

A God Who Encourages Us

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes understanding God as a loving Father who encourages us, contrasting this with the Old Testament's teaching approach and highlighting the importance of true repentance and love for others.

Duration: 1:10:46

Scripture: Matthew 6:25, Romans 15:5

Topics: "Christian Love", "Godly Encouragement"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of treating others with kindness and encouragement, reflecting on how God treats us. It highlights the need to repent of not showing love and encouragement to others, as God does for us. The speaker delves into the significance of being a source of comfort and encouragement to those around us, mirroring God's character of compassion and love. The message underscores the power of forgiveness, the impact of encouragement, and the transformation that comes from treating others with grace and kindness.

Transcript

I first began to sit and speak when I had to speak four or five times a day at a conference and it got a bit tiring on my legs. So, since I wanted to find the scriptural support for everything I did, I looked into how did Jesus preach, was he sitting or standing? And I tell you, though I've read the Bible so many times, it never struck me till I studied it that almost every time Jesus sat and spoke. If you don't believe that, just check it out in the scriptures.

The sermon on the mount, he wasn't standing, he was sitting. Even when he was in a boat preaching to the people on the seaside, he was sitting and I was, I wasn't trying to justify my sitting, I was just trying to wonder why did he do that? Because none of the Old Testament prophets sat when they spoke, they always stood. So, since I'd majored in the last 40 years and trying to see the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, I said, is there something here that the Old Covenant prophets all stood? Whereas Jesus did stand sometimes and speak, but most of the time he was sitting.

And so, I saw a difference. The Old Testament prophets spoke as the mouthpiece of God to the people, but Jesus was building a family. The Old Testament prophets more like teachers telling Israel where they were wrong, telling them to repent.

And I saw there's a lot of difference between a teacher and a father. You know, Paul speaks about that in 1 Corinthians 4, he says, if you're not familiar with that verse, let me show it to all of you. 1 Corinthians 4, he's writing to the Corinthians after, you know, trying to correct them for a lot of sin in their midst.

And he says, I'm not writing these things to shame you, 1 Corinthians 4, 14, because you can have 10,000 teachers, but you don't have many fathers. And I became your father through the gospel. So, I see there that one father is better than 10,000 teachers.

I work with about 100 elders in many, many churches across India and other places, and my constant exhortation to them is don't be a teacher, be a father. Even when you teach God's Word, be a father. A teacher stands and teaches in a school, at least in India they do that.

I don't know how it's here. A father, when he sits at the table, he's not standing. When he speaks to his children, he's sitting at the table.

And so, I saw that was the difference between the Old Testament prophet and the New Testament servant of God. Jesus came to build a family. He was like a father sitting at the head of the table.

And the Old Testament prophets were just teachers proclaiming where Israel was wrong. In the church, we seek to build a family. So, that's something new I got.

I mean, not that there are times I still stand, not whether you stand or sit, but the principle there, I was trying to understand why Jesus sat compared to the Old Testament prophets who stood. So, that was a new revelation to me, that our posture itself indicates something. Paul says, I'm a father, and he says, a father will never shame his children.

Whenever you say something to somebody to shame that person, you're not speaking in the spirit of the New Covenant. Because he says, I'm not writing these things to shame you because I'm your father. I'll correct you, but I won't shame you.

So, true Christianity not only changes our relationship with God, it changes our attitude towards the people, even the way we speak to people. When I see something wrong in someone and I speak in a way to shame him, that's not the spirit of the New Covenant. Maybe the spirit of the Old Testament prophet, but not the spirit of Christ.

The spirit of Christ will correct, won't leave something wrong, uncorrected. He'll correct, but always the aim will be to restore, to bring that thing which is imperfect to perfection. And I found through the years that the reason why we're not often very kind and gracious in the way we speak to others, particularly those whom we know very well, is partly because we've not come to know God in that way.

A lot of people think of God as a God who is always trying to correct them, but there's something wrong, something like a policeman on your tail, you know, flashing his lights. That's a completely wrong picture of God that a lot of Christians have. I know I had that myself for many years, and it brought condemnation in my life.

And I was born again. I had even quit my job to serve the Lord, but I still did not know what a good father God was. My life changed when I understood that about 42 years ago, completely changed, just this revelation.

So I see that this is one of the great things that Jesus came to reveal. He taught us to pray our Father who art in heaven. And I found in most of the Christians I've met, when they pray in public or in private, it's very rarely that they say, Father, especially usually, oh God, or Lord.

There's nothing wrong in that. He is God, and He is Lord. But I found in my own life that when I was always praying like that, it was an indication that I didn't really know Him as my Father.

It's good for you to ask yourself, when you address God, how do you address Him? And in private, when I pray, I call Him Dad, because that's the meaning of Abba. It says in Romans 8, 16, the Spirit within us cries out, Abba, Father. Abba is a Hebrew word, and if it were translated into English, it would be Dad.

That is the correct translation of Abba. So He's talking about an intimacy that we're supposed to have with God, and that is how we are to begin our Christian life. That's not some postgraduate degree we get in the Christian life or something we mature to after many years.

From day one, it's like when a child is born in your home, day one, you want Him to call you. You can't speak yet, but you want Him to know that you're His Dad or you're His Mom. God is both to us.

