complement the whole. Times change, but truth does not.