

A Non-Judgmental Life

by Zac Poonen

We must seek to develop fellowship with God, be disciplined in our lives, and love our neighbors as ourselves in order to become more Christ-like.

Duration: 1:00:24

Scripture: Job 42:7, Luke 6:37, Luke 15:11-32, Luke 16:19-31, John 8:1-12, James 4:12

Topics: "Judging Others", "Christian Compassion"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of not judging others but showing compassion and love, highlighting the dangers of legalism and self-righteousness. It encourages treating others with grace and mercy, following the example of Jesus in forgiving and not condemning. The message urges believers to focus on their own attitudes towards others, especially in their homes and local churches, rather than being critical or judgmental.

Transcript

Praise the Lord for his goodness to us over the last year. He has promised to give us his word every day. And I believe that we should seek to hear the Lord speak to us every day.

The early Christians never had a Bible, but they could still listen because they were dependent on the Holy Spirit. We need to be more dependent on the Holy Spirit this year. One of the first things we read in the Bible, when God created man, immediately after he created him, he had a whole day of fellowship with him.

That's how their life began. The first day that Adam lived on earth was a day of fellowship with God. And based on that fellowship with God, from the next day, he was tested.

That's what we read in the Bible. God created man, he had fellowship with him, and he tested him. God brought you and me to new birth, if you have been born again, primarily so that you can have fellowship with him.

We must develop that this year. And then he will test us. Jesus was tested in the wilderness throughout those 40 days, and the last three testings we see, but he was tested in many, many ways.

And I'm sure in those 30 years that he was in Nazareth, also he was tested in numerous situations in his home, how he would react to his parents, how he would react to his irritating brothers and sisters, and it's

only at the end of that period of 30 years, not one or two days, that the Father said, I'm well pleased with you. Now I anoint you. Go forth and fulfill my ministry.

Many Christians would like to take a shortcut. They try and, oh God, fill me, anoint me with the Holy Spirit, don't test me or anything, just fill me with the Holy Spirit, make me a mighty servant of God. You can pray that for 100 years, nothing will happen.

Because if you fail in the test, God is not going to say, I'm well pleased with you. God, this title given to God in Jeremiah, he's a God who examines our heart. Jeremiah spoke to him and said, Lord, you who test the righteous.

Jeremiah 12, the Lord says, now Jeremiah says, in the middle of verse 3, you examine my heart's attitude towards you. You're a God who examines my heart's attitude towards you. Do you believe God is like that? He's always examining our heart's attitude towards him.

While human beings around us judge us by our appearance, the way we dress, our position in life, and all types of worthless things, God examines our heart's attitude towards him. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart, God told Samuel. And one way he examines our heart's attitude towards him, and he's going to do that throughout this year, is by seeing what is our attitude to other people.

Because, you know, John says, at the end of his life, in 1 John 4, the last verse, if you say that you love God, that your heart's attitude toward God is right, but your heart's attitude towards your brother is not right, you don't love him, you're a liar. You're not a believer, you're just a plain old liar, or perhaps thoroughly deceived. Now, I don't want to be deceived, I'll tell you that.

I do not want to be deceived during my earthly life, and discover when I stand before the Lord in the final day, as all of us will stand. You're approaching the coming of the Lord, and the day will come when you and I will stand one by one by one, before the Lord to give an account of our life to him. I do not want to discover in that day, that I fooled myself, that I was a spiritual person, because other people thought I was that, or because I had a ministry, or a gift, or because I belonged to CFC, or because I did a few good things here and there.

I do not want to be deceived. And I would urge you to fear God, and reverence him, and make sure you're not deceived. And I'll tell you this, I'll guarantee you, that if you love the truth about yourself, you will never be deceived.

Love the truth. I've decided many years ago, to wholeheartedly love the truth about myself. When I hear it from God, when I hear it from other people, I say, yes Lord, there is some truth there.

And like Tozer once said, if men knew me as intimately as I know myself, they will never spend their time praising me and appreciating me. If men knew you as intimately as you know yourself, some of those praises that people give you may not be valid. So, it's good for us to live before God's face, and allow him to examine our hearts, so that we're not disturbed by people's criticism, and we're not excited by their praise.

Because we continue to live before God's face, and that's all that matters. When, you know, Jesus said that the two commandments, that the primary was to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbors ourselves, or as Jesus expanded it to say, to love one another as he loved us. And I think it's easier to love

God than to love others.

I think you'll all agree with me. Because it's easier to love someone who is perfect. I mean, imagine if you have a perfect neighbor, who is always so kind and good.

Is it difficult loving him? That's why we find it easy to love God, or we think we're loving God. He's so perfect. He never does anything wrong.

But when we live on earth, we are surrounded by people, and even this year you will discover, throughout the year, that you'll meet people, and even believers who let you down, and who don't measure up to the way you think they should behave. And then the Lord will examine my heart's attitude towards him, to see whether I can receive that person in the same way that Christ received me. That's all.

Jesus never asks us to do anything that he did not do himself. That's a great comfort to me. He never, you know, in the military we were taught that if you're an officer, you must never ask your soldier to go somewhere where you're scared to go.

You may never ask him to do a task that you're scared to do. And Jesus is the captain of our salvation. He never asks us to do what he hasn't done himself.

