

## Introduction

I am glad that you have decided to join us for worship. We are in week two of "Advance." "Advance" is a sermon series that we are using to talk about multiplying disciples here in our city. Last week we heard from Loys and Gabby and talked about how they're in this mentoring relationship and how Loys is pouring into Gabby and then Gabby is pouring into some high school girls. I'm excited because today we're going to look at a mentoring relationship, a discipling relationship that began many moons ago. I want to introduce to you... there's a big hug fest going on up here. This is Bill Roberts and Matt Tipton. These guys have been a part of Houston Northwest for many years, but Bill mentored and discipled Matt many years ago. Bill, tell a little bit about that story.

Bill Roberts: Sure; it was a real privilege, way back in the day, in an eighth-grade Life Group; Matt was in there. He actually wasn't a believer at the time... and you would have known it, if you had talked to him. He's a great guy... Then a couple of years later, I was privileged to get to lead the student worship bands and Matt walks in. He had just gotten saved that summer, and he walks in with his guitar and his awesomeness.

Matt Tipton: This was a really cheap guitar with a "Korn" sticker on it.

Pastor Steve: "Korn" ...as in the band?

Matt Tipton: Yes.

Bill Roberts: I was like, "You've got to take that sticker off now."

Pastor Steve: So then you taught him not only in a Life Group, but then when you say you were mentoring and meeting with the bands, what was that looking like?

Bill Roberts: My job was to build student worship bands. Every year we would get new people and Matt showed up. He was very raw, but he was Matt. In a lot of ways, the same guy he is now... kind of that goofy, pursuing God with all he's got. I was privileged to get to see Matt grow into a true worship leader. It was one of those things that was amazing because you might not have guessed that right off the bat. But, man... I mean, wow.

Matt Tipton: Honestly... Mr. Bill. Honestly, this guy is one of the greatest, greatest men that you will ever meet. The thing is that this church is full of amazing men, and Mr. Bill happened to be one of those men who played a big role in my life. He mentioned very briefly that he started to disciple me when I was in eighth grade. I really was a punk. I mention that, that eighth-grade boys...

Bill Roberts: Don't tell this story...

Matt Tipton: ... typically, are not very nice.

Pastor Steve: Would you please tell whatever story Bill does not want you to tell.

Matt Tipton: Yes, totally. Let me tell you this story. Mr. Bill, when I was in eighth grade... now I'm 31. I've got a beautiful family, and God has done some amazing things in my life. I thank God for those men in my life that discipled me and, like I said, Mr. Bill is one of those. It didn't come with someone coming

beside me and knocking me upside the head a few times. I was a little bit ignorant as an eighth grader, as you guys know if you are parents of one. We were in a class one Sunday. It was called Sunday School, and we met in a class. Of course, eighth-grade boys, when you put them in a class together, they're going to make jokes, and they're just not going to listen and pay attention and stuff. That's, of course, what we were doing. We were really rude. Mr. Bill was there; he was sacrificing time away from his family to come and teach us eighth-grade boys about who Jesus was. So every answer... He would ask a question and we would always say, "oh yeah... Jesus... God... Bible... Church."

Pastor Steve: (Laughing)

Matt Tipton: ...you know, just to kind of slack off and wouldn't let him finish. We were so rude. We were so disrespectful. I remember one day... this made an impact on me. I was like, "Man, this is awesome." Mr. Bill... we we're cracking up and were not listening at all, you know. He was trying to take the time to go through that study. Finally, it escalated... He was patient, quiet... and we just kept making jokes and laughing. All of a sudden, Mr. Bill goes, "Okay... I'm leaving." He got up and he walked out.