And when we see God like that, we understand words like this, for example, Romans 15, where it says, May the God, and this is Romans 15 and verse 5, May the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another. What a wonderful verse that is, Romans 15, verse 5. Think of that in a husband-wife relationship. So many husbands and wives are not in the same mind with each other.

And if I look at this verse, I think part of reason is they don't know God as a God who gives them encouragement. If I see God as a God who's always giving encouragement, think of knowing God as a God who gives encouragement. There are so many things in the world to depress us, discourage us, make us anxious, fearful.

To know God as a God out to encourage us, never to discourage us. Discouragement is a no-entry road. And we must respect that law of God, just like we respect traffic rules when we see a no-entry sign somewhere.

Discouragement is a no-entry road. Self-condemnation is also a no-entry road. But I never knew this when I was a young Christian.

I was converted when I was 19. I wish somebody had caught a hold of me and said, listen, you must never be discouraged. You must never be condemning yourself.

That's not God's will. I think my life would have been better much earlier. But if I slipped up and fell, I would go into discouragement, self-condemnation.

That's not God's will. I have to confess. I have to repent, ask God to forgive me, but not spend the next few days in discouragement and depression because I slipped up.

The God who gives encouragement. And when we see God like that, you'll find it changes our behavior towards those we love, whether it's at home or in the church. That helps build us together as a family at home and as a family in the church.

So I want to encourage all of you early in your life, right now in the Christian life, to know God as a God who is always there to encourage you. And if you hear a voice of discouragement, you can be absolutely sure that's not God. And if you hear a message in a church to discourage you, either the preacher doesn't know God or you got it in the wrong way.

One of the two, because God does not discourage. I don't see anywhere in Scripture. He corrects.

He rebukes very strongly. In fact, in Revelation 3, 19, the Lord says, as many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. The rebuke of God never leads us to discouragement.

It's always the devil who wants to discourage us because I remember those younger days of mine before I knew God as a loving, encouraging Father. If I slipped up and I got discouraged, it would lead me into more sin. So I became weak by that discouragement.

And that's exactly what the devil wanted, make me weak so that he can trip me up more easily. But instead of that, if I had said, Lord, I've repented, I want to turn from that. I'm sorry for what I did.

I want you to believe. I want to believe you've cleansed me. And if I could believe God's word that he is cleansing, it's not something that takes time.

It's immediate. And I don't have to, you know, shed a lot of tears as though my tears will cleanse my sin. No, it's the blood of Jesus that cleanses sin.

And if God sees I'm sincere and turn to him, I don't need to confess my sin to him more than once. I may have a lot of sorrow for it for a long time, for I slipped up in some way, and I dishonored God. There may be sorrow in my heart, but not discouragement.

And I don't have to keep on saying, oh, Lord, I sinned, I sinned, I sinned. I used to do that, particularly if it was a serious sin. I'd keep on repenting as if God didn't hear me the first time.

If I'm not sincere, then he doesn't hear me even if I confess it 100 times. But if I sincerely come to the Lord and say, Lord, I'm sorry, I slipped up. It was wrong.

I acknowledge my error. I'm forgiven immediately. Think of the thief on the cross.

He was such a criminal. I don't know whether he was a thief and a murderer, all combined. But let's assume he was around the same age as Jesus, 33 or so, and he spent all his 33 years doing evil, or most of it anyway.

And all he said when he turned to the Lord, he read was, I deserve, I'm getting what I deserve in Luke 23, 41. I'm being punished righteously, Luke 23, 41. I'm getting what I deserve.

Lord, remember me. He didn't torment himself saying, oh, God, you know, I've done such a wicked, such a wicked life. I've killed so many people, and now I won't get a chance to go and ask their forgiveness.

I've stolen from so many people. He didn't torture himself or torment himself, even though he was much worse than all of us. He said, I deserve this.

I'm a sinner. I'm guilty. And Jesus said, you'll be with me in paradise today.

How quick the Lord was to forgive that person, to wipe out a lifetime of sin in a moment. This is our Father. This is our Lord.

We must never lose sight of this clear vision of Jesus, who was also showing by his life how the Father was. I mention this because I know this wrong attitude tortured me for a long time, my Christian life, and it's quite likely that it does to you as well. It's very difficult for us to believe when we have done some terribly wrong things that God forgives so quickly and immediately.

I know there are people who, when they see that God's forgiveness is quick and immediate and complete, they take advantage of God and say, okay, well, it doesn't matter. I can slip up again and he'd forgive me. Now, those are the people who are playing games with God.

I can't imagine this man, if he was taken down from the cross, if the Romans just released him. I can't imagine him going back to murdering and theft and after that. His repentance was genuine, and that's how ours must be.

So I also have been thinking of late of why is the repentance of so many people, so many Christians, so shallow? If our repentance is shallow, our experience of Christ's life will also be shallow. So I looked at Matthew chapter 22 to try and understand true repentance. If we understand what is God's basic requirement of us, then we understand what repentance is.

Repentance is, I don't fulfill that requirement. In Adam's case, it was pretty clear. He must not eat of that tree.

