

Audio Sermon: Glorify God Not Yourself

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of glorifying God in church planting through burden, sacrifice, and local leadership.

Duration: 15:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Philippians 2:3

Topics: "Glorifying God", "Church Leadership"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a burden for the glorification of Jesus Christ in ministry, highlighting the need for prayer, sacrifice, and a focus on building God's kingdom rather than personal gain or competition. It stresses the significance of establishing local churches based on God's leading, developing godly leadership, and providing practical instruction to leaders for spiritual growth and integrity.

Transcript

Well, from the year 1965 to the year 1975, for 10 years, I carried a tremendous burden in my own heart to see a local church, which is an expression of the body of Christ. I sought for victory over sin in my personal life as well, at the same time. But it was not enough for me to come to a life of victory over sin.

And I also wanted to see a fellowship of people, that is God's will in the New Testament. And finally I saw it, after 10 years of having a burden. Now when I look back, I see that the years of burden in my heart were like the period of pregnancy of a woman before she gives birth to a child.

She carries a burden in her womb, which finally comes forth as a child. So the first step to any ministry, including church planning, is a burden of prayer. To go before God.

God's work must originate with God, not in my brain. And that's what I mean by a burden. To come before God and say, Lord, only you can do this.

I am available. You can take me and do what you want with me. But I long that your name should be glorified in India.

The name of Jesus Christ should be glorified. That is very, very important. To have a burden that the name of Jesus Christ should be glorified.

See, a lot of people want to start churches to promote themselves and to build up their own name. Then what you will build is what the Bible calls Babylon. But if you want to build the church of Jesus Christ, against which the gates of hell will not prevail, like Jesus said, it must begin with a burden in your heart for the glorifying of the name of Jesus Christ in your town or in your area or in your locality.

In my case, I'm burdened that the name of Jesus should be glorified in India. That's my primary burden. Of course, first of all, in the town and city I live in, but across the nation.

This has been my burden for years. This is what we pray for every week in our weekly prayer meeting in our church. So it must begin with a burden that the name of Jesus Christ must be glorified.

And not your name. Not your organization. And you should not be in competition with some other group.

That's another thing which I want to stress very clearly. It's pathetic that Christians today are competing with other groups to show that I'm doing something better than you and my church is better than yours. I said to God years ago, I said, Lord, I'm in competition with nobody.

My only enemy is the devil. I have no other enemies. I'm not fighting with anybody else in this world.

And I'm not here to show that I can do a better work than anybody else. Not at all. I want the name of Jesus to be glorified.

The other thing we have to be very careful about is the principle of sacrifice. Jesus loved the church and sacrificed everything he had for it. Babylonian churches are built on the principle of business and profit and gain.

And there are a lot of Christian churches today like that. It's not a question of which denomination they're in. If the motive is gain of honor for myself or gain of money for myself as a preacher or getting a reputation, that is Babylon.

That's not the true church of Jesus Christ. So Jerusalem, which is the true church, is built on the principle of sacrifice. Jesus sacrificed to build the church.

And if you want to plant a local church, you must be willing to sacrifice. You must be willing to sacrifice your time, your convenience, your reputation, your money. Money is a very important thing.

That means if you don't have a right attitude to money, you cannot serve the Lord. You cannot build a local church. When God asked Noah to build an ark, who paid for the ark? Noah himself.

How many people are there today who are willing to serve the Lord at their own expense? Paul was. He worked with his own hands. And those are the type of people whom God picks up.

C.T. Studd. He had such a lot of money in his inheritance, hundreds of thousands of pounds. He gave it all for the Lord's work.

I'm not surprised that God used him. Whereas today, a lot of people have made profit out of doing the Lord's work for themselves. They cannot plant churches.

They'll only plant churches which are like Babylon, which will dishonor God's name. So I would say, do you have a burden for the glory of the name of Jesus Christ in your locality? Are you willing to sacrifice?

Are you willing to sacrifice your convenience? For example, my home. Am I willing to give up my home, open it up to God's people, and let people come and use it? Because I say, Lord, it's not my home.

I remember six years we used to meet in my home. Our children were small. And it was, of course, a lot of inconvenience for me and my wife having a church meeting regularly in my home.

And 50, 60 people used to come there twice a week, thrice a week. But it blessed our children. In fact, our children were disappointed when finally the church moved to another meeting hall and there was no longer a meeting in our home because the place was too small.

But I praise God that our children could see the love and care and concern we had for one another as a family. So these are important principles. If our heart is right before God, I believe God can lead us to establish a local church.

I think the gifts of the Holy Spirit are also important, particularly the gift of prophecy and teaching. Evangelism is to reach out to the heathen. That can come later.

But once you already have a few people who are saved, they need to be taught. The gift of teaching is very important. If people are not taught, they're going to go astray.

And prophecy, by prophecy I mean not foretelling the future, but speaking like the Old Testament prophets spoke, speaking directly to people's conscience, convicting them and leading them to conviction of sin and self-judgment. That is how the church grows spiritually. That's how a church is consolidated.

And in our case, for seven years, God kept us consolidating the local church before he took us out. All the other 30, 40 churches have come up after the first seven years of consolidation of our local church. So we were not in a rush to go before God's time.