If he asks you to love an unlovely person, it's because he loved an unlovely person like you. He never asks us to do something he hasn't done himself. Unless you are so proud and conceited to think that you're such a lovely creature whom Jesus loved.

No, I'm not. I know Jesus loved me in my sin, when I had no interest in him. And he says receive, and when Christ first received me, way back 50 years ago, I'm sure there were a million things wrong in my life, which hadn't all changed.

I mean, even now, there's so many things still that need to be rectified in my life, of selfishness and hidden pride, and I don't know what else there is. But he still, he receives me. We often say that he rejoices over us with shouts of joy.

Not because we are perfect. It's like a mother who's rejoicing over a child who is not perfect in many ways. He's got sicknesses, but rejoices that the child is there.

Hates those sicknesses and tries his best to get rid of those sicknesses, but loves the child. That's how God loves every one of us. And he examines our heart's attitude towards others.

In our watch night service on 31st December, I was sharing that in the coming year, we need to be more disciplined in our life. Many people never become holy because they are not disciplined. They are filled with the Holy Spirit, but they are not disciplined.

We need to be disciplined, I said, in the way we use our time. Many Christians, most Christians, have wasted their time. If you look back over 2009, you will see so many hours wasted.

And I suggested that you spend 15 minutes a day at least studying the Bible with our verse-by-verse Bible study. 15 minutes, it's not a long time. And if you discipline yourself, and I'll tell you, you will never do it unless you discipline yourself.

I believe I would have had no ministry today if I hadn't disciplined myself to study the Word. Is it possible that some of you, that God had a fantastic ministry for you today, but he cannot fulfill it because he saw in your past life you were just too lazy to study his Word? You just came faithfully to the meeting to hear his Word, which is good. Dear brothers and sisters, never say, Oh, I don't have a gift.

Maybe that is one reason. It is also possible that you never discipline yourself. Any amount of prayer will not replace the need for discipline.

You know, sometimes children come to me and say, Uncle Zach, please pray for me. I've got an examination coming up next week. I say, Did you study for it? If you didn't study for it, any amount of prayer I pray for you now is not going to help you.

I mean, it's like a farmer who during seed-sowing time does not sow any seed. He sleeps and is lazy while all the other farmers are busy sowing seed. He doesn't water anything in his garden.

And then at harvest time, he comes and says, Brother Zach, please pray that I'll have a wonderful harvest like these other people. I say, You're not going to get it. No matter how much I pray, you're not going to get a harvest because in the time when you should have been sowing seed, you were sleeping.

How could God do that? He let them violate all his rules and laws. So, if we don't sow the seed and then we pray that God will give us a harvest, it won't happen. So, I tell children, if you don't study hard, if you study hard, we certainly pray that God will bless you and give you supernatural ability when you do the examination.

But if you don't study hard, you're just lazy. You're not going to get anything. The same thing, you see, if we don't discipline ourselves in the use of our time and say, Oh God, fill me with the Holy Spirit and all the wonderful, fantastic spiritual prayers we pray, what is the result of that in the last year? Is it possible that the missing factor was discipline? Discipline in the use of your time, that you don't waste your time.

So much of time is wasted in unnecessary gossip and all types of things which don't produce any profit. And I said the second area, we must discipline ourselves in the way we use our money. That is a very, very important area.

I believe there are so few prophets in the world because very few are faithful with money. Jesus said that, that if you are unfaithful with unrighteous mammon, God will never give you the true riches. So, when you don't have true riches from God, the riches are becoming more Christ-like and revelation on his word and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Don't say, God didn't give it to me. Consider the past. You know, we always like to put the blame on God.

He didn't give me a gift. He didn't give me the anointing. It's like Adam saying, you gave me this wife, what to do? You gave me a wife who gave me the fruit.

Man has got that tendency from day one of his creation, put the blame on God. The exam, the question paper was too tough. Instead of saying, I didn't study hard.

How is it other people got 90%, you got 30%? It's tough for everybody. All human beings are the same. How is it some people overcome certain sins and you don't? How is it some people overcome anger and you don't? You say, no, no, no, his temperament is different.

He's got nothing to do with temperament. Even Jesus was tempted in all points as we are and so is that other brother. He's also tempted to be angry and jealous and bitter but he isn't because he really seeks to take up the cross.

So don't put the blame on God. I would encourage you in this coming year to take a lot of the blame on yourself. Don't blame your wife, don't blame God, don't blame your husband and you'll find a lot more progress.

So in this area of money, if you are disciplined in the area of money, you'll find tremendous progress in this year. Don't waste your money on unnecessary purchases and don't waste your money on things that you don't need. Be wise in the use of it.

The third thing I said is be disciplined in the way you disciplined in your bodily habits, eating especially. I think we'll all be healthier if we eat a little less this year and we'll all be spiritually healthier if we are a little more careful with the use of our tongue this year. It's discipline.

That means I feel like eating something and I say no, I'm not going to eat it. I feel like saying something and I say no, I'm not going to say it. That's discipline.

But when you say no, I'm going to eat it because I feel like it, I'm going to say it because I feel like it, 2009 will find you worse than 2010. At the end of it it will find you worse than you were at the end of 2009. I've got to tell you the truth.