What is it in our case that God wants from us? In Matthew 22, you know, they asked him in verse 36, what is the great commandment in the law? And he said, now they expected him, for them, the great commandment was the Sabbath for all the Israelites. You see that how they were really after Jesus for whenever he did something on the Sabbath, they got upset with him. But Jesus doesn't even mention the Sabbath.

It's not some ritual, something, I mean, today going to church every Sunday. These are not the great commandments of the law. No, he says the great commandment is you must love God, love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.

In other words, nothing and nobody must be more important to you than God himself. That is God's law. And repentance is when I don't fulfill that, when something is more important to me than God.

It could be my job. It could be money. It could be anything.

Something has taken the place of God in my heart. It could be anything. It could be my rights.

I want to stand for my rights. That's very important. How dare this guy treat me like that? No, I have no rights once I come to Christ.

God, because then I've made my rights my God. People can say, well, how dare this person speak to me like this? Who are we? Jesus was never offended when people spoke to him in a rude way. This is also one big difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

See, when Moses' sister, his older sister, Miriam, spoke against Moses, not in a bad way, didn't speak evil about Moses. She just said, why have you married this non-Israeli woman? Because Moses' wife was not

a Jew, not a Jewish family. Why have you married a non-Israeli woman? Just because she questioned God's servant, she got leprosy.

Just for a simple thing like that. But when they came to Jesus, when people came to Jesus and said far worse things like, you're casting out demons by the prince of demons. Your name is Beelzebul.

That's a lot worse than what Miriam said. Miriam got leprosy. The Pharisees who said this to Jesus got forgiveness.

That's the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. You know, it speaks in Hebrews about the blood of Abel and the blood of Jesus. The many contrasts like this you find in the Bible about old and new covenant.

It says in Hebrews 12 that the blood of Abel, when it fell to the ground, when Cain killed him, was silently crying out for revenge. Punish the one who shed my blood. Punish him.

Don't spare him. God didn't spare Cain. He cursed him.

And it says in Hebrews 12 that the blood of Jesus fell to the ground. It wasn't crying for revenge or punishment. It's crying out for forgiveness.

It's a very beautiful picture. The blood of Abel on the ground and the blood of Jesus on the ground. One crying out for revenge my blood and the other saying forgive.

So when we have anything other than God as occupying the place in our heart, if I don't love God with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my mind, I am in sin. So repentance is, you know, turning around and giving up anything that took the place of God, my heart, giving it up. Whereas most Christians, when they are first, when they are taught to, first of all, most evangelists don't even preach repentance.

They just preach, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and will be saved. And their whole aim, you know, the aim of a lot of evangelism is we don't want people to go to hell. We want to save them from hell.

So missionary challenges are given like this in churches. Look at all those millions going to hell. Don't you want to go and save them? And people respond to that challenge and come forward without any call from God to go to that place.

And you go to a place without a call from God, you're going to create problems for God's work. I've seen this in India with numerous missionaries who came to India without a call from God. They did more harm for God's work in India.

Those who had a call from God make a tremendous difference, tremendous difference. So Jesus didn't come really to save people from hell. It's interesting to know that.

The first promise in the New Testament is he will save his people from their sins, not from hell. To be saved from hell is the ultimate result, the final result of being saved from sin. But he came to save us from our sins, not to forgive us our sins alone, but to save us from our sins.

So what is sin? According to this, by not loving God with all my heart and with all my mind, loving something else or someone else more than God, that's my sin. So repentance means to turn around from that sin. It's not just giving up my drug addiction or my gambling or drinking or some other bad habit,

repent of my pornography.

That's not... it's true in one sense we need to do all that, but there's a lot more than that. So if my turning from sin is only these filthy things, which even the world considers filthy, my repentance is shallow. And my repentance is shallow, my whole Christian's life is going to be shallow, because repentance is the foundation on which the house is built.

So the foundation is weak or shaky. Don't be surprised if your entire Christian life is going to be shaky, shaky, shaky. So it's helped me to see true repentance is to see the commandment first, and I've not obeyed that commandment.

Repentance is, Lord, I'm sorry I haven't obeyed that commandment. What is the commandment? You must love God with all your heart, with all your mind, and all your strength. God must be everything to you.

Now I don't hear the gospel being preached like that, and that's why we have all these shallow conversions. That's why we have so many believers falling into adultery and slaves to pornography and so many divorces among Christians, divorced people becoming pastors. Can you see the condition Christendom has come to? And it's all because we have not seen what we have to repent from.

So always keep this in mind. What is the great commandment in the law? Matthew 22, 36, the Lord says to love God with all your heart, all your strength, all your mind. There are other things Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, like overcoming anger and dirty thoughts and telling lies and all that, but it all stems from this.

The root of sin is, I don't love God with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind. He is not number one in everything in my life. Something else is.

You know, for a preacher, sometimes his preaching ministry can be his God, and that's why you find so many preachers that don't allow younger people to come up. They push them down. It's because their ministry is their God.

A lot of preachers I've met, they're so interested in impressing people with their ministry. Their ministry is their God. And no, nothing must take the place of Almighty God in my heart.

Christ must be Lord in every area of my life, and that's what I've got to repent of. And if I've repented of that, then we can say that I've repented fully. But that's not all.

When they asked him for one commandment, he said, I can't give you one alone, because they're two that hang together. He said, there are two commandments, verse 40, on which the whole of God's law depends. And so it's not enough that I say you must love God with all your heart.

