

A Useful Vessel For The Lord

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God for prophetic words that address the needs of people in the church. It highlights the need for believers to pursue the gift of prophecy, prioritize love over seeking personal honor, and cleanse themselves to become vessels of honor. The focus is on pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace, while avoiding useless arguments and quarrels, and encouraging all to prophesy and share words of encouragement with others.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:31, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 1 Corinthians 14:1, Jeremiah 15:19, 2 Timothy 2:20, Matthew 12:34, 2 Timothy 2:23

Topics: "Pursuing Prophecy", "Love and Righteousness"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God for prophetic words that address the needs of people in the church. It highlights the need for believers to pursue the gift of prophecy, prioritize love over seeking personal honor, and cleanse themselves to become vessels of honor. The focus is on pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace, while avoiding useless arguments and quarrels, and encouraging all to prophesy and share words of encouragement with others.

Transcript

In the church, we always want to have a prophetic word. The meaning of prophetic word is a word, not predicting the future, but a word according to the need of the people at this time. In every church, every CFC church, that's what we need.

And no man can know the need of the people. Only God knows. That is why everyone who speaks God's word, whether 5 minutes or 45 minutes, must seek God to receive a word from Him.

And the Bible says that every believer must seek for the gift of prophecy. 1 Corinthians 12 1 Corinthians 12 Verse 31 Earnestly desire the greater gifts, and I will show you a more excellent way. There are many gifts, and we can wonder what are the best gifts.

Many people think the best gift is healing or miracles. That is our human understanding. The Bible says, don't lean upon your understanding, because you'll go astray.

Our country, there are so many people who use their own understanding to find salvation and forgiveness of sins. Some burn candles, some dip in rivers, some go on pilgrimages. But we know that's not the way.

We know that we receive forgiveness by simple faith that Jesus died for our sins. No human being could have thought of that. So, in everything, we must remember our human way of thinking is wrong.

So, the best gifts are not healing and miracles. And he tells us later on what the best gifts are. But before that, he tells us in chapter 13 that whatever gift you exercise, you must exercise it in love.

That is the more excellent way mentioned in verse 31 of chapter 12. There is a wrong way to exercise the gifts. The wrong way is to seek my own honor, to show people what a great person I am.

That is the way of the devil. Anybody who seeks honor for himself in the church is an instrument of Satan. If you are seeking glory for yourself in any way, you are an agent of Satan in the church.

Because it's the devil who seeks his own honor. Jesus came to wash people's feet. That is the spirit that everybody in CFC must have.

A great desire to serve other people and wash their feet. And the more senior you become, the better you must be a feet washer. That must be your longing.

And that is an expression of love. Feet washer means when you see dirt in somebody's feet, you want to wash it, not criticize it. That comes out of love.

See how a mother will do anything for her little child to keep that child clean. That is the type of love we need to find in every brother and sister in the church. And if you don't have that, you must ask God to give you that.

And that is what chapter 13 is about. And he says there are so many wonderful things that are in the Christian life. Chapter 13, verse 13.

Faith, hope, love. Now in most preaching today, they say faith is the greatest thing. They say you must have faith.

You must have faith. God will do this for you. He will do that for you.

But the Holy Spirit compares faith with love and in this verse he says love is the greatest thing. So if you don't want to be deceived in today's world, remember 1 Corinthians 13, 13. It's easy to remember.

They say 13 is a bad number in the world. But 1 Corinthians 13, 13 is a very good verse. When you compare faith and love, love is the greatest thing.

You show me a brother who's got a lot of faith and a brother who's got a lot of love, I'll choose the brother who's got a lot of love. That brother will bless the church more. It doesn't matter if you don't have too much faith.

Yeah, we must have faith for God's promises. But I'm talking about faith for supernatural things. That not everybody has.

But love is greater than all that. And so it says in chapter 14, we must pursue after this love. Everybody here.

