

What The Lord Taught Me In The Early Days Of CFC

by Annie Poonen

This sermon reflects on the journey of a Christian community over 44 years, acknowledging God's faithfulness in building and sustaining their church. It emphasizes the importance of relying on the Lord for guidance and protection, giving Him all the glory and recognizing the role of spiritual leaders as watchmen. The speaker shares personal experiences of challenges faced, lessons learned in hospitality, and the significance of creating a peaceful environment at home to serve God's people.

Scripture: Psalms 127:1, 2 Chronicles 20:12, 1 Peter 4:9, Proverbs 24:3, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "God's Faithfulness", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

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Transcript

Dear brothers and sisters, praise the Lord. I praise and thank God for these 44 years the Lord has given us, given our CFC and made us a part of CFC. It seems like yesterday when we were, we had our last meeting in the Baptist Church, we were bewildered and that evening we started meeting in our home.

But God has been so good and faithful to us. There's one verse which comes to my mind, which has been coming to my mind very often and that is a verse in Psalm 127 and the first verse. I'll read it out.

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. That verse has been coming often to me, to my mind.

It's been the Lord who's built CFC all these years I know. It's none of our efforts or hard work or any of the gadgets or the building or anything that we had. The Lord has been building and adding to the church and doing a work in our midst.

I praise and thank God and it's good for us to remember that it's the Lord who's going to continue to build us. Anytime we think that we are somebody's, we are somebody or we have done something in these 44

years, we have done something or other, then we lose sight. We start to begin to take the glory for ourselves and the Lord will be against us.

And we want to give the glory always to the Lord for what he's done and what he's still doing in our midst. And the second part of that says, unless the Lord watches the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. Yes, our dear elder brothers are our watchmen.

They watch over our souls and take care of us, but it's the Lord who's watching over them. I often remind myself how much I need to pray for our dear elders who have to faithfully give God's word, hear the voice of God and be the spokesman for God. And I want to do my part in praying for our dear elders in all the places.

And God, you give them the correct word every time we meet. There's another verse which comes to my mind also when we think of a small beginning, when we started meeting in our home and that's in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 verses 6 and 12. We all know that story.

We've heard it many times. It's about Jehoshaphat when a great army came against him and he prayed this prayer. In verse 6 it says, he prayed, he said, Lord God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nation.

In your hand are power and might so that none is able to withstand you. Yes, it's really the Lord mighty God who's been with us and helped us all these years. And those days we were such a small group, despised and people's critical about us and saying why did you, did you do, why did you preach this wrong doctrine? They called us heretics and cult leaders and all that opposition came.

When people used to come and ask me, I just couldn't understand because we were preaching, my husband and brother Ian were preaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and that was a precious experience to me. So what was wrong in that? And Christ manifest in the flesh, Christ came in our, like us. I always believed Christ came like us.

He didn't come as anything different or anybody different. He came like you and me. So I was wondering what was this wrong doctrine people are blaming us for? And then I remember one of our fasting and prayer meetings, this, we meditated on this, these verses that in verse 12, it says, Oh Lord, we need not execute judgment.

We are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you. We are powerless against this, all this criticism and what people had against us and all this.

And we didn't know what to do, but our eyes were upon the Lord and it is the Lord whose eyes we are on. Our eyes are still upon him as he led us in the past and delivered us. I know that he's going to continue to lead us.

In the past, it was that type of criticism. Now that type of opposition and battle that we had to face. Now it looks like maybe the battle is different.

Persecution maybe. Maybe the temptations which Jesus warned us about in the last days, there'll be love of money, love of ease, prosperity, and love for one another will grow cold. Deception, maybe all those things may come up, but whatever it is, our eyes are on the Lord.

We have no fear. The Lord who took care of us, he will take care of us and lead us. And I praise and thank God in that verse in Psalm 127, it's the Lord who watches over us.

He watches over us and I praise and thank God that he has given me also a place in this wonderful work he has started and is doing. I don't deserve any of his goodness, but he has given me a place to be here with the saints and I want to be always grateful for that. I am really thankful from the first time the meeting started in our home, because it was such a deliverance for me.

You know, when we came to the Baptist church, I came from a small town. I grew up in Coonoor and later I studied in Vellore. Both were small towns.

And when we came to Bangalore, I was a little intimidated by the affluence and the poshness of this church especially. I really felt awkward and I felt that I was not proper. I was not in the proper place.

My dress or my behavior or whatever it was, was too much like a village person and I was not able to fit in. And the previous pastor was a Canadian. He and his wife, they were a very sweet couple.

But when we came to replace them, I felt that people were always looking at me like, what am I compared to the Canadian lady? And it was a big contrast. And sometimes they would come and ask me to take care of their children. You know, working mothers would say, can you take care of, anyway you are sitting at home, can you take care of my children also? Or they come for a checkup and sit and talk and have tea.

And then the whole afternoon or morning would go. I really didn't know how to cope with it. And over the months, I felt like I was becoming a slave to people.

I just wanted to be free, to be myself, to run my house how I felt I should do, not like how people wanted me to. And always I felt like people are coming home to scrutinize what I was doing and how I was doing things and comparing me with the previous, the pastor's wife. So when we started meetings at home, it was a great deliverance for me.