You've got to love your neighbor as yourself. And so that's the other thing I've got to repent of. It comes--it's the other side of the coin.

You can't get a coin with one side. You can't get a currency note printed on only one side. So if I love God with all my heart, and I don't love my neighbor as myself, I haven't understood the law.

They asked for one commandment. He said, I cannot give you one. These two go together.

So in simple terms, what does it mean to love my neighbor as myself in practical terms? Because repentance includes that. The great commandment is love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor--means everybody else in the world--as yourself. And the way I've been helped by is reading this verse, is interpreting that commandment in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 12.

You know, he preached the whole Sermon on the Mount. And we can say in a nutshell, the Sermon on the Mount is love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. That's the Sermon on the Mount.

It's expanded as what we call the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. In Matthew 7, 12, he says, therefore--now this is at the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The rest is all conclusion. Therefore, the way you want people to treat you, treat them.

Because that's the law and the prophets. And this is the same expression Jesus used in Matthew 22, where he said the great commandment is love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. He says there also he said, this is the law of the prophets.

And here also he says, this is the law of the prophets. In other words, the law of the prophets is the way Jesus describes the Old Testament Bible. He was saying, your entire Old Testament Bible can be summed up in this.

Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and treat other people the way you want to be treated yourself. And then you read through the Sermon on the Mount with that verse in mind, and you understand it. Do you want people to be merciful to you when you do something wrong? Or do you want them to come down hard on you? We all want people to be forgiving and merciful.

Well, be forgiving and merciful to others. Blessed are the merciful. They'll find mercy.

Or do you want people to yell at you in anger? No? Well, don't do that to others. Treat others the way you want to be treated yourself. How do you want your husband to treat you? Treat him like that.

How do you want your wife to treat you? Treat her like that. This is the whole, he's saying, this is the law of the prophets. This is the whole message of the Bible.

If you're not doing that, we can sit here for ages talking about victory over sin, and the new and living way, taking up the cross, all this biased language, or just fooling ourselves. If it is not leading to treating others the way I want them to treat me, do you want people to lust after your sister? Then don't lust after other girls. In pornography, do you want your sister to earn some money by stripping herself in front of a camera for people all over the world to see? You wouldn't want that.

You wouldn't want your wife to do that. You wouldn't want your sister to do that. Then don't watch it yourself.

Somebody else is doing that to make money, and you go and pay for that, or even if you're watching it free. There, you're not treating that person on that computer screen the way you would like to be treated, or the way you'd like your sister or your wife to be treated. Picture this.

If your wife is doing that to make money, those women are doing it to make money. What else? They're not doing it for any other reason. They don't enjoy doing it.

Some of them are treated so badly. And imagine a Christian enjoying that, paying for it. What type of Christianity is that? Until I see that I'm not treating other people the way I want to be treated, I'm not treating other people the way I want my wife to be treated, I haven't understood repentance.

I haven't. And when I see it like that, I say, hey, when it comes close to home, I realize I don't want that. You don't want it for yourself.

You don't want it for your wife. Then why do you want it for other people? Treat other people the way you're to be treated yourself. God really takes special care of people who really seek to live like that.

That's repentance. You know, the Christian life begins with repentance and faith. Faith that when I turn to God like that in repentance, Jesus will forgive me all my sins immediately.

And not only that, he says in Hebrews 8, 12, I will not remember your sins anymore. So if I take repentance seriously, I find that I have a good foundation in my life. My building won't shake.

My Christianity won't shake. A lot of Christians, their Christianity begins to shake after a while. Backsliding is the building is shaking.

So almost always because the foundation has not been laid properly. Any skyscraper, it takes such a lot of pains to make sure the foundation is deep enough, solid enough, good material, because you're building a skyscraper. That's why this is so important.

And I want to say also, God treats us the way we treat other people. Turn with me to Psalm 18. Psalm 18, we read verse 25.

With the kind, you show yourself kind. You want God to be kind to you? Be kind to other people. That's what he's saying here.

If you are kind to other people, you'll find God is very kind to you. If you treat other people with purity, God will treat you the same way. And it says, but if you're crooked, the last part of verse 26, with other people, you'll find God is, the literal Hebrew there is twisted.

God himself is not twisted, but you'll experience him in a very twisted way, because you are crooked in your dealings with other people. With the blameless, you show yourself blameless. With the pure, you show yourself pure.

So I find here, not only God wants me to treat other people the way I want to be treated by them, God treats me also the way I treat other people. These are characteristics of God. If I'm kind to others, I don't have to ask God to be kind to me.

He will automatically be kind to me. It's his law. He will treat me like I treat others.

So if you've been having some problems in God's dealings with you, search yourself and see whether this is the reason. You're not treating other people properly. Maybe you're not treating your wife properly at home.

Is God yelling at you? Maybe it's because you're yelling at your marriage partner. And when you stop it, you'll find God stopping it too. Otherwise, it'll continue.

It's not going to change. Stop. God is a very righteous God.

And you can't just treat other people in the world as you like. Next time, don't go to God and say, Lord, forgive me. God says, repent first.