You know when I read the verse which says pursue after love, I get a picture in my mind. It's late at night. I'm going to the bus stop to catch my bus to go home.

And the last bus. And it has already left the bus stand. It just started.

What will I do? Even if I'm an old man, I'll run. That is how we must pursue after love. How many of you are pursuing after love like that? That is the last bus is going.

I have to run and catch it. Take that verse seriously, my dear brothers and sisters. Pursue after love.

Then you must earnestly desire for gifts to serve others. You know, we all know the meaning of gift. We know what birthday gift is, wedding gift is.

Always gift is for somebody else. Have you ever given a gift to yourself? No. Wedding gift is for somebody else.

Birthday gift is for somebody else. Always gift is for others. I've never heard anybody say, I gave a gift to myself.

It is so simple. That when you seek for a spiritual gift, For whom is it? It is not for you to get honor. No, it is to bless other people.

You give a wedding gift to somebody you love because you love that person and that's why you spend a lot of money to get a gift. So the love comes first. Why is it for some people's wedding you buy only something worth 50 rupees and somebody else's wedding gift you give a gift of 500 rupees because you love the other person more The first person is just some not so well known person so you have to give some gift but the other one is maybe your son or somebody you love very much then you will give an expensive gift so the more we love the more we want to give a good gift to other people Many years ago the Lord told me if you have a gift if you have love in your heart for the people you are speaking to and you got my word in your heart I will always give you a word when you stand in the pulpit and I have proved that for nearly 40 years I only have to make sure that I love everybody I speak to and I must make sure that the word of God is in my heart If I got the word of God in my heart but I don't have love for people then I can preach from my head it will not be from God So whenever I seek to speak to people I want to make sure I love them and then it says pursue love and then seek for gifts to give to other people Every elder brother must pursue after love Every brother who stands up to share anything must have love in his heart and not only the brothers who speak in the pulpit not only those who stand up to preach even you are a sister somebody comes to visit your home why don't you seek God for a gift to bless that person who came to your home See in the world when somebody comes to visit a home they spend their time gossiping speaking evil of everybody and they waste their time We don't want to do that We want to bless the people who come to our house If you want to bless them you must love them first and you must say Lord this person may come to my house only 5 minutes Don't let me send him away by polluting his mind with all types of rubbish But let me give a gift to this person a word from heaven A gift and that is called prophecy So what is the best gift 1 Corinthians 14 verse 1 Desire earnestly spiritual gifts but especially that you may prophesy Everybody not only the preacher even you young girls sitting here You know what you must do You must love all those young girls whom you know In the church, in your school, in your college anywhere Say Lord please give me a word in my mouth just to encourage or bless them maybe just one minute It says in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 31 Everybody can prophesy Every brother, sister young brother, young sister in the church can prophesy and if you don't get a chance to prophesy in the church you prophesy at home Not everybody can prophesy in the church because there are so many people in the church But when people come to your home or you go to somebody's home or you meet somebody in the school or in your place of work The world is full of discouraged defeated people God has put you as a light