Because we had to build something before we could reach out to other places and tell people, come and see what the Lord has built. See, a lot of people go out and preach and reach out, but they have not built anything in their own hometown. There's nothing they can invite people to come and see, see what the Lord has done, the fellowship the Lord has built in our midst.

And then what happens? It becomes a very shallow type of work. So God worked in us, made us like a family, caring for one another, loving one another, giving us fellow workers with whom we could work together without strife. And then we began to reach out.

And in reaching out also, we didn't want to go where just because somebody invited us or because we felt there was a need, we would pray and ask God to give us a witness in our spirit as to where he wanted us to go. The vineyard of the Lord is very large. How do I know where God wants me to go? Only God can show me that.

And see, it's something like this. If you go to some place where the fruit is not yet ripe for picking, you can sit there for 10 years and waste time. Whereas in another part of the vineyard, the fruit may be ripe for picking.

And if you listen to the Lord, the Lord will send you there and send you to 10 other places and 10 years later bring you to this place where by which time the fruit is ripe for picking here. So instead of you wasting 10 years here, in those 10 years you've gone around to other places where God leads you to one place

after the other where the fruit is ripe for picking. So who can lead you there? Only God.

So I believe in this matter of planning churches, you know, we can't do it like the Coca-Cola company does. It says, okay, now we need to send Coca-Cola to this place and to this place and to this place. We want to sell it here and sell it here and take a map of India and go here, there and everywhere and establish outposts.

No, that's not how the apostles served the Lord. We read that Paul waited on the Lord. He was planning to go to one place, Bithynia, and the Lord said no.

And some other place, the Lord said no. Finally, the Lord told him to go to Macedonia. We read in Acts 16.

Places he wanted to go, he could not go. And some other place where he had not planned to go, the Lord led him. And the church was established in Philippi by his going there.

So I believe another aspect of planning churches is to know where God wants to lead us at this particular time. Another place, it may be God's time five years from now. So I shouldn't be going there now.

And the result of this type of ministry has been that through the years we have seen, very quickly, local churches come up. And very quickly, God establishes leaders. The other thing in establishing local churches is that we must give responsibility to the local people as soon as possible.

Not keep on spoon-feeding them forever and ever and ever and ever that they never grow up spiritually. One of the things I've sought to do is to lead people to lean upon the Lord and trust Him, even if they make mistakes. Just like we would teach a child to walk.

You hold him in the beginning, then you leave his hand. Let him fall down a few times. It won't hurt him.

He'll get up and learn to walk. Or you teach a little boy how to ride a cycle. You hold him in the beginning a little bit, and then you leave him.

Of course he'll fall down. None of us ever learn to ride a cycle without falling down. The same principle in giving responsibility to local leaders.

To give them that responsibility, let them make mistakes, but you're there to advise them and that is what we've seen in all the 30-40 churches and God has raised up a number of leaders there. We have elders meetings of about 50 of us come together once or twice a year to fast and pray to see God. So as I was saying, we come together once in a while.

You see, the development of a local church depends entirely on its leadership. If you read Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3, the type of leader determines the type of church. If the leader left his first love, the church has left his first love.

If the leader is faithful, the church is faithful. So I have seen that through the years in our own churches, that if I get a good leader or good leaders to lead a church, then I don't have to worry about that church. The church will grow really well.

But if the leaders are not godly people, then you're going to have problems with that church forever. So we are not interested in numbers. We're not even interested in number of churches.

We say if we don't find a godly leader, we will not start a church in an area. We're not interested in just starting a church and giving it to anybody who's a leader. We believe that God will raise up godly leadership wherever he leads us to plant a church.

We must have faith for that and we must always be looking out for that within one or two years, leadership has come forth to lead that church so that we don't have to keep that church dependent on us. We've always looked for local leadership and we have found it again and again and again. But then we need to instruct these local leaders and that's why we frequently come together during the year, whenever possible, come together and share with them.

I don't mean in a Bible school situation. I've never been to a Bible school myself and none of our leaders have been to Bible schools, but just like Jesus trained his 12 disciples on the job. So I'm always available for them to consult me by phone or when I meet them or sometimes they'd even come visit Bangalore to meet me or I may visit their place and we share together, we talk together.

Whenever I go to visit these churches, we spend every place, we spend hours with the local elders, sharing, finding out their problems and instructing them on being free from legalism and free from worldliness, what it means. Instruction concerning practical matters, very, very important. You know, just like a father would take pains with his children, we must be willing to take pains with those who work with us as our co-workers.

Otherwise, we'll never be able to train leaders. It's not a question of a technique. Just like we have a burden for a church to be established, we must also have a burden that these men will grow up to be godly men.

And so we must teach them how to overcome the lust of the eyes, how to be careful in dealing with women. We must teach them how to be careful in handling money, to be righteous in money matters and how to ensure that financial matters are kept properly because a lot of problems come in these two areas with women and with money in every church. And we have to give a lot of instruction on this in righteousness and uprightness and doing everything in a clear way so that our testimony is not spoiled.

Never to visit a home, for example, if a man is not there in the home. Simple things like this. And never to open the offering box if another brother is also not present.

There must be two people present whenever an offering box is open. Two people must keep the accounts. Little things like this.

We practically train them and to make sure that to see the condition of people in your church, to know the, I insist that every elder must know the spiritual condition of every single adult in his church.

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