Pastor Steve: (Laughing)

Matt Tipton: ...So as eighth-grade boys, we just sat there and we were like... "Dude... what did you do? It was you, man." We really did. That made an impact in my life. But I tell you what. Two weeks later, I remember Mr. Bill invited me... He would invite the boys in the eighth grade to come and eat with his family after church. That was a big deal to me. I grew up without a father. I did not have a father figure in my life growing up, so there was kind of confusion... "Who do I look to as an example for that?" Mr. Bill was one of those guys. I don't mean to talk a lot... but I would love to say, Mr. Bill has shown me what it means to be a discipler because it's not just about going through a study together. That's not what discipleship looks like. It's almost like shepherding. That's kind of what he did. He just took me under his wing. Sometimes he had to pop me upside the head and be like, "Dude... that's not the right way. That's not how we live as a Godly man." That, to me, is a great example of discipleship and that God is given me the opportunity to be with other young men in my life.

Pastor Steve: So, Bill... Do you look at that now and do you say, "I'm glad that I did that." Was that worthwhile? I guess that's maybe a dumb question. Let me ask this.

Bill Roberts: Well, if I had known he was going to tell about that now..."

Pastor Steve: Now, would you say that having invested this time into Matt, did it pay any dividends to you? ...And what were those?

Bill Roberts: Oh gosh, yes... That was like... call that my "pearl-before-swine moment" back in the day with the eighth-grade class. They were great guys, and I'm glad that...

Pastor Steve: By the way, I found out... not only was Matt, our future worship leader, in that class... Clint Collins, current sound engineer for Houston Northwest was in that class as well. (Laughter) Remember, if you have really bad kids in your class, they'll probably get called into the ministry. There you go... Keep going.

Bill Roberts: They were great and I am glad, I guess, that I had an impact. Getting to see Matt... One thing that God showed me during those years was you can't just look at someone and judge them right off the bat what they're going to be like. If you're in Christ, God has gifted you, and God has gifted Matt in

amazing ways. There was a time when I was a better guitar player than Matt. That was like eighteen years ago, or something... because he blew right by me, and I got to see him develop into a real worship leader but also a Godly young man. The blessings of that, just to see Matt come back to our church after going to be in the church plant in Seattle and come back, and now he leads worship every week. It's awesome... getting to see parts of his life. I was there when he met Stephanie... and I got to see that little romance bud on the worship stage that year. That was awesome.

Matt Tipton: High school...

Pastor Steve: He tried to embarrass you there. Did you see how he did that? Yeah? I look at this and, Matt, you tell your story and you say, "I didn't have a father and men in this church stood in and they loved me like a dad." And then you say that it taught you how to look at people and see people, not as they are in that moment but how Christ wants them to be. This seems to me that if our church is going to move forward and to be part of something big in the transformation of this city, this is the kind of stuff that has to happen. Not just in the Body but outside of the Body. Do you guys have anything else that you want to share or just add to that?

Matt Tipton: No... I'm really excited just to share that story because discipleship involves a lot. It involves a lifetime. It's not a quick two-week thing that you're involved in somebody's life... that's the Church. It lasts throughout your lifetime; we're here to disciple one another. That, like I said, doesn't look like just going through a book, but it involves life and mentoring and taking people under your wing, just like Mr. Bill did.

Bill Roberts: One quick thing to add to that. As Matt said, it's time... it's a lot of time together, but just to see God's glory in Matt's life and to see what God has done in someone who had very hard circumstances and how God has turned Matt into a husband and a father... a great husband and a great father and a great servant of God. It has been awesome and that's the Lord's work in his life.

Pastor Steve: Amen. Thank you guys for sharing today.

It excites me to see that. I hope that it excites you because if we're going to see the Lord do supernatural things, it's going to mean that every single one of us is part of the discipleship process here in our city. Last week we began the sermon series, and we talked about the fact that it's powerful if we multiply disciples. If you were here, I used that example from math class. Maybe you were here for that. We talked about how one cent... how one penny over a month, if you double it every single day, by the end of the month the final amount that you would receive would be over \$2 million. We talked about the fact that if you apply that same principle to this church, a church of about 1500 people... if it became a church that would multiply and each year, each person in our congregation would disciple one other individual out there in the city... that in 13 years, 12 million people would have been reached for Christ. That would literally transform our city landscape, within one generation, if we got serious about the multiplication of disciples.

