

05 New Wine in New Wineskins - Presenting the Church as a Virgin to Christ

by Zac Poonen

The ultimate goal of church planting and ministry is to present the church as a pure and undefiled virgin to Christ, and this requires submitting to authority and following God's will.

Duration: 1:00:38

Scripture: Matthew 18:20, Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 4:16, Philippians 2:1-4, Colossians 3:14-15, Hebrews 10:24-25, James 3:16

Topics: "Church Unity", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of building fellowship and unity within the church, highlighting the need for elders to lead with humility, service, and a focus on building strong relationships. It calls for repentance, fasting, and prayer to seek God's guidance and to present the church as a pure virgin to Jesus Christ. The message stresses the significance of functioning as a unified body of Christ, where every member plays a vital role in building up the church in love and fellowship.

Transcript

The purpose of all our labor in planting churches, building churches, sending circular letters to the elders, warnings, conferences, our ultimate goal is that we might present our churches as pure virgin to Jesus Christ. We believe it's worth it. Otherwise, why would we spend one million rupees for a five-day conference like this and a youth camp, without taking any offering, without being in debt.

Humanly speaking, that's foolish. It's a waste of money. But we don't believe that.

Last week, we had a conference in one of the poor villages in Tamil Nadu. Two and a half days, the expense came to four hundred thousand rupees. No offerings, no debt.

We have proved that for thirty-six years across forty-fifty churches. We have proved that God is a living God. We have proved in a poor country, where so many live below poverty level, where people, many villages eat two meals a day.

If you seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness and follow the principles taught in God's word, He will add everything else we need to us. But we do not glory in the provision of our earthly needs. That is the crumbs that fall from the table.

We glory in the fact that we get living bread at every conference. Not just that our financial needs are met without ever sending a report or photographs of our work anywhere in all these years. Because Jesus never sent reports of His work.

Jesus never asked anybody ever for money. He received, but He never asked. But we don't glory in that.

We glory in the fact that God has given us through all these thirty-six years, in conference after conference, bread. Living bread, manna from heaven. Fresh manna with a fresh anointing.

And not just stale bread. Even if the message is the same, like the manna that fell for forty years was exactly the same in taste and color, but it was fresh. The point is it's fresh.

And Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 11 verse 2, this is our goal. This is our goal for churches. I'm jealous for you.

2nd Corinthians 11 verse 2, with a godly jealousy, because I have betrothed you to one husband, that is to Christ. So that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. I'll tell you how I picture myself as an elder, in connection with this verse.

I picture myself as Abraham's servant who's gone to Mesopotamia and bringing Rebecca on a camel, that long journey through the desert, through many, many weeks, to finally present her to Isaac. And all the men who tried to attack her or wean her away because she's a pretty girl, I have to defend her from them. I have to warn her.

I have to protect her. I have to fight the enemies so that one day I can present Rebecca to Isaac. This is a true elder brother will have this burden.

And he's willing to risk his life. He's willing to lay down his life to protect Rebecca, so that she can be presented to Isaac. If you don't have that type of a burden, you are not fit to be an elder brother.

He never sought his own. And I can imagine as Abraham's servant is walking, traveling with Rebecca, he wasn't trying to show off to her what a wonderful man he was. Like some elders do, try to show off their preaching ability and their other abilities.

And over all people with their power and their imagined spirituality, rubbish. He was only talking about Isaac. All along that way, he would talk to her about Isaac, what a wonderful man he was and all his good qualities and this, that, and the other.

So that by the time Rebecca met Isaac, she was in love with him. And if I can succeed in making the bride of Christ today, show them the glory of Jesus in such a way that they are in love with him, that they'll forsake everything for him, I've done my job. I can say, Lord, now let your servant depart in peace.

For mine eyes have seen your salvation. I've seen the body of Christ. That was Paul's burden.

Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. God has given us the example of Paul as a godly man whose life we can follow, his ministry as a leader we can follow. I'm jealous.

All those who have responsibility in the ministry, are you jealous? Jealous in a good way. God is a jealous God. He wants the bride of Christ for himself.

Every good husband is jealous that he wants his wife for himself. Another man should not touch her. That is how Paul was jealous that the bride of Christ should not be touched by the world or the devil.

I'm jealous for you with a godly jealousy that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ and that's why we rebuke, we exhort, we correct, we plead, we pray, we encourage, we strengthen, we help, we do everything possible so that the bride of Christ will one day be ready to meet the Lord because we are aware, as it says in verse three, there is a devil around who by his craftiness would like to draw people away, draw the bride away, not by threats as much as by cunning, by craftiness. It's with craftiness that he led Adam and Eve away and that's what he says in verse three. And how does he come? This craftiness is described in verse four as coming and preaching another Jesus.