Repent of the way you treated other people. Repent of the way you speak to others. See, it says in James 3, speaking about the tongue, James 3, verse 9, with our tongue, we bless God, our Lord and our fathers.

Father means he's talking about believers, not talking about unbelievers. We bless the Lord, our Father, obviously believers. And then these believers curse men.

That means you say rude untimely things to your fellow human beings. Maybe they did something wrong to you. Okay.

They did a lot of things wrong to Jesus. And you curse them, men who have been made in the likeness of God. So I asked that atheist, that non-Christian, is he made in the likeness of God? According to this verse, yes.

I mean, that image has been defaced terribly, but he's made in the likeness of God. I think of, say, a poster on a wall with some film actor's face or something, and then it's torn. You can't see the face clearly.

You can't even recognize because most of the faces, the poster has been torn. That's the picture I get of man. You can't see the, he's nowhere like God at all, but he was made in the image of God, defaced by the devil.

It says there, man who's been made, it's not only believers, it's talking about all men have been made in the likeness of God. And that's why there is, there cannot be any racism if I've understood this. This is one of the terrible things about heathenism.

You see a lot of it in India, that they have a caste system, that are the upper caste. And it's so terrible in India that in some villages, it's, you know, it's banned by the government, which you can enforce that ban only in the cities where there are police stations and things like that. But in the villages, nobody bothers.

And so the caste system continues no matter what laws the government passes. And so if a man of a lower caste walks by and his shadow falls on this man, just a shadow falls on this man of a higher caste, he's got to go and have a shower. That's how much he despises that person.

And so many cases we read in the papers of this upper caste man's daughter falls in love with that lower caste. And sometimes lower caste people are very highly educated and gets married. The father of the girl goes and kills both of them.

It's very common because it's such a hatred. That person is not anywhere near me. So we find this type of treatment of other human beings.

And Christians must be completely different from that. There is no higher or lower caste in my mind. Everybody's the same.

That uneducated, stupid, dumb person is made in the image of God. That person who's got Down syndrome or some other defect that's made in the image of God. I have to consider every person around me.

And then it says, how can you curse that person made in the image of God and then go and bless God? That's what he says here in James chapter three. I need to repent of that. Repentance means I turn around from that type of attitude I had towards other human beings.

To whom must I apologize if I did something wrong? Let's take that for example. Is it only for people of my own social level or status? What about if it's a homeless man whom I hurt in some way or spoke rudely to? I must go and apologize to him and say, I'm sorry for speaking to you like that or treating you like this. Because he's made in the image of God.

Maybe he's homeless. But he's made in the image of God. So there's a lot more to repentance than we think.

And the reason we have so many of our problems is because we are treating other people differently. And no matter how much we come to meetings and talk about victory over sin and being filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues and all that, you will never come into this divine life till you understand what the commandment is and what repentance is to turn from violating that commandment. Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength.

If money, for example, takes the place that God should have in my heart. Money. Very important.

It's taken the place of God in my heart. I haven't repented. I've not repented.

And many, many Christians I have to say, money or their job or profession has taken the place of God in their heart. They don't kill people. They don't get angry.

They don't lust after women. They are upright. They give generously for God's work.

But money and their profession has taken the place of God in their heart. God's not against your earning money. People like Job and Abraham were extremely wealthy.

In the New Testament, there were people like Philemon who were wealthy enough to have slaves in their house. And you never read the Holy Spirit saying in the New Testament, I'm talking about telling a master, divide your property with your slaves. One would think that that should be what Christianity teaches.

No, that's communism. We must distinguish it in communism and Christianity. Christianity only says, treat your slaves properly.

It doesn't even say release them. Treat them properly because Paul knew that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the time was not right to proclaim the Roman Empire release of the Catholics. It will come at a later stage.

But there we see that treat them properly. You don't have to share your money with them. You don't have to share your property with them.

Treat them kindly. So it's all based on this principle, treat other people the way you want to be treated yourself. And I've asked people this question.

I would say most Christians, the ones they hurt the most are the ones who live in their own home. Your husband or your wife. Yeah, we, in a moment of weakness, we slip up because familiarity breeds contempt, whether you like it or not.

It's true. Familiarity breeds contempt. And if you're a true Christian, it will not be true.

It'll breed respect. You will respect more people who are very close to you. Okay.

But let's assume that you haven't come to that place yet. You slip up and you say something rude or in anger to your wife or husband. Now the question is, how quickly do you apologize to her or him? That is a test of your spirituality.

How quickly do you do it? You recognize it's a fall. I mean, if you have a conscience, you know immediately that you've done something wrong or you said something wrong. How quickly do you set it right? To use an illustration, you walk out onto the road and you slip and fall.

How quickly do you get up? 10 seconds? Not even one second. I mean, I don't want to be lying down on the ground. That's not the way I'm supposed to be.

I'm supposed to be erect. Do I recognize the same thing when I've slipped up and fallen into sin, into treating another person the way I don't want to be treated myself or treating another person the way I don't want God to treat me? I did something wrong. Okay.

How quickly do I set it right? That shows how deeply I have repented. And it's very simple. I've asked people, why do you delay in asking forgiveness? There is only one reason.

Pride. Tell me if there's any other reason. It's only pride, because it's a bit humiliating to go to that person and say, I'm sorry for what I did five seconds ago, what I said.