So I want us to take a moment and continue to go through 1 Thessalonians because last week, after we got done with that sermon, people were coming up to me and they were saying, "Wow, Steve; I never considered the fact that I could be a discipler... that I could find someone, grab someone, and I could engage them. I could disciple them. It never occurred to me." But then the followup question to that invariably was, "But what precisely am I supposed to disciple people toward?" I want to talk about that today.

Now I'm going to go ahead and just give you a little bit of a public service announcement at the beginning. Everything that I am going to explain today... it's a little complex, at least for me it was, so I had to write it down. Matt... you may not know... is also a very gifted graphic artist. He laid it out and had it printed in a booklet form. These booklets are on tables on your way out today, by the exits. Just grab one of these and take it with you. If you want to think about this further, it's there for you today. I think that it will help you. I know that it certainly helped me to write it out.

As we get into this today, the question of what it is that we're multiplying. It is the question of what spiritual transformation is. 1 Thessalonians is important for us because it's probably the oldest Book that Paul wrote, and it may even be the first Book that was written down in the New Testament. I want us to think then what it is that spiritual transformation look like and how it is that it comes about.

Let's read together in 1 Thessalonians, starting in chapter 1. We're going to start in verse 4. We read this last week, but I want to go through to the end of the chapter this week: *"For we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you, because our Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the Word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the Word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything."* Do you remember last week we talked about the fact that we have an army of disciples that are out proclaiming the truth. Preachers don't even need to preach because so much Gospel transformation is taking place. *"For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."* Let's pray.

"Lord, thanks for Your Word. God, we want to pray right now that Your Word would be applied to our heart and would change us. Father, I pray for those who came here today that don't even know why they're here. I pray, God, that You would change them. Father, for those of us that are just here because we go every week... God, change us. Father, for those of us that are kicking against Your leadership... Lord, change us. Father, we want to hear from Your Holy Spirit today. God, speak to us; move among us. In the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."

## 1. Turn From Idols. (v. 9)

We're talking about what it means. Now, if you look in verse 6 you see that Paul says that the reason that transformation happened was because these people who had worshipped other gods *"...became imitators of us and of the Lord."* So they imitated Paul, Timothy, Silvanus and they also imitated Jesus. But what does it mean to be someone who imitates Christ? Now this week, if you signed up for an "Advance" Life Group, you're going to study in-depth what it means to imitate Christ. If you have yet to do that, I want to encourage you, on your way out, stop at the tables at the back of the room and sign up for a Life Group that meets during the week so you can find out what it means to imitate Christ. But I want to also say this: When we talk about imitating Christ, sometimes people think it is only an outward expression... it's changed behavior... and certainly changed behavior matters a great deal. But changed behavior is not the key component of what it means to be a person who walks in faith because, listen... changed behavior is good but if it is not matched up with a changed heart, it is simply legalism. There are a lot of people in this world who can do a lot of great things that are outwardly very nice, but if they don't have the right heart

posture, it is a mistake. You want to see today what is true transformation... This is what true transformation is. I'm going to tell you about it. Verse 9: True transformation: *"For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you..."* This is it; this is the key. *"...and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."*

You see, transformation needs to be real. If you are someone who has received Christ, this is the thing. You should experience heart transformation and behavior transformation. I oftentimes meet people who say, "I'm a believer in Jesus Christ, but I really haven't seen any change in my life." They use that as an excuse to say, "...therefore the Gospel is not really powerful... or therefore God is not real." Hear me on this. If you have not been changed by the Gospel, the problem is not with the Gospel. The problem is with you or with me. It's our application of the Gospel to our lives. This is what I want you to understand. If we are not being transformed, we must understand what transformation looks like.