That means if he can convince you that Jesus was not like you, he was not tempted like you, he has succeeded. That is another Jesus. The Bible says the one who does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh is the spirit of the Antichrist, 1 John 4. Spirit of the Antichrist is repeated again in 2nd John.

John the Apostle, the age of 95, one thing he emphasizes tremendously in his epistles is Christ came in the flesh and if you don't confess that you got the spirit of the Antichrist. That is another Jesus and I'll tell you a lot of Christendom today is worshipping another Jesus who was fully God but not fully man. I worship a Jesus who was fully God and fully man and therefore he was tempted exactly like us but he did not sin.

There was not even a smell of sin in him and that is the Jesus who we proclaim in the church and we have proclaimed for 36 years and this is the Jesus who we are the bride of and who has transformed our life. You have seen the mystery. Ephesians 5 it says the mystery is the two shall become one flesh.

Have you read that? Ephesians 5 verse 31. The two shall become one flesh. The two shall become one flesh Ephesians 5 31 and you think that's referring to husband and wife? He says no.

Verse 32 I'm referring to Christ and the church. Have you seen that mystery? This is a great mystery. It says in verse 32 that Christ and the church are one flesh.

It's a mystery. The wholehearted those who fear God will see it. Those who love the world and love money and love themselves will not see it.

They will worship another Jesus and they'll be polluted. I'm not saying they'll go and commit adultery and steal and rob and all that but they will miss out on God's rest. There will be a spirit of harlotry in them.

The spirit of the mystery of iniquity speaks about the Antichrist and the mystery of iniquity in 2nd Thessalonians 2. Let me turn there for a moment if you want to understand what this other Jesus is and the other gospel and the other spirit. 2nd Thessalonians 2 it speaks about the mystery of iniquity or lawlessness in verse 7. 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 7. The mystery of iniquity or lawlessness is already at work and then it speaks about that lawless one that is the Antichrist. Verse 8 will be revealed and it says here about people who believe the lie.

What is the lie that people believe? It speaks about the Antichrist being restrained until the day. It's talking about by the way about the coming of the Lord in verse 1. It's talking about days immediately preceding the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and are being raptured to meet him before Christ comes. He's talking about I'm talking about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and are being raptured to meet him.

Don't get disturbed let me tell you something clearly. Verse 3 let no Christian preacher deceive you because that day will not come until the man of Christ and lawlessness the Antichrist is revealed. Do you know that Christ cannot come till you see the Antichrist? There will be no rapture before that.

I'll tell you honestly I'm not expecting Jesus Christ to come tonight. 95% of Christians don't believe me. It doesn't matter 95% of Christians in any case don't believe most of the things I preach.

They don't believe most of the things in the Bible. It doesn't matter. I've seen the way 95% of Christians live and I've seen the way 95% of Christian homes are and I've seen the way 95% of Christian churches are and I want to have nothing to do with it.

Because they believe another Jesus who did was not tempted like us. They believe in another gospel which can forgive your sin but cannot deliver you from sin. In their gospel there is no such thing as sin will not rule over you.

That's not in their gospel. Another spirit which gives you excitement but doesn't give you holiness. When the Bible speaks of evil spirits they make people completely evil.

When the Bible speaks about unclean spirits they make people completely unclean. When the Bible speaks about a Holy Spirit people say he cannot make you holy. You mean the unclean spirits can do a better job at their task than the Holy Spirit can do at his task.

What an insult. Have you seen people possessed by the devil? What a total control those demons have over that man or woman and we insult the Holy Spirit by saying he cannot ever do a work of holiness in people like the devil makes people unclean. Let me tell you as completely as Adam gave us his nature the Holy Spirit can give us the nature of Christ if you have faith.

But if you believe this other gospel that tells you that only your sins can be forgiven according to your faith be it unto you that's all you'll have. But I believe this I believe that as completely as Adam gave me his nature of corruption and filth and lying and hatred and bitterness oh I got it completely from Adam. It's an insult to my Savior Jesus to say that he cannot give me his nature completely.

Is Adam more capable of giving me his nature than the Holy Spirit is able to give me the nature of Christ? I'll tell you why. Because most Christians are not filled with the Holy Spirit. They love their flesh more than they love the Holy Spirit.

No wonder Adam's nature is being manifest much more in them because God gives us freedom to choose. When a demon possesses a man he does not give that person freedom to choose. He possesses that man and says from now on I'm going to tell you what to do.

The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He comes and fills our life and gives us power but he says I won't run your life. I want you to choose voluntarily to submit to me every day.

And so he goes on to speak here about this mystery of lawlessness. The lawless one will be revealed it says in verse 8 whom the Lord will slay. This is the one who comes with the activity of Satan.