there You know what that light is What does Jesus mean when you are to be a light to the world First of all our life Our life is our light Let your light so shine before men they may see your good works and glorify your father But the bible speaks of another light also See 2 Peter 1 2 Peter 1 It says here about 2 Peter 1 in verse 19 The word of prophecy is like a light shining in a dark place You know when you give a prophetic word to somebody What does that mean A word that will exactly meet that person's need What is the mark of a good doctor They can give you the absolutely right medicine for your need Another patient comes the doctor gives another medicine for that need The third person comes another medicine because they have got different sicknesses And it's a wonderful thing when we are in touch with God that we can have the right word even for one minute to give to people whom we meet You know we are coming to the end of time and we can't just depend on 2-3 preachers All of us must learn to prophesy We want in CFC all brothers and sisters to earnestly desire to prophesy from now on I am not talking about preaching in the meeting I am talking about one minute words of encouragement that you give to your friends and others whom you meet in school, college, hospital, anywhere One minute words of encouragement that you give to people whom you meet When you see somebody in need and you say Lord please give me a word for that person I will tell you from my 40 years experience If you love people and you study God's word whoever you are God will give you a word for your friends He will give you a word for your enemies also You know what is the best thing you can do for your enemy Give him a word from God Not a word of judgment Leave all the judgment to God That is not our business The Bible says Never take revenge because revenge belongs to God Worship also belongs to God We must not get people to worship us Because worship belongs to God In the same way Vengeance belongs to God not to us If you take revenge on somebody that is exactly like receiving worship If you take revenge on somebody that is exactly like receiving worship Two things belong to God Revenge and worship We must not touch them We must bless our enemies Give them a loving word from God If somebody curses you bless them with a word from God That man is in darkness You be a light Don't become darkness yourself This is what I mean by earnestly desire to prophesy I hope all of you will really take this word seriously Take it as a word from God Lord, I want my heart to be filled with love for all the people I meet I want to have a word according to their need wherever I go I want to get rid of all the useless words from my mouth Let me show you Jeremiah 15 another verse the Lord gave me That is a word for you also If you don't know this verse please remember it I am not speaking to preachers In our church we want everybody to prophesy Very few people have the gift to stand in a pulpit and speak and prophesy for a long time The Bible says you must prophesy according to the proportion of your faith That's what it says in Romans 12 That means God can give some people the ability to speak for 1 hour Some people only 20 minutes Some people 5 minutes I think all of us can speak at least for 1 minute Not in the church But at home In our place of work Words that will encourage others Words that will challenge them to think about God I want all of you to really seek for this So here is a word Jeremiah 15 verse 19 Please remember this verse all of you If you return you can stand before me says the Lord And you can stand before me That's the first thing You must learn to stand before God And then the next thing You must get rid of all the worthless words from your mouth If you get rid of all the useless words In our mind so many thoughts will come as to what we should talk Somebody gets angry with me And in my mind immediately certain thoughts can come to speak to him like this That is a worthless word Throw it away Because I am standing before God now I have to stand before God Like you know I tell married couples Jesus said If two are there I am in the midst of them So I tell them whenever you speak to your wife remember Jesus is standing there Whenever you speak to your husband remember Jesus is standing there Never forget that When you speak to your wife Jesus is there When you speak to your husband Jesus is there You can't see him but he is there It will completely change the way you speak to each other at home If you think in this way you will have a relationship The