Do you want to be a better person? Do you want to become more Christ-like? You need discipline. That's in our relationship with God. So I want to share a little bit in our relationship with others.

You see, love God, that's the vertical and to love one another is the horizontal. So God examines our heart's attitude towards him. There was a man who once when Jesus said that, he said you've got to love your neighbors yourself.

Turn to Luke chapter 10. This is where Jesus quoted these two verses. When somebody asked him in verse 25, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said, what's written in the law? How does it read? You see, you've got the Bible.

Why do you ask me? It's written in the Bible. You see, I know the answer. You've got to love the Lord your God.

Luke 10 and verse 27. With all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength and with all your mind and you must love your neighbor as yourself. And he said, that's right.

It's written in the Bible. You answered correctly. Do this and you will live.

But, he was a true child of Adam. Just like us. Wanting to justify himself.

You know what a tremendous lust. I call it a lust. There is in all of us to justify ourselves.

We're okay. Wanting to justify himself. Just think of that phrase.

And see if you're ever guilty of it in your life. In your relationship with other people. Wanting to justify yourself.

Jesus once turned to the Pharisees and said to them in Luke 16 verse 15 You are those who justify yourself before men. But that which is great in the eyes of men is an abomination to God. Luke 16 verse 15.

So, I learned from that, that if I try to justify myself before men I may convince them, but God thinks I'm an abomination. And just in case you want to compare scripture with scripture. There was something that God called an abomination in the Old Testament.

You know what it was? He told the Israelites in the wilderness when you go out to the toilet, they didn't have toilets there. Go out, outside the camp. Take a spade with you.

Dig a ground and when you're finished, cover it up. Otherwise, the Lord will see an abomination. That's the abomination we are when we justify ourselves before men.

I never in my life want to justify myself before men because it makes me a stinking abomination before God. I'd rather those people think wrong of me than God think I'm an abomination. So, he wanting to justify himself.

The moment you begin to justify yourself, you begin to say, I'm alright. You know, I'm trying to keep those commandments, but my problem is who's my neighbor? That's why he asked him. Jesus said, okay, I'll tell you who is your neighbor.

And remember, he was speaking to a brotherhood of Israeli people who were all descendants of Abraham. We must not look at the nation of Israel like the nation of India. No.

The nation of Israel is not a picture of a nation on the earth today. It's a picture of the church which is called the Israel of God in Galatians 6. It's a picture of the church. So, when you read this story, you're thinking not of some stranger, but of a brother because everybody in Israel were brothers in the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

The Lazarus, the beggar sitting outside his gate was his brother, not just any odd beggar that you find anywhere on the streets. If you don't bear that in mind when you read the Gospels, you can have all types of wrong ideas in your mind. So Jesus replied, there was a man going down from Jerusalem, Jericho.

He was a son of Abraham. And unfortunately, he fell among robbers and they stripped him and beat him and went away leaving him half dead. And there was a priest going down the road.

When he saw him, he passed by the other side. This is what I call the sin of doing nothing. The sin of doing nothing.

Now, many people do not know there is a sin in doing nothing. They know the sin of doing something where you hurt somebody or harm somebody or speak evil. Now, this guy never spoke evil of him.

He never kicked him. He never spat on him. He never spoke evil of him.

He just ignored him and went on. Then, there was a Levite. Jesus spoke about these people who are supposed to know the Scriptures better than anybody else.

And I suppose that applies to us. Perhaps, I wonder if there are people in Bangalore who know the Scriptures as well as we do. Well, then this applies to us.

You see a brother who has been beaten up by the devil or a sister who has been beaten up by the devil and in your attitude towards that person, God examines your heart. This is what the Lord was saying. That my attitude to my brother or sister is going to really reveal to me, if I want to see it, my heart's attitude towards God.

Now, I want to say, dear brothers and sisters, if you watch this, if you watch this diligently during this year, I can give you in writing, you will be a more Christ-like person by 31st December this year. That's up to you. And then, this guy also passed by on the other side and he was probably busy meditating on Scripture or preparing for the sermon he had got to preach in the temple and probably inwardly judged this man saying, why in the world is he going from Jerusalem to Jericho? He should be going towards Jerusalem.

The meeting is there. Why is he going somewhere else? Do you judge people who don't come to the meeting? I think a lot of us do. He should be going to the meeting.

Why is he going to Jericho? Why is he going somewhere else? None of my business. I don't go for my relative's weddings when there is a meeting in CFC, but I never judge another person who does that. Because my convictions are for myself.

It's not for a single other person. Do you judge someone who doesn't do what you do? Or who doesn't have the same sense of priority that you have? Okay, he decides to go from Jerusalem to Jericho. Well, I'm going to Jerusalem for the meeting.

It's none of my business. It's none of my business to say, well, you deserve it. That you had an accident because you should have been going to the meeting, not going away from it.

It's so easy. It is self-righteousness that makes me feel unholy. I'm going to the right place.

This guy is going the wrong direction. And he deserves it. Be careful of that.

And then there was the Samaritan. Now, I want you to understand, the Samaritans were people whom the Jews had nothing to do with. Samaria was captured 700 years before Christ by the king of Assyria.

Read that in the Old Testament. And he came and captured the northern part of Israel, which is called Israel. The southern part was called Judah.

