

Keep Your Devotion to Jesus

by Sandeep Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a pure devotion to Jesus and not stopping short of fellowship, lest we become deceived and lose our focus on our relationship with God.

Duration: 20:04

Scripture: Genesis 3:9, Matthew 25:1-13, Acts 2:42, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 4:3, Philippians 2:1-2, 1 John 1:3, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Personal Devotion", "Fellowship With God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of true fellowship with God and warns against the dangers of stopping short of genuine fellowship by mistaking it for mere friendship or community. It stresses the need for a deep, personal devotion to Jesus above all else, highlighting that fellowship with one another is rooted in individual fellowship with God. The speaker cautions against losing sight of this core relationship with Jesus amidst the activities and responsibilities within the church, emphasizing the priority of knowing and drawing closer to God.

Transcript

I wanted to share a small thought from 1 John chapter 1 verse 3. 1 John chapter 1 verse 3. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also that you also may have fellowship with us and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ. This is John the Apostle who had seen Jesus, who had heard Jesus, who had been with Jesus and he is sharing it now with others so that they may have fellowship with us, with him. And the fellowship that he had was with the Father and the Son.

He wasn't sharing these truths so that people would get information about Jesus. He wasn't trying to make sure that the story of Jesus was communicated to the next generation. He was sharing everything that he had seen and heard so that they may have fellowship.

And that the fellowship that they would have with John would have been the fellowship that John had with the Father and the Son. And that's something that the Lord has been putting on my heart as we continue to establish ourselves as trying to be a family of God. As we try to be the family of God, as we seek to separate ourselves from churches or traditions that want to build big congregations or go to big events or wanting experiences with God, we are trying to be different.

We're trying to be the family of God. But one of the dangers, if not, if I can think of it as we've been a family for a few years, I would say the number one danger that we who are seeking to be the family of God, I would easily say the number one danger is that we will stop short of fellowship. Fellowship is a very exalted word and the danger is we will stop short of fellowship and make it many other things.

It could become friendship, it could become community, it could become a lot of wonderful communal hanging out with each other, sharing with one another. A lot of people go to Acts chapter 2 and say, look here are all the things that the first church did. They were breaking bread every day, they were sharing, they had everything in common.

And they try to copy that. But the church was meant to have fellowship with one another, not friendship, not factions, not groups, not an exclusive church that thinks itself separate from everybody else, but acting like a family. It's very dangerous when a family of God thinks that they are a special family.

We see this in the world. There are families that build their whole lives around how we are unit is we are as a family. We're the Poonan family or we're the Smith family and this makes that centric and there's a very dangerous thing that comes in with it.

And as a church too, if we focus on family that is not driving after fellowship with God, we will reduce ourselves to some human construct, to some human thought. And so this is not old news, this is not new news that I'm speaking, this is just a reminder. We spent the last two weekends with a lot of great family time.

We've gotten to build a lot of relationships and bonds that have been very precious. But it's very important that we keep on reminding ourselves that the essence of what we're trying to do is to build fellowship. And fellowship with one another is based on fellowship that we have ourselves with God.

You cannot, it's hypocrisy, it's dangerous when my connection with another Christian brother or sister, in the human sense, is greater than my friendship and my intimacy with God. And I can, when we're hanging out together and we're spending a lot of time together and we're getting to know one another, it's very possible that we become familiar with one another and we become great friends with one another, which is a wonderful thing, that's what happens in the family. But it loses its core centric, which is core center, which is true in the body, which is true in the family, which is a relationship with the head.

And 2nd Corinthians 11.3 is that verse that we should never forget. I hope nobody who's a member in this church is unaware of 2nd Corinthians 11.3. I hope every single member of this church will know this verse immediately. 2nd Corinthians 11.3, we've spoken on this numerous times, that the mother of all deception, the mother of all deception is straying away from your own individual, simple and pure devotion to Jesus.

It is not about how well you get along with other people in the church, it's not about how much we serve in the church, it is not even about whether we sinned less this week than last week. Those are all good indicators, these are all good accessories, but we can have all of those things, including victory over sin, but not have a pure devotion to Jesus. We can be obeying commands but not having relationship with the giver of the commands.

We all know that's true from our own lives. So, these are all the verses that we've spoken about many times, but it's a constant reminder to ask myself, do I have a growing devotion to Jesus? Otherwise, I have somehow let in the deception to start. And I can criticize prosperity preachers or many other preachers,

but I myself am on the path we've been deceived according to God's Word.