There's going to be a lot of power and signs and false wonders in the last days and it'll deceive with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish. And it says here in verse 11 God will send a deluding influence on them so that they will believe and the margin says the lie. The literal word is God will make

people believe the lie.

Why? Because verse 10 they did not receive the love of the truth to be saved. If I don't love the truth as God shows it to me from Scripture. If I don't love the truth about myself when God speaks to me in a meeting and convicts me of my sin.

And if I don't love the truth enough to be from this wretched Adamic nature then Almighty God himself will send upon me verse 11 a deluding influence so that I will believe the lie. Now there are millions of lies but there is one like called in Scripture the lie. And if you've got a margin in your Bible it says literally it is the lie.

But because the translators couldn't understand that they just said what is false. But the actual thing which Paul wrote was the lie. And you know what the lie is? That is the first lie in the Bible.

First lie in the Bible was spoken by Satan. You can disobey God and get away with it. You can disobey God and nothing will happen.

It's a small thing. Just taking a little fruit. It's not a big thing.

You're not killing your husband or hitting him or doing something else. You're not making an idol and worshipping. No, no, not big thing.

It's a small thing. It's God has said a small thing you disobey that is the lie. You can do it.

It's not serious. That is the lie. And God will make people believe the lie that small sins, small disobediences to God's word are not serious.

Why does he make some Christians believe that? Because they don't love the truth. They don't want to be saved from everything of Adam that they have got. I want to ask you honestly.

How many of you want to be saved completely from everything you inherited from Adam? I want to. 100%. Everything.

I don't want a smell of Adam left in me. You know, bad moods, bitterness, unforgiving. All that I'm saying you see it in Christians.

Love of material things, lack of consideration for poor people. It's all Adam. 100%.

Seeking one's own honor, exalting oneself, pushing down others. It's all Adam. And you see plenty of it in Christendom.

Fighting, quarreling, arguing. Adam, Adam. I refuse to fight and argue with people.

Because the Bible says we do not wrestle with flesh and blood. Even over doctrine. I've had people come to my house and want to argue with me about some doctrine.

And I say, listen, if you want me to explain from Scripture the doctrine to you, I'll do it. But if you want argument, I'm not interested. And when he begins to argue again, I say, listen, I'd like to talk to you about cricket.

You know the score that's going on in the matches now? Because there we are on the same side. We all want India to win. I changed the subject.

So I'm not interested in fighting with people over doctrine. Because I know this. If a man wants to do God's will, he will know the doctrine.

And if he does not know the doctrine, it's because he does not want to do God's will. That's what Jesus said. You know this verse in John chapter 7, verse 17.

How to be sure that your doctrine is right. Here's the answer. If anyone is really willing to do all the will of God, show me a person here who wants to do all the will of God in your life.

In other words, you want to marry whom God wants you to marry, not whom you want to marry. You want to go and live in the place where God wants you to live, not where you want to live. You want to take a job which God wants you to take, not what you want to take.

In everything big and small, you want what God wants and not what you want. I can tell you in Jesus name, you will know whether this doctrine, this teaching is from God or not. Jesus said that.

But if you don't want God's will in some little area, you say, Lord, all these things I want God's will, but not here. You will keep on arguing about doctrine all your life. I've seen that.

The more eager you are to do the will of God in every single area of your life, you will never go astray in doctrine. And I've seen people who go astray in doctrine, and I know somewhere in their life, they don't want the will of God. How many of you are willing to give all your money to God and say, Lord, I want to spend my money from now onwards only the way you want me to spend it.

I want to spend my time the way you want me to spend it. I mean, I would say to God personally, I'm not asking you to say that, Lord, I will not even take a vacation unless you want me to take it. Oh, but brother Zach, after so much activity, don't you need a rest? No, God knows what I need.

If God sees that I need a vacation, he'll tell me to take it. I don't plan my life. I get so many invitations from so many places.

And if I were the average type of preacher, I'd just take it. I'd say no. God doesn't want me to go to all these places.

I want to go where God wants me to go, not where people invite me. I have people tell me, brother Zach, will you please come and take oversight over our church? I say no. I have no lust to oversee any church.

Zero. I want to do God's will. Because I'll be a nuisance to people if I go where God doesn't want me to go.

I'll be a nuisance if I try to go and do something that God doesn't want me to do. And I don't want to be a nuisance to people. I want to be a blessing to people.

So if you are eager to do God's will in your life in every area, you know the doctrine that is right or wrong. The lie is that you can disobey God and get away with it. It's the first lie God convinced Adam and Eve of in a small little thing.

And you can see that he has convinced people all over the world because that is the spirit of rebellion. That God has said something. And I say, well, it doesn't matter.