Transformation looks like what we read in verse 9. It is that transformation that comes when we throw down our idols. Now whenever we talk about idols, the image that probably comes to your mind is that small gold statue that Indiana Jones steals at the beginning of the Raiders Of The Lost Ark... some sort of graven image that represents a false god that people might worship in order to get some sort of spiritual power. In Romans 1:23, Paul says this: *"They exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."* Now we scoff at that sort of thing today. "Idols... I mean, seriously... believing that a statue is a god. How silly could that be? We would never fall into that sort of behavior." You're right, in a sense. We really wouldn't. But at the same time, John Calvin, writing in the 1500s, famously wrote this statement: "Man's nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols." Apart from Christ, your natural bent is that of an idolater. I'm going to say that again: Apart from Christ, your natural bent is that of an idolater. Now that's a problem for me because I realize that I have an idolatry problem, if I'm honest today. I have a problem that I worship things that are not truly God.

I looked around my office. I didn't have any little statue idols. I looked... everything I had was kind of a Christian symbol. That wouldn't be a really good idol. I wanted to put something right here that would be man-made, that would be made by human hands, that might kind of control our affections or our attention, that people give it a lot of power. I wanted to put an idol up here. I didn't have one so I'm just going to put an iPad instead... (Laughter) because I think that sometimes these things control our affections and our attitudes, and I think that they are indeed made by human hands. I'm just going to set this right here, and I think that actually... oh, oh... somebody whose this is sent them a message. I'm sorry about that; so here we go. This isn't actually my iPad... I borrowed this.

Right here, what we've got is an example of an idol... something that's mad-made, something that can control our affections or our attention because of the fact that we give it power that it doesn't necessarily have. Now you say, "But Steve, I don't worship that... I don't worship those objects." I understand what you're saying. But what's funny is that the more that I think about idolatry in our world, I realize that the reason that the Thessalonians were considered effective disciples was that they had been worshipping false gods, they threw those gods down, and they turned to the true God, Jesus. I want you to think... What are the idols, the man-made things, that we put on a pedestal that we worship? You see, here's the thing... it's that we control our idols because we believe if we craft these idols carefully enough that they will bring us meaning and worth, and we'll begin to feel valuable because we've created something that gives us a sense of who we really want to be.

Let me tell you some of the things that I think are idols in our contemporary culture:

Power... "If I can just be over enough people.. If I can wield authority over enough individuals, then I'll have meaning and value in my life."

Approval... "If people would just like me, like the things that I say, like the clothes that I wear, appreciate me for the work that I do, then I'll have meaning and I'll have worth."

Dependence... "If people need me... if they say, 'We can't do this without Steve,' then when I'm really needed, when they depend on me, then I have meaning... then I have worth." That can become an idol.

Independence... "I don't want anybody to need me at all. Or even better than that... I'm not going to depend on anyone else. I'm going to be an independent man or an independent woman. Because of that, therefore only when I'm independent do I have meaning or do I have worth."

Work... my profession... "When I do my profession to the best of my abilities and when I am paid well and when people recognize me for what I do... when I've crafted my profession to that sort of a status, then I'm recognized and then I'm worth something."

Achievement... "When I get enough done, then I'm worth something."

Materialism... "When I have a really nice house or I have good things or nice clothes or a really great car or I have that particular item that I've always wanted, then I have meaning and worth."

Religion... "When I do the religious activities..."

Relationships... "When those people that I depend on really like me..."

Irreligion... "When I don't have any religious beliefs holding me back..."

Race or culture...

Children... Boy... I talk to people who worship their kids. Kids are an idol.

Family... "Whatever my family wants.... that's what's most important... that's what gives me meaning and worth."

Suffering... "Whenever I suffer..." You know people who have to be in pain... they have to be suffering to feel worthwhile because only in suffering is anything good.

Ideology...

Image...