This is the seed that stirs up all other deception, and you can track every deception in anybody, prosperity preacher, some wrong doctrine in myself, I can trace it all the way back to somewhere I lost my simple, pure, personal devotion to Jesus. And when you're going to a very good church, when you're going to a church that preaches good doctrine, and that preaches the family-centric view of how God's church must be, it's very easy to get fooled. We can go along for the ride and we can get protected, because we think the church is pure, and the church might be pure, but we might be being deceived.

Paul was saying in the church of Ephesus that after he left, savage wolves would come in. Savage wolves of what? It wouldn't immediately start with some crazy doctrine or people committing gross sin. It would start with the devotion of Jesus being compromised.

And so for all of us, it's a constant reminder for me that eternal life is to know Jesus. This is why Jesus came, so that I might know Him, and I must constantly be asking myself, yes Lord, I'm hoping I'm getting victory over sin, but do I know You? If I don't, I'm not getting to know You more and more closely. I'm not having fellowship with You.

And if I'm not having fellowship with You, no matter what I'm doing with somebody else, it's not fellowship. It's friendship, it's good things that even the heathen do to one another. So my focus must be, Lord, I want to be so laser-focused every day of my life on getting to know You, through obeying the commands, through accessing the promises, through getting rid of self from the throne.

All of these things, but Lord Jesus, the big perk, the great advantage of all of this is so that I might know You. And from my knowing You, I try to reach out and get to know other people. And Matthew chapter 25, we heard from the end of Matthew 24, but Matthew chapter 25, the story of the virgins is the best example I can think of.

Matthew chapter 25, in the first 13 verses, talks about 10 virgins who all had lamps that were burning brightly. These were all virgins, which means, it's an image that Jesus is talking about, that these were people who were separated from the world. They were not committing harlotry with the world.

The world system was separate. They were separated from the world. So this applies, that applies to people who come to our church.

We, as a church, make it very clear that we're trying to not follow the patterns of the world, whether it is the world system that the devil runs, or the religious world. We're trying to be living. We're trying to be virgins in that sense, separated from the world.

And so we can think we're okay. But here's a story about 10 virgins. Now this is also the other thing true about the 10 virgins.

Five of them, all 10 of them, had oil in their lamps, that the lamps were burning. And so we all have an external testimony, have a view that others look at us and say, oh this brother is committed to this church. This sister is one of us.

She's serving, she's helping, he's doing this, he's in this ministry. All 10 of us, every one of us, could be all united in being virgins separated from the world, and having a testimony that their light is burning brightly. But five of them were foolish, because they didn't have oil in their flasks, it says in verse 4, 3 and 4. For

when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in their flasks along with their lamps.

So they had an external testimony, they were fighting sin in the external lives, but they also had oil in their flasks and the inside. They had a hidden life of devotion to Jesus, that oil of the Holy Spirit that shows us the love of God. They had that, but only five of them had it.

And in this church too, we can have everybody all being separated from the world and being okay with it. All 10 having an external life that we're all doing the right things, but only 50% of us might have oil in our flasks, an inner life that says Lord Jesus, I'm trying to pursue a knowledge of you, week in, week out, week out of that. Now these people may have all started, all 10 may have had oil in their flasks to begin with, but somewhere along the line they got caught up, as they started getting fooled, and they started thinking friendships and community, or some kind of earthly benefit that comes with being part of a church, fooled them and separated them from thinking about intimacy with Jesus, and knowing Jesus.

Very possible. We have young brothers who are all meeting together once a week. Is it possible that our friendship and a camaraderie of the young people hanging out, or the brothers hanging out, can fool us into thinking, I'm going every week, I'm getting to know one another, I'm helping out, I'm a useful brother, but do you think it can fool me that I'm not getting to know Jesus every week? Absolutely.

I speak from personal experience. Mothers, you guys are hanging out, I think, once a week or something like that. Is it possible because of your common bond of raising children, or because it's so stressful, is it possible that the devil can deceive you into thinking, your life is so stressful because you've got so much on your hands, you've got no free time to think, so you put pursuing Jesus and an intimacy with Jesus on the table.

So I'm just going to try to raise good children. And we can get deceived, or maybe some of us, it's trying to make sure we come out of debt, or make sure that we have enough for our retirement, or make sure that our health is okay, or make sure that we make sure that our children get all of these things done in their lives, their schooling, whatever it is, and we lose focus on how much greater it is to have a devotion to Jesus. Family, this has happened to much better churches than us.