I can modify it. I can change it. That's the spirit of rebellion.

It started out with whatever his name was. They call him Lucifer, but that's not his real name. His real name is not mentioned in Scripture.

What his name was when he was an angel is not mentioned anywhere in Scripture. Lucifer is just a Latin word. It's found in one of the earlier Bibles.

He's called the shining one. We know some of his other colleagues like Michael and Gabriel, but we don't know the name of the one who became the devil. So I don't know what his name is, but let's call him Lucifer for the time being.

He was the head of the angels and he rebelled. The first sin in the universe was not adultery, was not telling lies, was not disobedience. It was rebellion against authority.

I will not submit to God's authority. Like a poet has said, the words of Satan was, it is better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven. Got it? It's better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven.

I want to rule. I want my own little kingdom to rule. That's how many churches have started.

Somebody does not like to submit somewhere. So I don't want to submit there. I'll break off and start and be the ruler.

Better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven. It was to overcome that spirit that Jesus came with the spirit of a servant to bow and serve people. But that rebellion against authority is what brought sin into the universe.

Never forget it, that the first sin was rebellion against authority. And if that sin is not eliminated from us, then root is there. We can be free from so many other things.

You see, I don't commit adultery. I don't steal. I've overcome anger.

I don't lust after women. But rebellion is there. You got the worst thing, brother.

You got the worst thing of all. You got rid of these two, three minor sins and you got the worst sin still sitting in your heart. Rebellion against authority, rebellion against God's Word.

We got to be careful about that. And that's why, as I said yesterday, we got to teach our children from the time they are small to submit to authority. And that's why in our church, we've taught submission to authority.

Wives, be subject to your husbands. And that is an example the Bible gives, as the church is to Christ. When a wife is not subject to her husband, as the church is to Christ, she has got the spirit of the devil.

I have no doubt in saying that. I'm not saying she can't ask or question or disagree. Yes, a wife is a helper, but if she's got a spirit of rebellion, that is of the devil.

If she's unwilling to be subject to her husband, then let her husband be the leader in her home. And I don't mean reluctantly, grudgingly. Submission is not submission if it's not joyful.

You say, how can I be submitted to a husband who is not spiritual? How could Jesus submit to Joseph and Mary who were not spiritual? There's your example. You think you're so perfect. Are you as perfect as Jesus was in Nazareth? He was perfect, but he submitted to totally imperfect Joseph and Mary who were under the old covenant, who had no victory over sin.

He saw them fighting with each other and he didn't despise them. Because if he despised them, he would have sinned. But he submitted to them.

Because he came here to overcome that spirit of rebellion that the devil had brought. It's so important for us to understand. It can come into a home very easily.

And when you see rebellion in your children, you ask yourself who brought that spirit into your home? Perhaps the wife. The children see the way the wife talks to her husband and they pick it up. And if the mommy asks the boy, how do you speak to me like that? Mom, I was just speaking to you the way you speak to dad.

I'm learning something from you. The spirit of rebellion, it spreads quickly, quicker than the flu, quicker than chickenpox. People can catch it up like that, especially children.

We're so careful to protect our children from infectious diseases. What about the spirit of rebellion? Worst of all, so that's the thing we have to preserve the church from, to be a pure virgin for Jesus Christ. See in the in the letters to the churches, he speaks there in the first church in Ephesus about how they were doing all the right things, but they had lost the love for Christ.

And the Lord says that's bad. That was a church that had become on its way to becoming a harlot. Because it was doing the right things, having meetings, conferences, but fervent love for Jesus is gone.

We can learn something from those churches. We see another church in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 12 of the church in Pergamum. And they were taken up with the teaching of Balaam, which is being occupied with money, preaching for money.

Where money became the central thing in that church. Raising money, urging people to give money, money, money, money. That's another false gospel.

And there's plenty of it. And to the angel of the church in Thyatira, verse 18, write, I have this against you that you tolerate your wife, who is a Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches people wrong things, spiritual immorality. If you allow your wife to be the boss, that's the spirit of Jezebel.

And here was an elder brother whose wife was a Jezebel. I'm sorry to say that recently I had to write to the wife of one of CFC elders, you are a Jezebel. You got the spirit of Jezebel and your husband can't control you.

There's something wrong. I don't care if people are offended. We're jealous to keep the church pure.

And if the husband won't tell her, I have to tell her. I don't go around telling everybody, but if there's somebody in one of our churches who's got the spirit of Jezebel, I'll tell them straight. The spirit of Ahab's wife leading people astray from worshiping and submitting to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Be careful, brothers, that that does not enter into our home. There are many ways in which Satan is seeking to infiltrate and get into even CFC churches, and we're determined to fight the battle, not against flesh and blood, but to keep the church pure from all these filthy influences. And I noticed another thing that this sister said.