And he sent the Assyrians into Samaria, and there was a lot of mixed marriages. You know, and you know how in India we know people despise mixed marriages. We like to keep our tribe pure.

So the Jews despised the Samaritans. So they say, ah, they're all mixed. They're not pure Jews like us.

They're a mixed race. And so, you know, the Jews were so despised the Samaritans so much, they wouldn't even walk through Samaria. They'd go right around and take the long walk, and they'd say, I want nothing to do with going through these people.

And here was a group of people who were despised. You know, this could apply to Christians whom you despise, and other denominations perhaps. And that Samaritan came by.

He wasn't probably going to a meeting. And I don't know which way he was going, whether he was going toward Jericho or Jerusalem. But he was on a journey, and he saw this man.

And he never knew the Bible as much as this priest and the Levite. But he felt compassion. Now remember, this is not a picture of some man lying on a road in India.

It's a picture of a brother whom you see in need. Spiritual need, perhaps. Who's failed, or done something wrong.

Slipped up. Beaten up by the devil. Young man, perhaps, who slipped up and fell into bad company.

Unfortunately, your children are not like that. And you say, well, the parents didn't bring him up right. I brought up my children right.

That guy didn't bring his children up right. What to do? He's got to suffer. That's the attitude of the Pharisee.

Not Jesus' attitude. Or he's of a mixed race. This man, he had compassion.

Bandaged up his wounds, poured oil and wine on him. Why did he do it? He was a total stranger. He was not even, you know, a pure descendant of Abraham.

He was mixed with Assyrian blood in him, this Samaritan. He put him on his beast and took him to a little hotel and took care of him. And then he gave him two days wages to the innkeeper.

Two denarii means two days wages. He took out his own money and said, will you please take care of this man? I don't know what's happened to him. And I'll be coming this way again.

If you spend more, I'll repay you. But please help this man. And Jesus said, now of these three people, verse 36, who do you think was a real neighbor? Who proved to be a neighbor who loved his neighbor to the man who fell into the robber's hands? And he said, the one who showed mercy towards him.

As God has been merciful to us. First of all, this man beaten up is a picture of you and me, beaten up on the road, going away from God and Jesus came and picked us up. And he says, now you treat other people the same way.

And Jesus said, stop justifying yourself, just go and do the same thing. Dear brothers and sisters, I'm not talking about social work. The first commandment is not love your neighbor as yourself.

All people who spend their time doing social work, they think the first commandment is love your neighbor as yourself. It is not. That is to put head down and feet up.

The first commandment is love God, love Jesus with all your heart, soul and strength in mind. Then, from there flows a love for others. The world will admire you if you don't love Jesus but just love your neighbor as yourself.

You may get a Nobel Prize or Bharat Ratna or something like that. But if you love Jesus first, with all your heart and seek to be a witness for him, it is very unlikely you will get a Nobel Prize. Even if you do good to others, because you do good in the name of Jesus.

And you are primarily interested in a person's spiritual welfare. Not in his physical welfare. I often think of the story of the prodigal son.

If you had done social work and helped that prodigal son and he is with the pigs, just give him food and money and food and money, what would you have done? You would have eased your conscience. I am such a good man. I am helping this poor boy who is at the level of the pigs, but you would have hindered God's purposes for him, made sure he never went back to his father's house.

I have seen a lot of social work. All it accomplishes is prevent people from going into God's kingdom. Because, for such people, the first commandment is love your neighbor as yourself.

It's not. Love God with all your heart, soul and strength in mind. But since we already know the first commandment is love God with all your heart, soul and strength in mind and study the scriptures and pray and do all those spiritual things, we need to hear the other side more.

You know, our vehicle has gone off to the other side of the road. That our attitude to other human beings can be very critical and judgmental. We can think I am better than all those people.

I am sure this priest in Levi felt I am so much better than the Samaritan. Guys, wrong doctrine and mixed race but I have got the right doctrine and I am doing what is right and I am going to the meetings regularly and yet Jesus picked up the Samaritan to be the hero in this story. I want to ask you, even if you don't agree with somebody's doctrine, maybe the Samaritan's doctrine is bad and if his doctrine is bad, his life should be worse than ours.

What shall I do when I find a Samaritan whose doctrine is not as good as mine but his life is better than mine? What shall I do? Do you know the number of criticisms I have got from converted Roman Catholics for appreciating Mother Teresa? I don't care what they say. I still appreciate Mother Teresa a hundred times more than those converted Roman Catholics. Those converted Roman Catholics only go around giving tracts to others and condemn them.

Mother Teresa has taught me something about how to care for all the poor beggars in India. I don't go to have a doctrine. I don't go to an automobile shop to buy toothpaste.

No. I go to a toothpaste shop to buy toothpaste and I go to an automobile shop to get spare parts for a scooter or car. So, I don't go to Mother Teresa for a doctrine.

No, we go to a person to see something in one area. Maybe she can teach me nothing about doctrine. Maybe in your eyes she is a Samaritan and you are the Levite and the priest going to the meetings, reading the Bible.

But the person beaten down in the road is that poor Samaritan who does something for that person while we just ignore it because we are going to the meeting. Even if he can't do anything for that beaten person, at least let's have a good attitude towards the Samaritan who is helping that person. Can't we do that? Instead of being critical and think we are so spiritual and we are super spiritual and righteous.