Whatever you want to say, you can put a different idol up here on this pedestal... whatever it is. You see, the idols of our day and age most likely are not actual physical idols, although they can be. They typically tend to be attitudes within our heart. Why it is that we have a difficult time overcoming those idols, I think I'm going to share with you today. I believe it is because we have truncated... we have abbreviated... we have cut off the full Gospel. We have abbreviated the Gospel to simply say this: "Jesus died on the cross for my sins." Now please hear me... that is true. That is a key component of the Gospel. It is not the

Gospel in total. That is a part of the Gospel. Listen to me... Jesus forgiving you of your sin is not enough for you to overcome the idols in your life. What else do you need? You need to know this: That Jesus Christ died but He also was raised from the dead. The Resurrection matters. I want you to hear me on this... because the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the same Spirit that then gives you the power to overcome idols in day-to-day living. You see, you don't just need the blood of Jesus to forgive you. You need the Spirit of Jesus to empower you. I want you to hear me on this. If you don't remember anything else I say, remember this: You have been forgiven so that you might walk in freedom. You have been forgiven so that you might walk in freedom. Many of us would say that we are believers in Jesus Christ, but we are not experiencing the freedom that is described in the Scriptures. The reason that we are not is because, while claiming to follow Jesus with our mouths, we are worshipping idols within our hearts. We have a dual allegiance, and that dual allegiance is causing us to be torn apart. Whenever Jesus Christ said that you cannot serve both God and money, He could have put anything else within that blank because if you are struggling with an idol in your life, the reason is simple. The reason is that you have not yet discovered that Jesus Christ gives you the power to overcome those very idols.

The first thing that we must do is turn from the idols. There is no manipulation of circumstances, no achievement, no power, no process, no performance... There is nothing that is necessary for you to chase after in order for you to beat these idols. But you do simply have to do this: Receive the tools that God has given you. Your best plan of action is to freely receive the gracious gift of meaning and acceptance that comes through the Gospel. Because, you see, here's the deal. You're not just forgiven in Jesus Christ. You're declared to be children of God. When you are considered to be a child of God, when you're adopted into the Kingdom... do you know what? That changes the way that you live in relationship to idols. They no longer have the power that they once had.

## 2. Turn To Jesus. (v. 10)

So you turn from idols and then you do what verse 10 describes. Verse 10 says, *"...to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."* Do you want deliverance? If you want deliverance, you turn away from idols and you turn toward Jesus. People oftentimes say to me: "Steve, what does it look like to turn away from idols and turn toward Christ?" I'm glad you asked. This is what you do... You must live now and understand how to defeat idols, based on what Scripture gives us. So three steps. I'm going to tell you what these three steps are. This is what is written in that booklet. I want you to take it and get familiar to it. These are steps to defeating idolatry, according to Scripture.

1. You identify the lie.
2. You identify the truth.
3. You live and apply the truth.

I'm going to explain those to you here. Are you ready? Let's pretend that over here on this pedestal we have an idol and that the idol is the idol of dependence. "I'm only worth something if people need me or if I help people. That's the only way that I find any value in my life." This is what I want you to hear. I don't care what the idol is in your heart; it is lying to you right now. Okay? Your idol is a liar, and it wants to create in you an expectation or a reality that is false. You need to know the truth. It's going to start by telling you a lie. Now typically this lie will be a subtle shift from the truth. So, for instance, whenever the lie comes and says, "You're only worth something if people need you" ...well you know there's parts of Scripture that kind of sound like that, right?

I wrote down a couple of verses over here that have a piece of that: 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says that *"If someone is not willing to work, let him not eat."* Galatians 5:13: *"Through love, serve one another."* So we get those ideas... "It's good to work; it's good to help other people." It never once says, though, does it... in Scripture, that if you're not helping other people you're worthless... but we can begin to feel it. You see, we take the truths and we twist it or the enemy twists it or our heart twists it, and we begin to turn the truth into a lie.

Maybe your idol isn't dependence. I can give you a couple of other examples. I have a friend who literally, one day said to me, "You know, I want to do this for my kids because there's nothing more important in this world than my children." You know what? I love my kids but that's a lie. I love my children very, very much. In fact, the Scripture gives me the truth that children are a gift from the Lord... another arrow in my quiver. Many Scriptures talk about the beauty of kids, but do you know that it never once says in this Book that the most important thing in your life is your kids. It never once says that. You see, it feels good to say that. You could turn that into an idol.