She said, I've decided to take off the veiling from my head. I said, I'm absolutely convinced. When a woman removes the veil from her head, not one who grew up without it in some church where they didn't teach it, that may be ignorance, but when a woman wore a veil for a long time and then one day decides to take it off, it is pretty clear she's going on the road to being a Jezebel.

It's a spirit of rebellion. I don't want to be under authority anymore. Actually, she's honest.

She's honest. Say, I take it off. I'm not under anybody's authority.

Okay, go your way. I'm almost certain if such a woman doesn't repent, she'll go to hell, without any doubt in my mind. And the husband will be responsible.

Be careful. I'm not saying that you must be a tyrant to put your wife under your thumb, but I want to say to you, sisters, don't bring the spirit of rebellion into your home. Now, when it comes to, I spoke about submission to authority.

Now, there are a lot of elders who like to hear Brother Zach speak on submission to authority because it sort of establishes their throne in their church. Now, they may not be spiritual people, elders, and some of our elders are not. And people ask me once, some of them ask me, Brother, how can you appoint this man as an elder? I said, because a one-eyed man is king among the blind.

Understood? A one-eyed man is king among the blind. All the others in the church are blind. This fellow's only got one eye.

He's the elder. Now, if he comes to a church where everybody's got two eyes, he'll be sitting in the last seat. It's a relative thing what to do.

And, well, shall you submit to this elder whom you don't have any confidence in? The answer is no. Confidence is the basis of obedience. And confidence is not something that you can force people to have.

I can't say, you must have confidence in me. Rubbish. I have to earn it.

A husband who tells his wife, listen, the Bible says, wives, be subject to your husbands. He's not a godly husband. He's a dictator.

He's like Saddam Hussein, not like Jesus Christ. Because he's trying to use a verse which is not even written for him. There's a verse in Ephesians 5, 22, which says, wives, be subject to your own husbands.

Let me ask even the little children here, or you tell me, who is that written to? To husbands or to wives? Who? You don't know? Read it again. Wives. It's a letter addressed to wives.

You know what a godly husband will do when he sees a letter addressed to his wife? Say, darling, here's a letter for you. I'm not going to open it. I don't want to read it.

And here's a letter, the Holy Spirit's address to a wife. You don't even read it. Oh, that's not for me.

Let me go to the next verse. Oh, that's also for my wife. Okay, let me go to the next verse.

That's also for my wife. Okay, let me go to verse 25. Husbands, ah, something for me now.

See, that's how a godly husband does. But an ungodly husband, he's a busybody in other people's matters, opens other people's letters, and says, wives, here, it says here, be subject to your husbands. Why did you open that letter? That was not meant for you.

And there are elders who do the same thing. They will point their people in their church to Hebrews 13, 17. Hey, listen to this.

Just like the Saddam Hussein husband, there are Saddam Hussein elders also who say to their flock, Hebrews 13 says, obey your leaders. Brother, that's not written for you. That's written for the flock.

Let them read it. This letter is not addressed to you. Don't even read it.

I mean, if you want to read it, then see who is your leader and obey them. Maybe you're an elder and God's put an apostle over you, you better listen to him. If you don't have an apostle, then do what you like.

But it's for those, it's a word not to tell other people, you must obey me because I'm your leader. You never find that in scripture. Submission must come from below, accepted from below and not imposed from above.

When it is imposed from above, it's demonic. Even Jesus Christ does not impose his authority upon us. How many of you have found Jesus imposing his authority upon you, sitting on your head until you obey him? I can think of 101 things in my life, I'm sorry to say, where the Lord told me to do it and I didn't do it immediately.

I'm ashamed. So many things in my life, when I look back, the Lord told me to do it and I waited. The first thing was baptism.

Way back when I was 19 and a half, I took one and a half years to obey him and he didn't sit on my head and crush me, he just loved me and blessed me. And one day when I felt like obeying, I obeyed and he loved me, accepted me and led me on. That's how Jesus leads, he doesn't impose his authority upon us, he leads, he doesn't push, drive.

So a leader must never push or drive, he goes in front like the chef, he just loved me and blessed me. And one day when I felt like obeying, I obeyed and he loved me, accepted me and led me on. That's how Jesus leads, he doesn't impose his authority upon us, he leads, he doesn't push, drive.

So a leader must never push or drive, he goes in front like the shepherd in front of the flock. I'll tell you, you can find out as an elder whether you're a shepherd or a hireling. I've seen here on the streets of Bangalore, the hirelings driving the sheep and goats to the slaughterhouse to be cut up to be sold as mutton.