way you speak to each other will completely change That is why God says Stand before me When you stand before my presence Throw away all the useless and low words Keep only the precious words Precious words are the words that come out of love Speak that Throw away all the other words If you do that each of you will have God's promise Verse 19 You will become my mouth Verse 19 If you think you are becoming God's mouth think about it When I hear this I remember I want to pay any price I want to be your mouth In the old testament it was only for few people like Jeremiah But I showed you 1 Corinthians 14 You can all prophesy now Not to puff you up as if you are a big person Not to show you The way I see the prophet I see him as a people's feet If someone's feet are dirty I take some water and wash his feet This is the true spirit of the prophet Not to stand up there like some big man Not to show you This is the true spirit of washing people's feet Do you know what it says about Jesus when he washed their feet Do you know which chapter in the bible it is written about Jesus washing the feet It is also what the world calls an unlucky number It is also what the world calls an unlucky number John chapter 13 And that is the chapter where he talks about washing the feet in verse 5 First gift verse Where he poured water and washed their feet But see how that chapter begins in the first verse That is why he washed their feet Jesus knew he is going to leave the world soon and go to his father I want to tell you all of us also we are not going to live in this world very long we are going to go away I want to tell you all we are not going to live in this world very long we are going to go to God Before we go Let us do what Jesus did He loved his own verse 1 which are in the world and he loved them to the end Imagine John chapter 13 verse 1 If you try to do this in your life imagine how it will be Lord, I don't know how long I am going to live in this world 10 years 50 years I don't know Before I go and go to the father I want to love my fellow believers unto the end And because he had that type of love he took the bucket and started washing the feet That is the spirit we must have That is the church we must build all over Tamil Nadu That when other people look at CFC they should not say oh what great preachers no they must say what love these people have for one another You are a good elder brother if you have built a church like that There may be many weaknesses in the brothers and sisters in your church But teach them to love before they depart this world You know how it is in the world They are only interested in making money I was going down the road yesterday And I was looking all the shops Every shop Oh they are only interested in making money Barber shop they want to make money Every shop Why are they keeping the shop there Only to make money And then you go and you say ah doctor Board I hope at least he is interested in helping the poor people No no no He is also interested in making money After sometime you come to church At least these people will want to serve people You go inside there and also they want your money Everything down the street is money money money money Church is also for money And then CFC meeting hall Ah There people must see here are people who want to love us and serve us and wash our feet They are not serving for money They don't want our money They want the honor of washing our feet My dear brothers build a church like that Not one or two people in your church everybody in your church must be like that How many bulbs there are here all of them are burning What's the use of one or two burning here Our CFC church must be like this Not even one fused bulb Imagine if you have a church like this Everybody wants to love Four elder brothers here they are also shining brightly All the young ones everybody is shining brightly What a wonderful church that is That is how we must be And in that love we must seek to give a word to encourage people Be God's mouth This must be our longing Turn with me to Lamentations Do you children know where Lamentations is Do you children know where Lamentations is Do you older people know where Lamentations is Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations That is after the middle of Psalms, Proverbs after all that Isaiah, Jeremiah, then Lamentations Lamentations in chapter 4 Here in Lamentations in chapter 4 in verse 1 and 2 See, Jeremiah was looking at the condition of the people in Israel Jeremiah wrote this book called Lamentations Jeremiah wrote this book called Lamentations It's called Lamentations because Jeremiah

was weeping over the poor condition of the people in Israel What is he crying about He is not crying that the people have become poor they don't have enough food No, they were all quite rich But spiritually they were dead And he thinks of the early days in the times of Joshua what a powerful nation Israel was He is thinking of that Oh, how powerful that was 8-900 years ago And now how pathetic it is He didn't criticize he was lamenting that's why it's called Lamentations What is he saying here in chapter 4 verse 1 How dark the gold has become How the pure gold has changed These valuable stones are now being thrown in the street like useless stones The precious stones of Zion once they were like fine gold now they have become like ordinary mud pots Imagine what is the difference between a golden vessel and a mud pot This is once upon a time these people of Israel were like golden vessels Really valuable Now they have become like mud pots That has happened in many churches And don't ever say it will never happen to us It's good to humble ourselves and say Lord if we are not watchful and humble same thing will happen to us We have seen some tremendous times of revival in CFC churches Some of you know even in the early days in Tamil Nadu We were very despised by many people But we remained faithful Many of us were poor But we loved the Lord Money was not the important thing for us But we wanted to live for God And God little by little added to us those who really wanted to live a godly life Think back to your own life my brother sister Some of you who came to the church 20 years ago 25 years ago Do you have the same passion for holiness as you had then? Do you have the same longing for fellowship with others like you had in the beginning? Those days you were willing to suffer anything for the Lord's sake You were willing to take leave from your work in order to go for a conference Many people were willing to take leave without pay even for 2-3 days To show that God is more important than money How is it today? You know Has the gold vessel become like a mud pot? What about your local church? Was it like a golden vessel once? Has it become like a mud pot now? What about your home? Some of your homes maybe your married life was much better 20 years ago than it is today We need to repent if the gold vessel becomes like a mud pot Is all hope lost? No Now I will tell you how the mud pot can again become a golden vessel I am telling the mud pot can again become a golden vessel I am telling you how Turn to 2nd Timothy and chapter chapter 2 2nd Timothy chapter 2 Here we read in verse 20 In a large house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also vessels of wood and earth some to honor some to dishonor You know there are some rich people who will have some golden and silver vessels in their house which they keep under lock and key And then there are some wooden packing cases and earthen pots which they are just lying outside So it says in a house there are these type of vessels Now the question is how can this mud pot become a golden vessel In verse 20 he says the vessels of gold are for honor and the vessels of mud are for dishonor Now how can a vessel of dishonor like a mud pot become a vessel of honor like a golden vessel And that is what the word of God says in the next verse If you cleanse yourself from these things you can become a vessel for honor you can become a golden vessel again Sanctified useful to the master prepared for every good work If some of you feel that you have backslidden from your original love for the Lord And if you have backslidden from your passionate desire to follow Jesus Then this is what you must start doing You must cleanse yourself Don't look at the faults of other people Cleanse yourself from everything that you see in your life which is not like Jesus Christ I have been doing that in my life for many many years now Even now I am doing it Every day I say Lord Jesus I have not yet become like you A lot of people respect me a lot I am not worried about that I don't compare myself with them I compare myself with you Lord Jesus Every day And I see so many things that I want to cleanse myself God shows me Then I cleanse myself Then I can become a little better tomorrow than I was today And if I cleanse myself tomorrow The next day I will be a little better And like that little by little by little I can become more and more like Jesus And if I do that I will never be a earthen vessel I will become a golden vessel You don't have to have preaching gift or anything It's not talking about preaching here It's talking about cleansing