I see families out in the world, we see some of these stories going on, where families who put family as most important, end up having gross sin in their family life. Gross sin allowed in this family unit, that was saying all we want to do is to have a pure family. Evil gets in.

And the same thing can happen to the church. Family is the most wonderful construct in how to raise children. And a church as a family, I'm absolutely convinced, is the most beautiful construct.

But we can exalt church being a family, and forget that the fire that makes us a family is fellowship. Fellowship with Jesus. And there can be a husband who's got fellowship with Jesus, and a wife that doesn't.

And a wife can have fellowship with Jesus, and a husband cannot. The children might have fellowship with Jesus, and the parents don't. God's no respecter of people.

And so it's so important, dear brothers and sisters, that we don't forget this. We will push hard to break the bonds of trying to be separate and seek to be a family. And there are many other dangers that I've written down that I don't have time to speak to.

But if there's nothing else, may this one danger be written in our hearts. That we may lose our devotion to Jesus. We may lose having that close connection.

We must be asking ourselves every day, Lord do I know you? Lord am I obeying you? The first question is, do I know you? Then I'm safer. As I've shared before, the first question that Adam and Eve were asked after they sinned was not, why did you do this? The first question that Adam and Eve were asked was, where are you? Where are you? That's the first question the Lord is trying to constantly ask you. It's secondary that you sinned.

What's worse is that you don't want to know me. And it's secondary that you obeyed me. What's worse is that you don't want to know me.

That's what Jesus' problem with the Pharisees. That we may obey all the letter of the law, but we never want to know him. We don't want to come to know Jesus, the author of the law.

Family, God wants relationships so much more than he wants anything else. And when you sin and when you disobey God, God's first question is, where are you? Come back, come back to me. Establish a relationship.

And when you're obeying everything that God's commanded, God's question still to you is, where are you? Where are you? Are we building this relationship? Whether we obey or whether we disobey, the number one thing the Lord is trying to drive home is, are you getting to know me? Are you getting to hear my voice and know it like you know your wife's voice or your children's voice? That you can pick it out. Are you getting to know me? Are you getting to know my ways? You don't need a verse necessarily. You just know God probably won't like it that way.

And that we have a burning, burning desire to want to know him. That we don't need other people to lean on more and more. We're trying to give to other people, rather than trying to lean on other people.

We're leaning on God, we're leaning on the everlasting arms and he's lifting us up. Dear brothers and sisters, God has called us to be a family with a really high calling. But let us not put family before fellowship.

Individual fellowship with God. I've seen this in my own life as I've sought to focus on fellowship with God and the Father and the Son. He has given me words to speak and he's also given me the right way in which to relate with other people.

Let me end with one last thing. Fellowship is not based on responsibility in the church. I say this honestly before God.

There is no special fellowship that I share with Bobby and Jeremy. And I say this to our credit. We are not united.

Bobby, Jeremy and myself are not united because we are elders. We are united in that we each individually seek to have fellowship with the Father and the Son. And I praise God that it has been that way from the beginning and it continues to be that way and by the grace of God it will continue to the end.

But my fellowship is not based on somebody is an elder or not. And our fellowship is not based on that way. I've enjoyed as good fellowship with others who are not elders in this church.

So don't feel that and it's very dangerous. I've always felt it's very dangerous for any kind of factions to develop. And I'm very concerned that there'll be a faction developing among the elders.

That is why by the grace of God I can say honestly before God I have never sought to have any kind of special fellowship with any of the elders. So hopefully we are being examples in how we seek equal fellowship with others who are also seeking fellowship with the Father and the Son. That must be my only metric.

That I can have as much enjoyable fellowship with two brothers. One who is a gifted brother and somebody who is not gifted. But if they are equally seeking to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, I can have that.

So we put aside any kind of responsibility that we have in the church when it comes to seeking fellowship. I'm looking, dear brothers, since I don't want to fellowship too much with the sisters, but my desire with the brothers is that every one of us can be responsible for the fellowship we have with one another. If we seek to have a primal relationship with Jesus and say, Lord draw these others to me.

Draw others to me who are seriously interested in that. God will build that fellowship in each of our lives. It's not based on time, the quantity of time, it's based on the heart being one when we meet with one another.

May God help us.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/C7JAs6bPrrg.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/sandeep-poonen/keep-your-devotion-to-jesus/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net