Some of the biggest Pharisees I have met on the face of the earth are people who do nothing for the poor but who are regular in the meetings, singing songs and praising the Lord. I don't want you to get a surprise on the Day of Judgment. That's why I share my heart with you.

I'm not asking you to go into social work. No. I told you that.

But let's remember. Let's start with our attitude to people in this church. In your home first.

There are different circles. Jesus said you must be my witnesses first in Jerusalem. Why? Because that's where you are right now.

And then in a bigger circle, Judea. Then Samaria and then the outermost parts of the earth. So you got to be witness to the Samaritans too.

He mentioned that. But must start in Jerusalem. That means to me Jerusalem is my home.

And then once I'm a witness to the Lord, that means my husband and my wife and my children can testify about my life and my home first. And especially the servants who work in my home. We've had servants work in our home.

And I'm very very interested to know the testimony of those servants about me. Yeah. About me and my wife and how we treated them.

I thank God that one of them was converted from Hinduism and is now the wife of one of the elders in one of our churches. Because we said, Lord if it doesn't work in our home, it's no use giving it out to others. As I've often said, if you have a CD player that doesn't work in your own home, would you give it as a gift to somebody else? It may look very nice.

Otherwise tell him, honestly this is a gift for you but it doesn't work. So when you a gospel that does not work in your own home, why do you want to give that gospel in a tract to other people? Otherwise tell them here's a tract, it doesn't work in my own home I hope it will help you. It's crazy that we who would never give a CD player that doesn't work in our own home as a gift to others, give to other people a gospel that does not work in our own home.

Do you know the number of preachers who have divorced their wives, who are standing up today before television cameras and telling people, giving things that has not worked in their own home they should shut their mouth and go and repent. I've seen a lot of people who come here to India from America and they say I wish these people would never cross these oceans and come here. They come because they got a lot of money.

What have they got to say? Are they leading people to godliness? Or corrupting India's Christianity with pushing people down and teaching people prosperity and all that and they should be teaching people godliness. Dear brothers and sisters we are living in a time of compromise, corruption and we need to be balanced in our Christianity. So, let's keep this in mind.

Lord, what does it mean to love my neighbor as myself? I start in my own home and I ask myself, what do my husband and my wife think about my Christianity? Is it going to be better in 2010 than 2009? Or is it just going to be more meetings? Am I going to go with the Levite and the priest, go reading my bible and ignoring my wife and children and all that in the home? You want to hear god speak to you? Well, God says, be my witness in your home first of all. Don't try to fool other people if you are a wonderful Christian if you are not a good Christian at home. Jerusalem first, then the next circle is our local church.

You should belong to a local church. If you still don't belong to a local church you better hurry up and become a part of a local church. Many people don't like to be a part of a local church because it brings responsibility.

They treat a church like a restaurant. You know, you go to a restaurant you don't have to wash the plates, you don't have to do anything, you don't have to cook the food, just eat, give some money and go away. A lot of people go to church like that.

Come, eat the spiritual food, put some money in the offering box or put nothing, go away. But there are others who recognize the church as a home. I have to sweep the floor, I have to clean the toilets, I have to do so many things, I am part of the home.

Many people don't want that responsibility. And I can guarantee that such people will never grow. Those who treat churches like restaurants never grow spiritually.

We're building a family not restaurants. So, first a local home, Jerusalem, then the local church. In other words, do I have a right attitude to every single brother and sister in this local church? I'm not worried about their attitude towards me, that's not my business.

What is my attitude towards them? Some of them are unlovely, just like you were when Christ accepted you. Some of them are so stubborn, exactly, not as stubborn as you were when Christ accepted you. Some of them are so inconsiderate and selfish, not as inconsiderate and selfish as you were in God's eyes when Christ accepted you.

All he's saying is receive them like I received you, that's all he's saying. Is he asking us to do anything less than he did for us? No. Oh, I can't forgive what that person did.

Well, you know that God couldn't forgive what you did, but he still forgave you. He even gave his son to die for you to forgive you. I tell you, I believe that the Christianity of many Bible-believing fundamentalist Christians is not Christianity at all.

It's just religion. With a lot of Bible study and Bible knowledge, but does not change their hard attitude year after year after year after year. They just keep on increasing in Bible knowledge and losing with Bible knowledge, not becoming more spiritual.

And I want to make sure dear brothers and sisters, this year does not become a failure for you as past years. I want to encourage you to take it seriously and say, Lord, I want to be Christ-like, not more Pharisee-like this year. I want to be more like you.

And you're going to examine my heart's attitude towards you by my attitude towards other people. First my home and then my local church and then gradually we can go to the outermost parts of the world. Sure.

But don't think that your Christianity is tested by your corresponding with somebody in America or Australia and say, oh, we have a wonderful time corresponding. It means nothing if you're not good in your own home. It's a deception.

Everybody can have a wonderful time with people whom they meet once in a while. You know, you had a wonderful time in a conference with people you meet once in a while. You have no problem with them.

But it's the people you live with whom you meet with regularly in your church, in your home first. And so I want to urge you, my brothers, start with your home this year and then start next circle is the local church. Make sure you have a very good relationship this year with everybody in your home and that you treat everybody in your home the way Jesus treated you.