But a good shepherd doesn't go with a stick, he goes in front and says, follow me. That's what Jesus said and if you're one of those who's got a whip in your hand and you get up every Sunday morning and whip everybody, come on you must do this and you must do that, you sitting over there, I'm preaching to you right now, do this and you sitting over there, you must do this. Brother, you're a hireling, why not go in front of the flock and say, follow me.

I don't ask any of you to submit to me unless you have confidence in me. I've said that in CFC by the way. I have got up in CFC and said, I am not your elder brother if you have no confidence in me.

Full stop. I'm not your elder brother, I'm the elder brother only of those who have confidence in me and who want me to guide them. And even when they come to me for advice, they come to my home and sit and say, Brother Zach, please give me some advice on this.

I say, okay, this is what I think the scripture says, but now go home, pray about it and see if the Lord wants you to do it and if the Lord doesn't want you to do it, don't do it. I won't be offended. I want you to be connected to Christ.

I'm just giving you advice and if you don't obey me and you make a mess of your life, you come back to me and say, Brother Zach, I'm sorry, I made a mess of my life. I will never say to you these evil words, I told you so. You'll never hear me say that to anybody.

You know, there are some people who have a carnal delight in telling people, I told you so. Why didn't you listen to me, the great prophet? Yeah, that is the spirit of the devil and some elders have it. If you can't give advice to some brother who did not listen to you, you're not fit to be an elder.

A godly man, think of the number of times you did not listen to the Lord and then you went back to him. Did he guide you? Of course he did because he's a father. I've often said to the elders in our church, we want fathers, we don't want teachers.

Teachers are offended if students don't listen to him. Fathers are patient. So do you have to submit to everybody who calls himself an elder in your church if you don't have confidence in him? Obey him in the things related to the church meeting.

If he says the meeting is at 9 30, don't go at 10 o'clock, go at 9 30. When he tells you to stand up to sing, stand up to sing, don't sit down. You know like the PT teacher in school, stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down, do what he says.

In church matters, now we sit down and sing, sit down and sing. Now he says stand up and sing, stand up and sing. All those matters please obey.

But when it comes to your life, how to run your life, you have zero confidence in him, don't go to him for advice, don't consult him. You have no confidence in him. There are many elders like that.

Just because a church in some way claims to be connected with CFC does not mean it's a spiritual church. Let me clear that doubt from your mind forever and does not mean that elder just because his name is on some elders list is somebody we approve of or recommend. I have personally said this to people.

If you go to a town and there is a church there in some way connected to CFC and that elder's name happens to be on the elders list, go there, try it out and if you're not happy there because you find carnality or worldliness or the elder is a bit of a dictator and you find another church, maybe a Methodist church or a Baptist church, something there or a Pentecostal church where there's a more godly man who's a leader even if he calls himself a pastor, I, Zach Poonen, will tell you to go to that Pentecostal church and not to the CFC church and you can quote me on that because I want you to be a disciple of Jesus, not to be a CFC loyalist. I'm not interested in building CFC. I'm interested in making disciples and if you can be a

better disciple by going to a non-CFC church, it'll be a crime for me to tell you to be go to CFC church with some type of earthly loyalty.

The Pharisees must be go to the Pharisees club. The Sadducees must go to the Sadducees club. We don't have any club.

We don't even have a membership. So I've given you freedom, brothers and sisters. Now you're free in your locality.

If you find your local church, the one that brought you here, who put your name on the list and brought you here is not godly, leave it and go to another church which is godly where you can be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus Christ. I remember one brother in one of our towns where we've had a CFC church for many years, one brother telling me, he used to come for our conferences and but he never went to our local church there. I asked him one day why.

He said, brother Zach, I'm tremendously blessed by CFC Bangalore and your ministry but this your local, whether you call it a branch or not over here, I don't find it godly. I don't find the leaders godly. I said, then I approve of your not going there.

He was going to another church. I said, go ahead. What shall we say? Go to this ungodly Saddam Hussein leader type of church? No.

So, it's so important to understand confidence. You young people, as you grow up, you must win the confidence of those younger to you, teenagers who grew up in your church, those of you who are in your 20s, 30s. You should be a tremendous example to the teenagers, boys and girls.

You must win their confidence. You can win the confidence of little children. I'll tell you how to win the confidence of little children.

Easy method. Give them a chocolate. I tell you, that's all it requires to win confidence with a five-year-old.

They'll follow you for life. It's so easy and it costs so little. That's how we win them and then we can tell them about Jesus.

Love the little children. Be an example. Be an elder brother, sister, even to those little ones.

Be friends. Jesus loved little children. We must do that.

Like you've heard me say this, when I go to a home, I like to talk to the children. Even in homes I visit here, I ask the children, what did you study in school today? Bring me your homework book. Let me see what you studied and I sit down with them and I teach them some geography.