yourself Are you doing that? Are all of you doing that? In CFC this is the thing we must be known for We are a church where everybody judges themselves and cleanses themselves And the leader judges himself more than everybody else That is a good elder brother You should be cleansing yourself more than other people I will tell you what I preach I preach what I have cleansed myself in Many years ago the Lord told me You cannot help people in any area where you have not cleansed yourself If you don't cleanse yourself from love of money you can't help people to be free If you don't fight against anger in your own life you won't help other people Everybody here young old I want you to be a golden vessel for God Never mind if you have back slidden so far You make this conference a turning point in your life I want to be a golden vessel for you and I want to cleanse myself So it says in the next verse verse 22 Please look in your bible read this verse verse 22 Flee from youthful lusts You know the meaning of flee How does it say in Tamil Not just Odu Flee That means you run for your life See Lion is coming against me When we heard one lion escaped from the zoo and is roaming in the street I go on the road and I see that lion Lion is running after me I will break every record for running that I have ever done in my life I will flee That is how we must run away from sin Do you know that sin is worse than a lion It is much worse than a lion A lion cannot send you to hell The lion used to eat the Christians in the old days and they went to heaven But sin can send you to hell It is worse than a lion It says we must run away from it All of you and me also We have to run away from sin We have to run away from anything that dishonors God in our life Anything that is not like Jesus Then I can be a golden vessel Imagine all of you can become useful golden vessels for God When Jesus looks down upon your church Imagine how happy he will be All the children in that church are so zealous for God All the children are so zealous for God So let us learn to do that And not only flee from youthful lusts Then that is the negative thing Positively we must run for something good Verse 22 Pursue after righteousness and faith in God's promises and love and peace with all men And we must seek fellowship not with everybody There are so many believers who are not serious about following the Lord You know people ask us Why you can't fellowship with all the other believers No I can love all of them That is no problem I love Roman Catholics I love Hindus I love Muslims I love Atheists God is my witness that I love everybody on this earth But I can't fellowship with all of them Because the Bible says I must fellowship with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart Verse 22 So I can't fellowship with everybody I can love everybody I can serve them help them give them a word to encourage them But when it comes to fellowship it is with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart So you know some people ask us this question Why is it when you have a conference you invite only the people, CFC people for your conference I said I'll tell you why It's not because we can't give food we are willing to give food to everybody But when we come only for two or like here just one day in a whole year One day we come to Tanjavur for a conference or include the other conferences in Tamil Nadu maybe 3-4 days in a year that you go to We don't want to spend those 3-4 days with all types of people who come and create controversies and questions about so many things why you preach this and this wrong doctrine We don't want to discuss all that We want to fellowship with those of like mind so that we can have a peaceful conference without conflict and argument and controversy In the early days of conferences in CFC about 30-33 years ago we used to invite everybody and so much time was wasted with people discussing in between the sessions all types of useless things I realized this is an absolute waste of time From now on we want to invite only people who have got the same mind and after that we had really good conferences not just in the session but in between the session also People say how can we reach the others No You have 350 days more in a year to reach all the other people in your village and in India Even if you go for 15 days conferences in Tamil Nadu in a year You still have 350 days to reach other people So that is how we reach other people in other days But now we pursue these things with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart it says in verse 22 So that we can encourage one another to become golden vessels We don't