That's all. The way Jesus treated you all these years is a good example to follow towards other people in your home. You're going to be demanding that they should be perfect.

Imagine if Jesus demanded that I should be perfect before he had any fellowship with me. I would be doomed. I'd get so discouraged.

I'd give up. Even today he accepts me as an imperfect person. Is your servant in your home not perfect? Terrible, isn't it? Do you know the meaning of mercy? Do you know the meaning of goodness to people who are at a much lower level than you? I'll tell you, in the past year, I have been convicted myself of not servants, I think we've not had any in our home, but sometimes when I've spoken to someone who is a little lower than me in social level, a shopkeeper, I think of a few instances like that in the past where I was not absolutely kind in the way I spoke.

And I repented like anything, almost immediately, within 24 hours. I said, Lord, I'm so sorry because the way that came to me was like this. Let's say some shopkeeper cheated me.

And then maybe I speak, I don't get angry, but I can speak a little unkindly to him. And then the Lord says, okay, now try giving the gospel to him. Give the gospel to him? Isn't he a sinner from when Jesus died? Don't you need to tell him now that Jesus died for him after the way you've spoken to him just now? And I go hanging my head in shame and I say, Lord, I can never give the gospel to that man.

I hope he forgets my face so that I can one day come back and give the gospel to him. Imagine that I have to pray like that. Lord, I pray you forget my face so that one day I can give the gospel to him.

But you know what happens? I keep doing that a few times, it makes me a better person. And gradually, it's not overnight. It doesn't happen overnight.

Gradually, gradually, gradually I begin to have a little more control over people who cheat me. Or do something wrong or don't do the way things should be done. Don't give up the battle.

I decided not to give up the battle. Lord, if I fall a hundred times, I'm going to get up a hundred times. I'm going to be a better man at the end of 2010.

And I want to speak to every human being in 2010 in such a way that at the end of my conversation with him, I can give the gospel to him. Isn't that a good goal to have? Lord, anybody, anybody, in all these difficult people we shall meet in this year, I want to speak to them in such a way that at the end of my whatever comments I have made on his behavior, I should be able to give the gospel to him. And say, hey, I'll tell you something that can help you and me.

The gospel. Please keep that in mind. These guys we yell at.

That servant in your home, don't you want her to be saved? Or is she going to stand before the Lord one day and say, Lord, I worked in the home of one of your children for five years and they behaved in such a bad way I couldn't believe that you are the Savior. That would be terrible. That would be terrible if somebody stands before the Lord and says, Lord, I worked in the house of one of your children and the way they behaved, I couldn't believe that you are the Savior of the world.

It's impossible. It couldn't be. You only talk religious stuff.

God help me if any of my neighbors have to say that. We all have difficult neighbors. And I've tried my best through all the years that I've lived here to be good to them.

Never to get into a fight with anyone and they take advantage of me, fine. That may be good to them. If I lose financially, fine.

I want them to see that I'm a Christian. That I'm not money is nothing. If a little bit loses, that's okay.

I deny myself and buy a little less for my home, but I want to be a good Christian to my neighbors. Dear brothers and sisters, please keep that in mind. Jesus gave us an example.

He spoke the story, true story. Two stories I want to show you. First was in Luke 15.

This is a parable. The other is a true story. The first is a parable.

It's the parable of the prodigal son. And here also now read it as the parable of the elder son. Many of us were prodigal sons once upon a time.

But now we have given up that and come to the Lord. And now we are in danger of being like the elder son. That's our problem.

So I don't think when you read the prodigal son, you need to meditate on the prodigal son so much. I would suggest that as you read the story of the prodigal son, meditate on the elder son. What is his attitude towards this guy who's gone completely wrong in his life? Who's gone astray? And then comes back.

And the father receives him. And in the story of that prodigal son, you see that he's disturbed because he's no longer the center of attraction in the home. Do you like to be the center of attraction in the church? Children like to be that.

You know, children are very disturbed when they were the center of attraction somewhere and now they're not. There's something in human nature that wants us to be always in the center. There's a funny story said about a German king in the early part of the 20th century.

He always liked to be the bridegroom at every wedding. And he wanted to be the one whose birthday was being celebrated. And in a funeral, he wished he were the dead person.

All this attention was focused on him. There's something in that in us. You know, you see somebody else the center of attraction and that's what disturbed that elder brother.

Hey, I was this one who was appreciated till now. Now everybody's been appreciating this younger guy and look at the way he lived. There are younger people coming into CFC who have proved themselves over the last year or two to be more zealous, more faithful, more devoted to Christ and to the church than many who have sat here for 25 years and just warmed the seats and gone home.

Who've probably done close to zero for the church. What is your attitude towards them? You think you are senior and they are junior? They are miles senior to you. Not in terms of number of years in CFC.

That doesn't count to God. But attitude towards God. How long have you been in CFC? Eight months.

But boy, you're miles ahead of that other guy who's been here 30 years. You're a senior brother. I know you're half his age.

But you're a senior brother as far as I can see and you're a senior brother as far as God's concerned. It's commitment that the Lord sees. Is your attitude like the elder brother? I've been here longer.