I don't turn to Hebrews or James or anything like that. I turn to that geography book. I teach them something about latitude and longitude and little things like that and I win their heart so that when they come and sit in CFC, they pay attention to me when I turn to Hebrews and James.

That's what I want. I want to win them for the Lord. All of you can do it if you have a little love for these younger ones and all of you are elder to somebody else in your church.

Even if you're 15 years old, you're elder to so many people younger than you. What are you doing to help them? Sisters, you know you can be elders to those little ones. Be an example and say, follow me.

Win them for Christ. Don't leave all the job to the elders in the church. You be a help in that.

This is so important to understand. The function of the elders is to lead the church forward, to guide them. You know, in the Old Testament, we believe that the most important ministry in a church is prophetic ministry and prophetic ministry is so misunderstood.

There's a verse in 1 Samuel which says, in the Old Testament, the prophets were called seers, s-e-e-r, and it means what it says. A seer is one who can see a long way off. He's got discernment to see if this church goes in this direction, five years from now, it'll be in a pit.

And says, hey, don't go there. Steer this way. That's prophetic vision.

But people who don't have prophetic vision, they say, no, no, no, brother. It's okay. It's okay.

We'll be all right. We'll be all right, till they fall into the pit. And then they say, yeah, you were right, brother.

We need people with prophetic vision in the church. For example, when the music begins to take a certain direction and the young people would really like to take off in a certain direction, it's not a question of where it is now. Now it may be all right.

You have to see where is this going to lead this church five years from now. That's prophetic vision. And it's a question of sight, you know, like some people can read something on a board 50 feet away.

They read clearly, because their vision is so clear. Another person comes to 20 feet, then only you can read it. Another person comes to five feet, then only you can read it.

So spiritual vision also is like that. Maybe there's a pit five years ahead of you. When one with prophetic vision will see it, another person will maybe see it only after they fall into the pit.

Oh, there's a pit here. You have to be extremely thankful if you've got humble men of God in your church who do not consider themselves prophets, but who have a prophetic ministry. In our church, we believe in apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, but we don't call anybody a prophet, or an apostle, or a shepherd, or a teacher, or an evangelist.

You see, they fulfill a ministry. We don't need to give a label. I never went around my home with a badge saying dad.

Never. I've never seen anybody in any home going around saying, he must be insecure, that guy, poor fellow, nobody knows in that house that he's the dad. He used to wear this badge and go around showing everybody.

I see sometimes that word in the prophet so-and-so, evangelist so-and-so, insecure people. It's the same thing, and I see these fellows calling themselves evangelist so-and-so, prophet so-and-so, apostle so-and-so. It reminds me of the guy who goes around with the badge saying dad.

Insecure. The Christian world is full of insecure people who try to assert themselves. Elder.

Brother, if you're a father, they'll know it. So let me liberate you from thinking that you have to blindly submit to elders who, by their action and their words, do not produce confidence in you. And I'll tell you something about ministering in the church.

In a church where, if they allow you to, after one brother shared and others share briefly, it doesn't matter if you speak number five. The first brother may go on for half an hour and bore everybody, and then another brother five, ten minutes, and then you only get a chance at number five. And you get to speak only for three minutes.

But you're with such an anointing and freshness that when the meeting is over, everybody goes away and remembers what you spoke for three minutes and forgot everything else. You were the prophet there, but you didn't have the label prophet, but you're the one who blessed everybody. And next time, when next Sunday comes along, they'll be waiting for number five to get up.

They sit and listen. Oh, I hope this fellow finishes on one, two, three, four. Number five has got up.

We're waiting to hear what he has to say. You know, you can be a brother like that. You can be a sister like that.

A sister can prophesy. She can't teach, but she can prophesy. If she doesn't have the spirit of Jezebel, she can prophesy, and you can bless people.

That's our calling in the church. Instead of that, sometimes we can be deceived by religious spirits. Religious spirits are those who emphasize Bible study and praying, and how many hours do you pray, how much do you read the Bible.

Let me tell you something. If you are more disturbed because you didn't read the Bible half an hour one day than losing your temper once a day, you are religious, not spiritual. A spiritual man will be more disturbed if he lost his temper once in a day than if he didn't read the Bible for half an hour in the morning.

If you do both, that's the best, but it's godliness that's more important than study. Don't be a scribe. Be a disciple.

If you're more interested in going for the breaking of bread meeting than in fellowship with God's people, you're religious or the holy communion. What about the holy fellowship with people? See, the Bible says in Ephesians 4 and verse 16 that the body of Christ is built up and fitted together by that which every joint supplies. This is a lovely word.