want the golden vessels in CFC to become mud pots That means we don't want to behave like human beings we want to behave like Jesus Christ Mud pot is people who behave like other human beings Golden vessel is a brother or young sister or someone behaving like Jesus Christ Every one of us can do that We cleanse ourselves run away from all these things that pollute our mind Like I was telling somebody the other day a young man he said brother Zack when I sit at the computer I am tempted to go to those wrong sites with pictures of dirty pictures What shall I do? I say isn't it true that you are mostly tempted when you are alone not when other people are sitting with you You know what you must do? Turn off the computer Go for a walk Or if you got a scooter you can flee you can go quickly away Go around for half an hour and come back That's the best way to overcome sin Because the bible says flee from immorality So if you flee from these things when people come to argue with you don't continue the argument Say I don't want to argue Please forgive me I don't want to be your friend Even if we disagree let us love one another And we want to fellowship with those who are calling on the Lord from a pure heart So one person asked me How to find out who has got a pure heart? We can't see what is in the heart I said Jesus told us how to find out He said in Matthew 12 Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks So you listen to what a man is mostly speaking about Then you know what is in the heart If he is always talking about the movies and cinema theatres latest style of dress and all that or how to make more money Then you know it is all coming out of his heart A person who has got a pure heart I am not saying he will not talk about worldly things We have to talk about worldly things to live here In your office you have to talk about so many office things But that is not the main thing in his heart The main thing in his heart is how to be pure, how to love Jesus more What word God spoke to him from the Bible So you can find out who are the people who are really seeking after God In your church there may be people who are not interested in God like that You must not fellowship with them You must fellowship with those who have a pure heart And then when you are strong Then you can go and help those sinners to become pure But if you are not strong and you fellowship with them you will also become impure So it says pursue all these things with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart And refuse verse 23 all these foolish and ignorant speculations because they will produce quarrels All of God's children verse 24 must never be quarrelsome but kind to all patient when wrong All of God's servants must not quarrel and must be patient with everyone and must be able Even if you are a mud pot today you will become a golden vessel one day Don't worry about the other people Even if they are mud pots let them be mud pots But you decide That's what I decided I said Lord I am not going to live at the standard of other Christians around me I am not even going to live at the standard of other Christians in CFC I am going to look at Jesus all my life Till my last day on earth I will be looking at Jesus To keep on purifying myself To become more pure gold more pure gold more pure gold So that the words that come from my mouth will help people I really long from my heart that all of you will be like that You may not be able to speak for one hour like me that may not be your calling Speak for one minute to the people who come to your house When you speak on a cell phone I mean you talk such a lot of useless things why not one minute something good also you can say Why not do that Realistic to be like that brothers and sisters If you can't think of anything to say You say I read a verse in the bible today I was really blessed I just want to share that with you God bless you How much time did that take One minute Those of you who write emails One sentence you can add Something that will encourage that person Let's seek to pursue after love and earnestly desire to prophesy Let's pray Heavenly father Please help each one of us To love like you call us to love And to listen to you So that we can have a word to give to others We pray in Jesus name Amen

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