But I'll tell you something. If you practice it, maybe you'll slip up a hundred times. Each time you decide, I'm going to get up immediately.

Get up means I'm going to ask God to forgive me. And I'm going to ask this person to forgive me. I guarantee, I can give you a written guarantee.

You will come into a life of overcoming that sin very quickly. It may take you a year, but you'll finally overcome anger. Just follow this simple prescription.

As soon as you fall, get up, which means ask God to forgive you and apologize to that person. You're doing something to your pride there. You're shattering your pride.

God will treat you the way you treat others. Your repentance, God will bear witness to it. So it's wonderful to see this because, you know, there are commands in the New Testament, which some people read and say, oh, that's impossible.

For example, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said in Matthew 6, in the space of one minute, about one minute or two minutes in Matthew 6, 25 to 34. How long does it take to read from verse 25 to 34? Not more than two minutes. Matthew 6, 25 to 34.

In the space of two minutes, three times Jesus said, don't be anxious. Don't be anxious. Don't be anxious.

Now, if the Lord repeats something three times in a space of two minutes, it must be pretty important. That's not a suggestion. You know, sort of, it's good not to be anxious.

That's not what he said. But that's how most Christians have taken it. Isn't it a good thing not to be anxious? Yeah, sure.

But that's not what Jesus said. The same God who said, do not murder, said, do not be anxious. Am I going to categorize these into two different categories and say, this is important, this is not important? It's the same God who said it.

Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not murder.

Do not be anxious. Supposing that was listed in the commandments. Why didn't God list it in the commandments? Because he knew nobody could keep it in the old covenant.

They didn't have the Holy Spirit within them. They didn't have, they hadn't seen Jesus as an example. They couldn't do that.

That's why that is not one of the commandments. But in the New Testament, you read three times, he says in verse 25, don't be anxious. And again in verse 31, don't be anxious.

Again, in verse 34, don't be anxious. Three times in the space of two minutes. I must be serious.

Why is it that we don't take it seriously? And you come into the New Testament, into the epistles, and Paul says the same thing in Philippians 4, inspired by the Holy Spirit. He says in Philippians 4, 6, be anxious for nothing. And you say, what can I do? I'm the anxious type.

Whatever type you may be, God's word is for everyone. Be anxious for nothing. Consider the possibility.

Please consider the possibility that you're not getting free from anxiety because you don't treat other people the way God's treating you. You say, that's a different subject. No, these are connected.

You're not treating other people the way you want them to treat you. Is there a connection between that and anxiety? I believe there is. Because you cannot be free from anxiety if God doesn't give you grace.

No human being can be free from anxiety. We live in a world where there are 101 things to make us anxious. I don't want anybody to get condemned over what I'm saying.

There's a difference between being concerned about something and being anxious about something. If your kid has gone to school and he hasn't come back on time, if you're not concerned about it, you're not a good parent. Definitely not.

But there's a lot of difference between being concerned about something and being anxious about it. If you lost your job, naturally you're concerned because you've got to feed your family. But even in such a situation, the command of the Lord doesn't change.

Be anxious for nothing. But it doesn't stop there. It says here, let your request be made known to God with thanksgiving that he's heard it.

Be amazed to see the miracles God can do for you. You heard testimonies of other believers who lost their jobs and God did miracles for them. Is it only for them? He can do it for you.

Or another command there, rejoice in the Lord always. It's not rejoice in our circumstances always. That's not possible.

Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say rejoice. Whatever may happen to me, I say God is on the throne.

This is the life that New Testament wants us to have. And they're not all separate. Don't lust after women.

Don't get angry. Don't be anxious. Rejoice in the Lord.

They're all segments of one circle. These are little, little segments. And I can't just take one segment and say, I'd like to get victory here.

It's all one circle. It's all the result of putting God first in my heart. And then nobody takes the place of God in my heart.

It's all the result of saying I'm determined from today onwards to treat other people exactly the way God treats me. The way I want to be treated and I want to treat other people the way God treats me. Why do I forgive others? Because it says in Ephesians 4.32, forgive one another exactly like God forgave you.

That's how I'm supposed to forgive others. Exactly like God's treated me so well, forgiving me so much. It says treat others the same way.

And isn't it wonderful that all the hideous things we did in our life, God never tells other people about it. He doesn't let anybody know all the wicked things you've done in your past life or I've done. But don't go around telling other people the wicked things you know about them.

You know some wicked things some people did, let it die with you. Because that's how God treated you. Cover it up.

Love covers a multitude of sins. Don't humiliate people by exposing their sins. God doesn't humiliate you by exposing your sin.

All I need to meditate on is how did God treat me? If I have not treated other people like that, I need to repent of it. These are the things I need to repent of. My life will become get into a solid foundation and I have a solid repentance as God forgave me.

Now this question comes up you know, I can't forget the evil that somebody did to me. Well do you know something? Do you know that God doesn't forget the evil you did to him? He says I won't remember it. You've got to read the Bible exactly.

In Hebrews 8.12 the Lord says their sins and iniquities I will not remember anymore. I will remember their sins no more. He doesn't say I'll forget them.

There's a lot of difference between saying there is a word for forget in the Greek language. God didn't, the Holy Spirit did not use it. He could have used it.