I've often spoken about it. Ephesians 4 and verse 16. It's talking about the building of the body of Christ, fitted, held together by that which every joint supplies according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the whole body building up itself in love.

That which every joint supplies. I just want to explain that because this is the biggest problem in many of our CFC churches, even among the elders. You have a strong elder brother which is like a strong upper arm.

Wonderful. I like strong elder brothers. And you have another strong elder brother who's like the lower arm.

I like him too. But the joint is stiff. They don't fellowship with each other.

It's going on like this. How about bending your hand brother? Can't bend it. I'm a strong muscular elder.

Here's another strong muscular elder, but they can't bend the elbow. Useless. Would you like to have a hand like this? Muscular, rippling with muscles, but you can't bend your elbow.

I'd rather have a weaker elder brother and a weaker one who doesn't know the Bible so much, but who can fellowship with the other. You know what this joint is? Fellowship. You hear any noise? Put it near the mic.

If I had arthritis, you would hear creak, creak, creak, creak, creak, creak, creak. That is the fellowship between some elders. Anytime they come together, noise, noise, noise, noise.

Joint is not working. The sad thing is the elders are not bothered about it. If you can't fellowship and work with the other elders in your church, you are a good for nothing, useless agent of Satan.

Sitting there as an elder in a church of God. Brother, retire. The best brother in the church is the one who can build fellowship with others.

I'd rather have a little child who can function with all the joints working noiselessly than a big giant whose hands are stiff and legs, knees are stiff. What can he do? He's useless. You think the devil is scared of some mighty man like this who knows so much of the Bible, who can preach so well, but can't fellowship with anybody? Do you know how many joints there are in your body? That's what makes your neck bend.

That's what makes your, you can bend at the hip. That's what makes your arms bend, shoulders. So many in the fingers, joints, joints, knees in your foot also.

So many joints. Joints is what makes your body function. That's what it says.

You're that which every joint supplies. So what is the most important thing? I don't care if one hand is paralyzed. If all the other joints are functioning, I can do a lot more than a fellow muscular he-man who's like this stiff, like a statue.

And unfortunately, that is the condition of many people in many of our churches. That's the condition of many people in their homes. What's the use being a wonderful brother and you married a wonderful sister, but you can't fellowship with each other at home.

That's a tragedy which the devil has fooled people saying this is the body of Christ. Just because you're not connected to CFC or you have some respect for Zach Koonin, it makes absolutely no difference. You got to submit to Jesus Christ and be open to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has come to build the body of Christ and I want to tell you the first body of Christ in Nazareth, every joint was functioning without noise. Jesus could run, walk, lift, do so many things because every joint was functioning and we want to build every church like that as the body of Christ where every person fellowships with the other. And if that does not happen at the elder level, it's not going to go down to the others.

The father and mother are fighting. How can you expect the children not to fight with each other? There's a tremendous need for repentance in our midst, brothers and sisters. Forget about all the others.

Forget about the fact that you got the right doctrine. Forget about the fact that you speak in tongues and in the ancient past you were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Can you have fellowship with one another? Otherwise we're not building the body of Christ.

We don't have the new wineskin. We've got a doctrine. We've got a picture of a new wineskin but not the actual wineskin.

You cannot pour wine into a photograph. That's what a lot of people have. So let's repent, turn our face towards God.

I believe there's a tremendous need for many of our brothers and elders to call for fasting and prayer and to fast and pray themselves. I remember the days in our early days in our church when we were facing crucial decisions. We fast sometimes for three days, seek God and say, Lord, what shall we do? We want guidance.

And our fasting and praying was an expression of our utter helplessness before God. Say, Lord, show us. And that's how God led us in those early days.

And we do that again whenever needed, whenever there's a crisis. May God help us to passionately seek his glory that we can present to Christ a pure virgin one day. He was yours to hear.

Let him hear. Please do not be offended anybody by anything you heard today. If you love the truth, you will not be offended.

If you do not love the truth, may God have mercy on you. Let's bow our heads. Heavenly Father, help us to realize the seriousness.

Oh God, Father, help us to realize the seriousness of the issues we are dealing with. Help us to realize this is not a game. There's a life and death issue which involves the souls of so many people.

In this conflict with Satan, we want to be victorious. We don't want Satan to have any power over any of our churches. Lord, please help us.

Help those who claim to be elders and leaders of your people to be godly examples of humility, service, of brokenness, and exemplary in building fellowship. Raise up such men. And if you can't find such older men, raise up younger men and women like you raised up Deborah because the men failed you in that time.

Raise up young men and women who will lead the church forward, Lord. But we want the church to go forward. We don't want this church to be ossified and sit in a pathetic state because of king souls who sit on their thrones.

Have mercy upon us. Remove such souls. We pray and lead your church forward.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Source:

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