Maybe we can go to sin or an addiction. What if you're someone who struggles with internet pornography. What's the lie? The lie is, "I can only find pleasure whenever I satiate my sexual appetite by looking at digital representations of sex. I get the greatest amount of pleasure from this form of sex." You see, there's a lie. Think about the idol in your life. I don't know what it is. This is the thing that is important for you to recognize. The idols are so varied across this room right now that I cannot preach a long enough sermon to deal with every one of these. You have to now use your God-given intellect and your ability to recognize and to look within your heart and to do introspection to see, "What is the idol with which I struggle with in my life?" Whatever that idol is, you have to then recognize it's a lie that it tells you. I've shared with you guys that I struggle with approval from other people, for many, many years. It was a lie. Do you know what that lie was? That lie was, "You're only worth something if people say nice things to you... if they give you compliments." That's a dangerous place to be as a pastor because I'm then tempted to preach so that you like what I say and not what the truth is.

You've got to start out by finding the lie. Once you identify the lie, then step two is this: Once you've identified the lie, step two is then finding the truth, the grace-centered, grace-soaked truth of the Gospel as it is found in Scripture. So you start by finding the lie but then you find the truth. So, back to the original idol... the idol of dependence. If I think I'm only worth something whenever other people need me... that is a lie. But I have to combat it with the truth. Well, where's the truth? Well, it's in this Book, and I can only know the truth about who I am in Christ if I have studied Scripture. Ephesians 1:4 says this: *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons."* Did you hear that? You have been adopted... you have been received... you hold tight to that. You're worth something, not because people need you. You are worth something because Jesus Christ has declared you are worth something. Romans 8:38-39: *"I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Can anything separate me from the love of God? ...Even if people don't need me and they're not dependent upon me? No. Nothing can separate me. That's the truth. Romans 5:8: *"God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* God has declared me righteous. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. You see the Gospel declares that I am loved and I am worthy because of what Jesus did, not because of what other people think about me. There's a truth in Scripture.

What about the idol of kids? Right? "Well, my kids are the most important thing." What's the truth of Scripture say? Deuteronomy chapter 6... if you read that you see, "Oh... the most important thing for me to do... Deuteronomy 6 commands you, *"As you get up and as you lie down and as you walk about the road, teach your children of the things of the Lord."* Do you know what the most important thing is? It is a relationship with the Lord. It's the most important thing in this world. Do you know what's more important than your children in your heart is that your children know Jesus Christ. I mean, I break it to my kids all the time. I'm like, "Kids, I love you. I will always love your mother more." They're like, "Whoa... I can't believe you'd say that to me." I'm like, "Dude... she was here before you got here. She's going to be here long after you're gone..." (Laughter) "I'm sorry... It's Jesus, Momma, then you. You're like kinda down here. I love you but you're not up here with her." I have to tell them that. Why? ...Because I want them to understand truly... and I'm joking about that, but I want you to understand. I tell them that for them to know Jesus Christ is the most important thing for me. I want to teach them how to be a man, but I want to teach them how to be a man that follows Jesus because that is the most important thing.

What about the sex... the porn addiction? The lie was that I get greatest pleasure from pornography. What is the truth of Scripture? Psalm 42:1: *"As a deer pants for water, so my soul longs for you, O God... when can I go and meet with the living God?"* Where did David get his greatest pleasure? He got it from seeking after the Lord. I know this is crazy, in the sexual culture in which we live, but do you know what's better than sex? Jesus. I know, you're like, "What? That's crazy." No, it's not because here's the thing. A sexual relationship is a tool that God gave. Do you know that Ephesians 5 says that sex is a reflection of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. You're like, "Man... that's not what I saw in the movies last night." Yeah... well, I know that but that's a lie. What's the truth? The truth is that sex is God-made and God-given... that the greatest pleasure comes from the rapturous delight that we find in having our affections controlled and desired by Jesus Christ. That's where the greatest pleasure comes. You have to identify the lie but then also find the truth. The only way that is going to happen is if you open this Book and you know it.