He could have said I will forget about their sins. No that's not what he says. I will remember their sins no more or to be more accurate I choose not to remember.

That's what God is saying. God hasn't forgotten my sins. How can he? Is his memory worse than mine? I remember some of the terrible things I did 50 years ago.

Do you think God's forgotten it? No. His memory is better than mine. He chooses not to remember and one of the clearest proofs of it is you know that story where you read that in Matthew 18 of a man who was forgiven millions of dollars by the king because he couldn't pay and he went out and caught somebody by the throat who owed him some 10 dollars or something like that.

Now remember how does the story start? The king has forgiven this fellow's debt completely and then he goes and catch somebody by the throat because he treats him badly. He does not treat him the way the king treated him and that's reported to the king and what does the king do when this man comes back to the king? You read it in Matthew 18. He put that whole debt back on his head.

Now you remember that million dollars I forgave you? Well you got to pay up now or you go to jail. Why? Because you didn't forgive that guy 10 dollars and at the end of it Jesus said so will my heavenly father do to you if you don't forgive other people from your heart. So if the king had forgotten about this man's debt how could he put that debt back on him? That is a clear proof that the king didn't forget about the debt and God does not forget our sins.

He says I choose not to remember. Now how does that help me? It helps me that when God when I come to God I don't feel well he's looking at me and he remembers all those things in the past. No he doesn't remember a thing and the other way is I'm not tormented by the fact that I remember the evil that fellow did to me.

I will remember it but I choose not to remember. That's all that God requires of me. There are some people who take a super spiritual position who don't read the bible carefully who teach people that when you forgive somebody you must forget about what he did.

That's a lie. It is impossible and I challenge any human being to tell me that he's done it. It is impossible and all these people who preach it are hypocrites of the first order who haven't practiced it themselves and who haven't read the bible carefully because the bible doesn't ask you to forget what other people have done to you but you choose not to remember.

Forgive them as God forgave you and God says when I look at you I choose not to remember a single thing you did against me even though God says I know every single thing you did. That's how we forgive others. I can't because I have no control over my memory.

I can't have a control over my conscience. On memories I cannot control it. What can I do? Memory reminds me of a whole lot of things I did or where other people did.

God doesn't ask you to clean up your memory. He asks you not to think evil in your memory but not to forget the past. It's not possible.

So when I'm thinking of treating other people the way God treats me God does not forget my past. I don't know to forget what he did but every time the thought comes to me I reject it. I say that to deliver you from the torment that the devil would give some people saying hey you haven't really forgiven that person because you still remember it.

That's a lie. Satan you're a liar. I know the bible.

I didn't know it till today but now I know it. You can tell the devil that that I don't I don't ever torment myself that I remember something. Let me give you an example from the old testament in the book of Genesis

and chapter 40.

Genesis chapter 40. Remember this is the story of Joseph. He was first of all he was sold as a slave because of the jealousy of his 10 brothers.

That itself was bad. Taken away to a far country far his parents thinking that he's been killed by some wild animal and there he is in a far country. He's a slave.

Works hard. The Lord is with him and then this evil woman Potiphar's wife accuses him falsely and he's locked up in jail. Think of what all he went through.

He's got lots of problems far away from his country from his parents. All those problems he faces and while he's in that prison we read here uh pharaoh's just genesis 40 and verse 5 the cup bearer and the baker of the king of egypt were imprisoned there and joseph came to them. Genesis 40 verse 6 and he saw that they were dejected.

What do you do when you see somebody who's dejected? But joseph would have said I got enough problems of my own. I don't have to worry about these guys. I mean think of me well think of what I'm going through.

I'm thrown away by my brothers and far away from my parents and accused falsely by an evil woman. But he forgot about all his problems and he asks them hey why do your face is so sad today? Verse 7 he had even though he had so many problems of his own to worry about he asks him then why are you guys looking so sad? You think he's a man who's got no problems at all who's asking that question. He's got far more problems than them.

Why are you looking sad and do you know the whole story of joseph hinges on that one action. The whole story changes because of that one action where he was considerate when he saw somebody dejected. He went up to him and said hey why are you guys looking sad? Some problem can I help you in some way? And they told him it's their problem and he explains the dream and you know the story how that's what gives him an introduction to pharaoh one day.

He would never have got that if he had not been concerned about asking these people why you're looking so sad. Is that such a difficult thing to ask somebody why you're looking so sad? God saw that. He said I'm going to treat this man well.

God is kind to those who are kind. God is concerned about those who are concerned about others. That's all joseph had.

He didn't do any great miracle there. He was concerned about someone who was looking dejected and sad. So when we think of God as a God of encouragement.

God is a God who comforts the depressed. He doesn't do it to everybody. He does it to those who are concerned about others because he treats us exactly like we treat other people and that's what we need to repent of when we look at our past life.

All the ways in which we have not been concerned about it but we don't usually think of that as sin. We saw God as a God of encouragement. I want to show another verse in 2nd Corinthians.

God is a God who gives us encouragement and here's another thing God does. 2nd Corinthians 7 6. We can look at these as titles of God. One of the titles of God is what we saw at the beginning in Romans 15 verse 5. Title of God.

A God who gives encouragement. I want to know God like that. Here's another title of God.