I thought at last I can be myself and I can bring up my children the way I want them to grow. But meeting at home, it was so joyful. We felt like we were a band of prisoners set free and we could be free to shout and praise the Lord.

And our house was tucked away in the corner and nobody was there to pray and see what was happening there. And sometimes we'd have meeting the whole day, fasting and prayer. Normally we used to have four meetings every week, Sunday morning and evening, Wednesday and Friday Bible study.

So I had a lot of time to be with God's people and God's word and hear God's word. And our children grew up in that atmosphere, hearing the word. The only recreation was getting ready for the meeting and lots of people are going to come and we are going to have the meeting and going to sing some songs.

So I praise and thank God the Lord helped us to bring up our children in that atmosphere. And of course meeting at our home had its challenges because I had to get everything ready for the meeting before the people, brothers and sisters started coming. So I tried to move everything, our own personal private things into one section of the house and then the rest of the house would be open and people who came late they could eat something.

So I had to prepare some lunch or something. But I praise and thank God all those months and years there was always food at our table for whoever came. At least something, at least a tea and something to go with the tea, a lunch or whatever.

And sometimes people would come spend a weekend with us. They come sometimes some people would come a whole week. So many people wanted to know what we were, what was this teaching about and about the new covenant and about dying to self.

So people would come and stay and talk till late into the night. And we didn't know who was sincere and who would stay on till the end. But whoever came I was ready, the Lord helped me to keep things ready so that they could hear and hear the truth and hear, have fellowship with us.

And those days there were three or four things that the Lord was teaching me. First of all when we started meeting in our home it was a special time to sanctify myself. I felt like more than ministering to others, I wanted the Lord to break me, break my self-will, my desire to run my home how I want and have a set timing for different things because I couldn't do all that when our home was open to God's children.

And the Lord told me that I have to give up all those preferences if I want to be a part of that work which He's doing. And the Lord worked in my heart to submit to that chiseling process to take up the cross. And taking up the cross was impractical.

The Lord showed me taking up the cross is not a doctrine, it's a life, it's a way of life which I must have. I must be willing to take up the cross in any and every situation and the Lord gave me many opportunities. Our children were small, we had financial pressures, we had pressures from relatives and so many practical things.

We didn't have people to help us like, you know, domestic help. So a lot of work I had to do myself but I praise and thank God for all those years when He gave me the chance to be involved in serving God's people and allowing myself to be broken by Him. I don't think of it as being broken because I can think more about the joy that I received because I always felt like the Lord was with me and behind me and He was there to help me in every situation.

Then another thing which the Lord taught me was about practicing hospitality and I was so happy one day when the Lord, when in one of my readings I read this verse in 1 Peter 4, 9 where it says, practice hospitality without grumbling. I was so amazed because I thought, oh yeah, we have to be hospitable, practice hospitality but, you know, when people come at the wrong time or when the food is not ready or the food is not up to the mark or something goes wrong or the children are not able to manage the children and take care of their things, then that temptation to grumble and murmur in our heart comes and I read this verse in 1 Peter 4, 9 which says, practice hospitality without grumbling and I said, Lord, thank you that phrase without grumbling especially for me that I should not have not outwardly or inwardly grumbling attitude. Many times our children or we had to give up our rooms to accommodate guests and so we had to move our things out of the way and have people staying there and our children also learn to share their room and not to think that everything is for them and they have to accommodate other people and share their things with others.

Then the third thing which the Lord taught me was to take care of the home matters because every meeting Jack was speaking, there's no meeting in which he would sit next to me and take care of the children or anything like that, not only at the meeting but before the meeting began, I felt that the Lord

wanted me to get ready because if he's going to preach God's word freely and without any hindrance, then I must do all that is in my part so that it's easy for him to speak and give God's word to his children. So, if at all I felt that he should go with that atmosphere of peace, there should not be any stress or tension in our home, the children, everything should be so calm and peaceful. So, I had to do a lot of work before and see that the children's food was ready and they ate something or I could take something so that they could have in between, their clothes were ready, my clothes were all ready and everything was ready the previous day and there was food in case somebody comes for lunch or even sometimes earlier, they come earlier, at least a cup of coffee and some bread I should be able to give them.

So, there was a lot of planning and the Lord helped me to get everything ready and smoothly so that we could go to the meeting with the hearts that prepared, prepared to receive God's word and my husband would be prepared to preach God's word. So, I praise and thank God for all those practical lessons that the Lord taught me and there are many wonderful things which the Lord did. I praise and thank God that my children grew up in that atmosphere and they learned to respect the elders, they respect the young brothers.

The young brothers were a help to my children so that they could follow the example. Even if somebody was doing wrong, we didn't criticize anybody in the presence of our children. Sometimes when somebody would drop out, they were surprised that that brother stopped coming because they had no idea even though we knew that it was not, that person was not faithful and not following the Lord.

It was a surprise to our children. So, our children grew up without having any suspicion about anyone or bad attitude or bad thought or negative attitude to anybody and they grew up and I praise and thank God they, even though they sometimes trusted the wrong type of people, but still putting, teaching them to trust God and trust the brothers and have confidence in them was a great thing. And now I can see when my children have their own homes and they have seen hospitality and receiving God's people in our home and they want to do the same.

I praise and thank God for all that He has done. God bless you, dear brothers and sisters.

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