

Spirit-Filled Pastor Warns When Ministry Becomes Idolatry

I tried numerous times to soften the tone and re-work the language of this article, but God made it clear not to diminish a word. First Corinthians 11:31 says that if we discern wrong thoughts, actions, and attitudes, and repent of them, that we would not come under God's judgment. My hope is that this article sparks self-examination as it did in my own life.

It Completely Wrecked Me

When the sermon, When Ministry Becomes Idolatry, was released, the feedback was overwhelming. One young adult wrote: "Tonight was amazing. God moved in my heart like never before ... it hit me deep. Ministry became an idol. I was designing my own calling." A pastor wrote, "The sermon and the video that followed completely wrecked me. Our church will never be the same." It's amazing what God will do if we humble ourselves and receive His correction. You can watch the sermon [here](#).

Idolatry hides behind phrases such as my calling, my ministry, and my gifting. What a travesty it would be at the end of our journey to find that vainglory deceived us and coveting misled us. Idolatry is putting anything before God and coveting is desiring what others have. Both have infiltrated the rank and file of the church. If idolatry has slain its 1000s, coveting has slain its 10,000s.

Popstar Preachers and Woke Worship Leaders

What's so disheartening is not the sinner caught in sin, but the coveting saint high on their success. First Corinthians 1:29 reminds us that no flesh should glory in His presence,

and Philippians 2:3 is crystal clear that nothing should be done “through selfish ambition or conceit.” But instead of following John the Baptist’s words that Jesus must increase as we decrease (cf. John 3:30), many pursue Herod’s lavish lifestyle. Popstar preachers and woke worship leaders love the crowds but ignore the fact that Jesus often ministered one on one with no ulterior motives.

As prominence rises, so does pride: “I will only come for a certain dollar amount with guaranteed attendance. I want a certain percentage of the ticket sales, a green room at seventy-five degrees, and a lush layout of delicacies.” Oh, how the stench of pride must be repulsive to God when our calling, gifting, and ability is a gift from Him.

When we hear the voice of the Lord saying: “Whom shall I send?” do we truly say, “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8)? Or do we first weigh the pros and the cons, the costs and the expenditures, and the notoriety and publicity before deciding?

God is a Heart Inspector

God is not impressed by numbers but by nearness to Him. Ministry isn’t a business venture where we put profit over people, image over individuals, and revenue over relationships. You can have popularity but no spiritual power. Many boast in their ability but have no humility. We say it’s “gifting” but it’s really vainglory. Many Christian public figures won’t go anywhere unless they are recognized and compensated. If the blind beggar is unworthy of our attention, we need to check our heart.

Do you want the anointing of Isaiah? Then cry out like Isaiah and let the things that break God’s heart break yours: “Woe is me, for I am undone!” (Isaiah 6:5). Do you desire the anointing of David? Then humble yourself and cry out, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

Do you want the anointing of the early church? Then humble yourself and repent of selfish ambition and conceit. God is a heart inspector. He knows your motives better than you do.

Search Me, Oh God

In the sermon mentioned above, I shared that I don't want to build an idol factory, I don't want to lead a pride-filled church, and I don't want to fuel egos and build images! Breaking pride from our lives is painful but it's also very powerful.

In Isaiah 14:13-14, we find a reference to the King of Babylon that may also apply to Satan's fall. Take note of all the "I will" statements: "For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"

Not unlike many today, he wanted to ascend in rank, exaltation, and leadership. This desire must die in you before God can truly live in you. Step down from your throne and exalt the One who is truly worthy of our praise. Pray like David so you don't end up like Saul: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). {eoa}

Shane Idleman *is the founder and lead pastor of Westside Christian Fellowship in Southern California. More can be found at and free downloads of his books are available at . Visit him on Facebook and subscribe to his podcast.*

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