It's like those people who came to work at six o'clock in the morning and they looked down on the fellows who worked little and said, how can you make them equal to us? We've been here long enough. Very much longer. Jesus was constantly telling parables of Pharisees who looked down on others who thought they were junior and how can you make them equal to us? There's a lot of it in Christendom.

There are young brothers in their 20s and 30s who I believe should be leading the work in many churches. But they're being suppressed by older people in their 50s, 60s who think, no, no, no, we are the senior ones. Amen on the sisters.

Don't think that just because you've been here for many years you're a senior sister. No. If you're humble and godly and you're not itching to give people advice then you're a senior sister.

If you're itching to give advice to young sisters, brother, sister, you should just go and bury your head in the sand and disappear. These people are always itching to give advice. I tell young sisters, if you see some older sister itching to give you advice, please run in the opposite direction.

They can't help you. No. There are some sisters like that.

They're always itching to give advice to younger sisters. They're the most ungodly women in this church. You should live such a life that young sisters will come to you and say, sister, I'd like to learn something from you.

Then open your mouth and give them advice. That's the best way. I don't go around giving advice to people.

I say people come to me, I give them advice. I have no lust to give advice to any Tom, Dick or Harry in the world. No.

People came to Jesus and people must come to us. So, let's examine ourselves in this story of this elder son, his attitude. How can this person who has messed up his life so much be more accepted in the church than me? Well, he's got a humbler attitude and that's the thing that matters.

So, Jesus was speaking stories like this about self-righteousness. You know the story of the Pharisee and the Publican. In fact, many of Jesus' parables.

The Pharisee and the Publican, this fellow despising that other man because he doesn't know the Bible like him. He can't quote the Bible like him when he prays. And he thinks he's so holy because he prays and fasts.

And Jesus is exposing such people. The story of the laborers who came at six in the morning, despising the other guys who came at five in the evening. Now, take this story.

This is a true story now in Luke chapter 16. It's talking about this second aspect of loving your neighbor as yourself. Here were two brothers in the church.

One was a rich man, Luke 16, 19. And the other was poor Lazarus, verse 20, lying at the gate. To me, this is a story which is very appropriate for today.

How do I apply it to today? I apply it, here is a rich brother who believes in the prosperity gospel, a rich pastor perhaps, who's got his own private jet and his all types of things that he's made money off other people. And he's living in grand style like all these television personalities who make money from poor people and who many of you admire with eyes open thinking they are godly men. Because you have no discernment.

This rich man is like that. Sitting like that. And the poor man is, I think, of some of the poor brothers in some of our villages who are a million times more godly than that television preacher.

They don't have private jets and they don't perhaps know the Bible like them but they are much more humble and much more god fearing. And here's this rich man sitting there and thanking God that he has understood the prosperity gospel and God blessed him and made him very rich and got a lot of money. And this poor brother, he is struggling in life.

Sometimes he eats only one meal a day. Struggling. Living in a little old hut.

I praise God for these brothers whom I know. I've been to many of their homes through the last 25-30 years. They have blessed me much more than any one of these prosperity preachers on television.

Any day. And the rich man doesn't care for these poor people. Do you think any of these prosperity preachers will come down to the poor villages there where there are poor people struggling to earn their living? No.

They only go among the rich and preach where people can give them \$10,000 for one message, etc. I'm surprised. I'm not surprised at them.

I'm surprised at the dumb, blind believers who believe these people are men of God. That's what surprises me more. I'm surprised that some people in CFC believe all this rubbish.

After all, are they here? Well, I suppose some people will never understand. The Bible says that some people will ever be learning and never come to the knowledge of the truth. I really believe there are people in CFC like that.

They're mentioned in 2 Timothy 3. Ever learning but never able to attain the knowledge of the truth. They're just learning and learning and learning and learning but they still can't find the 2 plus 2 is 4. Finally, both die and boy, what a difference in eternity. What a difference.

Some, like the rich prosperity gospel preacher, will stand Lord, in your name we cast out demons, we did miracles we prophesied in your name Jesus said, get away from me, you who lived in sin. And this poor brother, he's in paradise. The one who is despised.

That poor person was a test to the rich man. The rich man was tested by his attitude towards that poor person. You may be the rich person.

Do you know that God is testing your heart's attitude by your attitude to someone who does not perhaps have as much spiritually or materially or intellectually, maybe he doesn't speak with that posh English accent that you have, his English is more broken or some bad accent and you despise him for that. You

don't realize that God is testing you. I believe God tests us through the way some people speak with a bad accent and things like that, so many things.

I'm not saying that we should get those people up to preach, I'm saying that what is your attitude towards them? That's what I do. Do we despise somebody for something which has no eternal value? This man despised this poor man and he ended up in hell. I don't want to be like that.

Let me show you another true incident in Jesus' life in John chapter 8. I preached a sermon on this one saying, legalism is worse than adultery. Legalism is worse than adultery. I don't know how many of you are guilty of adultery, I hope nobody, but I fear that number of you are guilty of legalism and legalism is worse than adultery.

That's what I want you to see from John chapter 8 verses 1 to 12. I'll show you. You know the story so I don't have to read it.