I have talked to so many people who are like, "I don't understand why I need to study Scripture." Let me tell you why. You are running into the battle with an unloaded gun if you do not know Scripture because your heart is filled with lies and with deceit. Jeremiah says it: "The heart of the man is sick and is deceitful above all things." Let me translate that for you. Your feelings will tell you lies, and they must be combatted with the truth. The truth comes from Scripture. You've got to think through the Gospel. You've been received... you're declared righteous... you're declared a child of God... you're one who is loved ultimately by God... He pursued you in Jesus Christ. All of these truths are within here, and they alone are the things that are given to you to combat the lies. But you've got to start by knowing the lies and then next knowing the truth that's given to us in Scripture. You've got to know what's in this Book. Go get you a concordance. Go get you a study Bible. Look up the idols and the struggles that you have in the back of the Bible. Find those verses... memorize those verses... write them down on notecards... put them on your mirror... stick them in your car... put them inside your Bible... put them at the kitchen table. Do whatever you have to do to fill your mind with the truth because you've got to get rid of the lie, and you have to fill it up with the truth.

### 3. Apply The Truth Of Scripture.

Which leads me to the third step because once you identify the lie and identify the truth, then you have to do something else. You have to apply the grace... apply the truth of Scripture to your life. You know the lie, you know the truth. What do you do? If you're going to change... if you're going to be transformed by the

Holy Spirit of God, do you know what you have to do? You have to take that idol and you have to punch it in the face with the Scripture. That's what you have to do. You have to fight, and there will be a fight. Do not kid yourself and say, "Oh, I believe in Jesus; everything is great. Rainbows and unicorns..." (Laughter) No, no, no. The way that it works is that you get violent with the idols in your life. Romans 12:2 says this: *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Let me tell you what. Do you want to know why you feel the things that you feel? ...Because of your thoughts. You feel the things that you feel here because of the things that you think. Right? You act the way that you act because of the things that you think. You know, sometimes our emotions control our actions, but again, our emotions are determined by our thoughts. The way that you think matters. How is your mind renewed? When your mind is filled with lies... the lies of your idols... you act in a particular way. It's difficult to break addiction if your mind is filled with the lie that the best thing and the best place you can find pleasure is in pornographic sex. It's difficult to break your idea of dependence and your idolatry of dependence if you're filled with the lie that "I'm only worth something if people need me or depend upon me."

What do you do? Whenever that lie comes into your mind, you have to punch it in the face. How does that happen? In my own life, whenever I struggle with this... with approval... You say, "Well, Steve... if you stand up and you say that in the pulpit, people might leave the church." "If you stand up and say that in the pulpit, people might write you a nasty email." "Steve, if you say that in the pulpit, people might not give; they might withhold their tithe." "Steve, if you say that in the pulpit, you know, man... they may not like you anymore." All those kind of things come to me. Do you know what I have to do? I have to punch it in the face with Scripture. I have to say, "You know what? I've been adopted as a son, and I've been called into the ministry of the truth, so I'm going to say the truth and I'm going to let God give me my approval and not the Church." (Clapping)

Now listen... The thing about that is that you have the same kind of a battle every day... whatever it is. You have to, whenever those lies come into your mind and come into your heart, you know what you have to do? You have to stop and you have to capture it. Are you familiar with that Scripture that says, *"We take every thought captive for Christ."* Do you know what that means? That means that whenever that comes, you see it and you grab it, and you say, "Oh no, you're not; you're not going to rule my day today." And then you say, "Now here's the truth of Scripture..." and you banish the lie with the truth and you put the truth in your heart. This is what you do... I mean, it's kind of weird... you preach to yourself and you preach the Gospel to yourself over and over until you finally believe it. Can I tell you what? I've got other idols that I fight with now, but what I've found is that now some of those ones that used to rule me... they've been banished. Every now and then they try to come back in but I'm familiar. I know how to fight them and they're gone.