2nd Corinthians 7 and verse 6. God who comforts the depressed. If you want to know God is a God who comforts the depressed. I decided many years ago I'm never going to be discouraged.

It's a choice of our will. It's not feeling. I'm tempted to be discouraged and depressed with many circumstances but I choose in my will say I will not be depressed.

I have a God who comforts the depressed who will comfort me. The way he does it in Paul's case God comforted him through sending Titus to encourage him. Isn't that great? Imagine the great apostle Paul being comforted as depressed by his younger brother Titus.

I like that. God's blessed me sometimes when I've listened to some younger brother share something in the meeting numerous times. God speaks to us through another member of the body who's probably half our age and if you're humble enough to receive that there's no limit to how much God can speak to you.

If you take the low place and say Lord I'm just a member in the body and I'm happy to receive anything you want to give from another member of the body. Here's Paul's example. If Paul had said hey Titus he's just a young fellow he can't teach me anything he would have remained in his depression.

God comforted me the depressed person by sending Titus to me. I like that. Be open.

Don't despise any member of the body of Christ saying what can he give me. There's a lot he can give you if you're humble and willing to receive what God has to minister to you through him. There's so much you've missed in your past life because you've looked down on certain believers saying what can you give me.

I know so much. It's not a question of knowledge. It's a question of there are heart problems that we have which any amount of knowledge will not cure and God wants to bless us through some young brother.

So I praise God. Encouragement, freedom from anxiety, depression because we are open to others. God ministers to us through others.

So I see the Christian life is a wonderful life. All these you know these commands which looked impossible to us be anxious for nothing and rejoice always. The reason why they are not being fulfilled don't listen to the lies of other Christians say it's impossible to live that life.

It is impossible if you don't read other people the way God treats you. I agree but if you start off treating other people the way God treats you you'll find some of these which commands which looked impossible to get fulfilled in your life because we are not taking certain scriptures. Let me show you one last verse.

God who gives us encouragement. So what should we do when God gives us encouragement? What do you do when God forgives you? You saw that forgive others. What about when God encourages you? It says in Hebrews 3 and verse 13.

Encourage one another every single day as long as it is called today. We confess sins of commission. Lord I had a dirty thought.

I spoke a rude word. Have you ever confessed a sin of omission? Something you were supposed to do and you didn't do. Well here's something to work on.

Encourage someone daily and to say Lord I didn't encourage anybody today. Is that a sin? It is if you believe it's a command of God. As long as it is called today because thereby you can help that person to be saved from being hardened.

A word of encouragement can save another person from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and a God who is a God of encouragement wants me to encourage others and if I do that I say I want to encourage people. I don't want to go around causing depression to others by the things I say. I want to encourage others.

There's so much of depressing news in the world. I don't want to go around circulating that. Let me proclaim the good news.

God is on the throne. The devil's being defeated brother. Every single thing will work for your good if you love God.

He will never leave you nor forsake you no matter what happens. He will not remember your past against you. Wonderful things we can say to encourage others and God will encourage you.

That's how we're supposed to live on this earth. I remember when some religious folk took me to court for religious reasons. One of the verses the Lord gave me was Isaiah 54 17.

The living bible paraphrase of that is you will have justice against every courtroom lie. I hope you never have to face that but if you do take a promise like this. When people tell lies against you I assure you you will have justice against every courtroom lie.

Be good to others. God will be good to you. This is how God wants us to live on this earth.

Finally. I say brother Zach you said finally a few minutes ago. Read Philippians.

How many times Paul says finally. He says it in chapter 3 finally and you think you're concluding. No no no he goes on for two chapters then said finally.

So finally. Proverbs chapter 22. Sorry Proverbs 11 25.

Proverbs 11 25. It's a great verse. He who waters others will be watered also himself.

The generous man will be prosperous. Now that's not what the world says. World says if you keep on being generous you'll become poor.

God says no. You learn to give to others and you've got God giving giving to you. Like one man said I shovel out to others what God shovels it to me and God's got a bigger shovel.

So I end up having more than I need. And he who waters others will be watered also himself. That means I water somebody else's plant and God waters me.

That's great. I do something too. Watering is to refresh somebody.

Someone who's discouraged and gloomy. I pour some water. That dry grass becomes green.

God will water me. This is the Christian life. It's a wonderful life.

And if you haven't experienced some of it it's because one something has taken the place of God in my heart. Or two I'm not treating other people the way I want to be treated or the way God's treating me. Let's rectify that and you'll find that you've come to an altogether new plane of the Christian life that you'll never experience so far.

Let's pray. Think about some of the things God spoke to you today and don't forget them. Don't let the birds of the air take away the seed that's sown in your heart.

I want to encourage you to water that seed. That is meditate on it. Let it take deep root in your life.

And then you'll find that the Holy Spirit lifts you to a plane of the Christian life that you've never tasted so far. Always in triumph in Christ. Heavenly Father give us grace and the wisdom to see that you're always seeking our eternal good.

Every word you speak is to lead us to that wonderful life that Jesus died and rose again to give us. Which so few are experiencing because the devil has come to steal and it's taken away. But Lord you've exposed the devil's lies and we want to live in the good of all that you purchase for us on the Calvary.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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