Jesus is standing in the middle on one side are all the legalists, the Pharisees who know their Bible well, who go to the meetings regularly, who pray and sing and do all the right things. On the other side is a poor woman caught in adultery whom the Bible says must be stoned to death. Moses said that.

It's a law in the Old Testament. And the legalists have got their verses ready and say Lord according to this verse this woman's got to be stoned to death. And Jesus says that's right.

I'm not against scripture. Stone her to death but let the one who has not committed sin throw the first stone. Now that's not written in the Old Testament but that's the spirit of the Old Testament.

Now if you and I were there those Pharisees would have picked up stones because we don't know their private life. I say I'm ready. But they couldn't do that with Jesus standing there because if one person had picked up a stone Jesus said okay you want me to tell everybody all the secret sins in your life? No, no, no.

I'm going home. Thank you, thank you. They knew that.

They couldn't fool him. So they quietly walked away. It says starting with the oldest.

Well, they were the biggest crooks. Starting with the oldest. All the senior people went away first and then the junior people also had to leave.

Finally there was one man left who had no sin in him who could throw the stone. That was Jesus. He was qualified to pick up a stone and fulfill the scriptures but Jesus doesn't throw stones at people.

Did you know that? Do you know that Jesus doesn't throw stones at anybody? Not even at sinners? Not even at people who have disobeyed God's word? Thoroughly like women caught in adultery? No. He's got no stones in his pockets. I thank God that I have a savior who's got no stones to throw at me.

Preachers may throw stones at you not Jesus. Have you heard preachers stand in this pulpit and throw a stone at particular? I remember a brother once getting up in a Wednesday meeting here many years ago and he was sharing something. It was so obvious to me that he was speaking to his wife who was sitting there.

I think it was obvious to everybody. He wanted to preach a message to his wife. He didn't have the guts to tell her at home.

So he got up in the pulpit and decided to give it to her here. He who is without sin throw the first stone at him. So Jesus said, I don't have any stones.

No one condemned you? All these legalists went away? No Lord, no man. I do not condemn you. Does that mean he tolerated adultery? No, no, no, no.

But don't sin again. You know that's the full gospel? John 8 verse 11. I don't condemn you.

That's the first part of the gospel. The second part of the gospel is don't sin anymore. That's the word the Lord spoken to me.

I don't condemn you for all your past life. Now don't sin anymore. Yes Lord I take both parts.

I'm not going to take one part. And then Jesus said these amazing words verse 15. You people judge according to the flesh.

I don't judge anyone. Because God, my father, didn't send me into the world to judge the world but to save the world. When you were born, how many of you think that God allowed you to be born to be a judge of other believers? I'm sorry to say I was stupid, idiotic and foolish to think that God sent me into the world to be a judge of other believers.

But I've repented. I've woken up and discovered God did not send me into the world to be a judge of other believers. He did not even send Jesus to be a judge of others.

He sent me to bless people and to save them. If they don't want to be saved, they don't want to be blessed, okay fine. But I don't want to judge them.

It's not my business. God is the only judge. James 4 says, remember there is only one judge and only one lawgiver.

Only one lawgiver and judge. That verse in James 4 has been a tremendous deliverance for me. I don't have to make laws for other people.

You know, so many husbands and wives, they have fights at home because they made laws for each other. Thou shalt do like this. Thou shalt do like this.

They are an additional lawgiver to God. It's good to have rules for ourselves but don't make laws for others. Perfectionist.

It's good to be a perfectionist if you stick to yourself in your perfectionism but don't demand it of others, even in the church. Let's press on to perfection but in our pressing on to perfection, let's be merciful to one another. God is examining our heart's attitude.

Remember the story of Job. You know, the prosperity preacher, the rich man sitting there could have looked at Lazarus and said, why is he sick? Because he doesn't trust God as a healer. Why is he poor? Because he doesn't trust God to provide all his needs.

Do you despise people like that? The Pharisees despised the woman caught in a tree, the rich man despised Lazarus and in the book of Job, the preachers despised Job. Why is he sick? Something is wrong. Why did his children die? Because something is wrong.

All these judges, why not take a humbler attitude? I don't know how many people judged others for getting sick during the last conference. I hope you didn't. I say Lord, I thank God for those who didn't judge but who helped and I thank God for those who say, Lord, that could have happened to me and do those, I thank God for those who did not even judge.

Those who organized the conference. Did you judge them? Did you judge the people who tried hard but, you know, probably made some mistakes? Jesus said, I am not judging anyone. He never had to judge himself, there was no sin in him.

What about us? We have so much to do judging ourselves. Here we go around, passing opinions on every Tom, Dick and Harry. Alright, we have messed up the year 2009.

Let's make sure 2010 is not going to be like that. May God have mercy on us. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us we pray. Deliver us from this persistent evil habit that we have. Of passing opinions about others and judging others and giving all types of opinions.

Most of the time we don't even know the full story. Please give us grace that this year will be a glorious year where we shall love our neighbors as ourselves. We shall treat other people the way you treated us.

We shall seek to have the power of the Holy Spirit to be gracious to others. We know this is a major part of the life of victory over sin. And we believe that as we seek the power of the Holy Spirit to treat other people right, we'll also get victory over our lusting with our eyes and our anger and many other things.

Because you treat us the way we treat others. Help us we pray. In Jesus name, Amen.

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