This is the thing: God wants to grow you spiritually, and He wants you to experience true spiritual transformation. The way that spiritual transformation comes about is that we refuse to stay where we are, and we instead decide that we will apply the truth of Scripture to our lives so that God can take our hearts and change us. You see, in the ancient world, when the Thessalonians put their idols down, they stopped worshipping false gods, and they started worshipping the true and the living God... do you know what happened? It was so radical that no longer did Paul have to preach because so much transformation was happening. This is what I want you to realize. What if God changed all of the people in this church in such a radical way? If this church decided, "We're going to take our idols, and we're going to combat them with the truth of Scripture, and we're going to take our thoughts captive for Christ, and we're going to return those captive thoughts and replace those with the truth that is given to us in Scripture" ...what would happen? Our idols would be broken and we would be changed. Do you know what would happen? It

would then give us the power because this is why: The people that you want to share the Gospel with... they look at you and they say, "I don't know if this is real."

Some of you are guests with us today. You're visiting our church. I'm preaching and maybe you're enjoying it... and maybe you're not. I don't know. I know you have listened to me and I can almost guarantee you... whatever I say, it's fine, but you think to yourself, secretly in your heart if you're not a believer, "But this guy gets paid to say this stuff..." (Laughter) "...I mean, he's the paid professional. So it's great." But do you know what's more powerful than the paid professional? "He's the salesman for Jesus. Of course he's going to say those things." What would be more powerful? I will tell you what's more powerful: The satisfied customer... Right here. Every person who stands on this platform or goes into their office or goes into their neighborhood and says, "I used to worship these idols... these things used to control my heart or control my life or control my destiny... but they don't anymore. Do you want to know why not? ...Because I finally understood that by the power of God and the Holy Spirit and the truth of the Scripture, I can banish those things out and I am a new woman... I'm a new man. I'm totally changed." When you say that and you live that... guess what? People sit up, they take notice, and then they want the same thing. That is the way that our city will be transformed.

This is the thing that I want to ask you today. "Are you willing to allow God to change you?" Maybe the better question is this: "Are you willing to fight for holiness?" "Are you willing to study the Word of God and to know it so well that whenever those lies come, you will find in Scripture the truth instead and you will punch those idols in the face, you'll throw them at the foot of the cross, and you'll watch them be shattered. Because we have been forgiven by the blood of Jesus from the sin and the shame that's in our lives, and we've also been given the same Spirit... listen to me... the same Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead lives in you. The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead... the Spirit of the Father... Holy Spirit. It lives in you. You say, "I want the power to change." You've already got it. It's already in you. If you've said "Yes" to Jesus Christ and you use His Word, you've got the tools. You've got everything you need right here. The question now is this: "Church: Will we do it?" If we want to see our city transformed, if we want to see our families, our neighborhoods, our businesses... everything change... it starts when we say "Yes." Will you? Let's pray.

"God, we want to be people who are changed. Father, I want to speak for this church right now. We want to be people who say 'Yes' to You, and Lord we allow Your Holy Spirit to come into our heart and transform us. Father, we want to be people who then also have the tool of Scripture and God that we break the idols that have controlled us and we shatter them at the foot of the cross. Father, we pray right now, give us the power of the Holy Spirit to say 'Yes' to You. And Father give us the power of the Holy Spirit to experience true spiritual transformation. Lord, we want to see something big sweep across this city, and it will only start whenever we finally decide that we will say 'Yes' to You and the things that you have called us toward. So God, we say 'Yes' to You now. Father, I declare right now, anybody who is here who has an idol... God, I pray that they will just throw it down. Father, anybody who has yet to say 'Yes' to You, I pray that today is the day they say 'Yes.' Lord, I ask these things, believing in the Name above all names... the powerful Name of Jesus Christ. Amen."