

(Basics) 14. Maximum or Minimum for the Lord

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of cultivating a spiritual relationship with Christ, seeking to understand the spirit behind the commandments, and living a life of maximum attitude, rather than just fulfilling duties and living a life of minimum attitude.

Duration: 13:01

Scripture: Exodus 20:13, Matthew 5:21

Topics: "New Covenant", "Intimacy With God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the difference between a servant and a son in terms of their mindset and approach to fulfilling their duties. He explains that the old covenant focused on the minimum requirements, while the new covenant encourages believers to go above and beyond to please God. Using examples from Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, the speaker emphasizes that the maximum requirement is to understand the spirit behind the commandments, rather than just following the letter of the law. He also highlights the importance of having a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, comparing it to a marriage rather than a religious practice.

Transcript

In our last study we were thinking about the difference between being religious and spiritual. We'd like to think a little more about that because this is such a vital area to be a true Christian. We all know the difference between a servant or a worker working in a shop or a factory and a son working for his own father in the same shop or factory.

Their attitude towards their work will be fundamentally different. A servant or worker is working for wages. He's working for certain fixed hours.

If he has to work longer than that, he expects overtime pay. He expects a bonus at the end of the year and after maybe one or two years he may expect a raise in salary. But a son is so different.

He doesn't think in terms of the number of hours he works. There may be more work required in the office or the shop or the factory and the son would gladly stay on long after the workers have gone away. And if the factory is going through a difficult time financially, the son will not expect the father to give him any money.

What is the difference? There's a lot of difference. And in the difference between the attitude of a worker and the attitude of a son, we can see the difference between the Old Testament way of life and the New Testament way of life. You know your Bible is divided into two parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Or it's also called the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Now these are not words that we use so much nowadays. Testament, Covenant, they sound more like legal words.

But in very simple language, it only means an agreement. We all know what an agreement is. You know, when a person sells a property or hires a worker, they sign an agreement.

Both the person who's buying and the person who's selling or the person who's employing and the person who's being employed. And that agreement is a picture of this Old Testament and the New Testament. God made an agreement with man in the Old Testament times with Israel.

But when Jesus came, he's called the mediator of a New Covenant or a new agreement that God has made with man. And in very simple terms, we could say that under the old agreement, man was like a servant. You know, a servant can't call his master father.

And that's why in the Old Testament, the Jews could never call God father, because they were servants. They could call him, Oh, Lord, God, mighty master and all that, but they couldn't call him father. But when Jesus came and he gathered his disciples around him, he said, I'm going to teach you now how to pray under the New Covenant.

When you pray, you say, our father, who art in heaven, which meant what? That this was a new agreement. We were now going to be sons and daughters of God. And our relationship with God was not going to be anymore like that of a master and a servant.

It was not even going to be like that of a friend to a friend, which is higher than a master and servant. It's going to be more than friendship. Abraham was called a friend of God.

But you know the difference between a friend and a son. If a very rich man says, this is my friend and points to another one and says, this is my son. You know who has the inheritance, who's going to receive everything from his father, not the friend, the son.

To be a son of God is greater than to be a servant of God. It's greater than to be a friend of God. Now, very often we use the expression that so-and-so is the Lord's servant.

And subconsciously we think that that man is greater than the other person who's only a son of God. But is that really true? If you were to come to my house and I introduced two people to you and I said, this is my servant and this is my son, who would you think is more important in my house? Is it greater to be a servant of the Lord than to be a son of God? These are all wrong concepts that we've got in our mind, which are not from scripture. Of course, a son of God should also be a servant if he's a responsible son.

But we need to recognize that Jesus came to deliver us from being merely slaves and wants us to become sons. And there we see the difference between being religious and being spiritual. A religious person behaves exactly like a servant.

A spiritual person will behave like a son. Let's put it in two different words. A servant would think in terms of the minimum that he has to do in order to fulfill his duties.

Whereas a son, a responsible son, would think in terms of the maximum that he can do to please his father or to help his father. And in those two words, minimum and maximum, you can see the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, between being a slave and being a son. And that's why when Jesus was preaching what is known as the Sermon on the Commandments, he said, for example, under the old dispensation you were told you shall not commit murder.

That's good. What's the minimum required? You shall not commit murder. But is that the maximum that God required? Certainly not.

What would the maximum be in that realm, in that area, to please the father? Where does murder come from? It comes from anger. And so Jesus said, I say to you, don't be angry. What was he trying to say? He was trying to say, if you meditate on the commandment, thou shalt not commit murder, you would discover that that's just the minimum.

But if you meditate on it, you'll discover that the way to please the father, if your attitude is, what is the maximum I can do? It will be, I should not even get angry with my brother or with anyone. Then I have pleased the father. I have not pleased the father if I have only refrained from committing murder.

Now a religious person is one who takes the letter of the law and says, I kept it. Religious people become Pharisees, and Pharisees gradually drift away from the truth. In every denomination in Christianity you will find Pharisees, people who are taken up with the letter, with the traditions, and who are more interested in keeping those external traditions of their particular group than in life in Jesus Christ.

This is the form of godliness that we are told in 2 Timothy 3.5 to beware of. See, if you keep your fellowship with people who are arrogant and proud, gradually you'll get a little bit of their spirit. If you constantly keep companionship with murderers, you'll get a little bit of their spirit.

And in the same way, if you keep companionship with people who are pure and godly, you'll get a little bit of their spirit. So when it says in 2 Timothy 3.5 that avoid people who have only a form of godliness, it's to preserve us in life, that the Holy Spirit warns us. Don't spend a lot of time with people who are just keeping the letter of the law, who are righteous externally.

That type of religiosity does not please God at all. Be a son, be a responsible son. In the same way, when Jesus spoke about adultery, He said, according to the old dispensation, the thing was to avoid adultery, the physical act.

That was sin. But is that the maximum that God required? No, that was the minimum. What was the maximum? The son would look at that commandment of God and meditate on it and say, well, that's the minimum that God requires.

It's like the servant saying, well, I've got to work from nine o'clock to five o'clock. Once my eight-hour shift is over, I'm off home. But a son may stay on till nine o'clock at night or all through the night, because there's work to be done.

So the nine-to-five attitude says, I don't have to commit adultery, that's all. But the son's attitude is, what's behind that? I should not be impure in my attitude or thoughts towards anyone. There must be purity in my

thoughts towards the opposite sex.

And that's Jesus emphasized to such an extent that he said, if your eye offends you, it's better to pluck it out. Now, who understands that? Only a son who is desperate to please his father, who is longing that his father will be totally satisfied with his life. Only such a person can be really spiritual, who seeks to understand the spirit behind the commandments in scripture and not just the letter of the law.

The Bible says that our relationship with Jesus Christ is like that of a bride to a bridegroom. This is true Christianity. It's a marriage.

It's not a religion. It's a relationship between two people. It's not worshiping a book.

It's being united to a person. It's not worshiping a book. It's being united to a person, to the person of Jesus Christ.

Religious people worship a book. The Bible is the most important thing to them. Now, the Bible is very important to me, but not more important than Jesus Christ.

If I did not have fellowship with Jesus Christ, the Bible would become a dead book to me. It's living because Jesus can speak to me through it. And our relationship with Christ is to be like that of an earthly bride who is deeply in love with her bridegroom.

The Bible speaks of our relationship with Christ like that and that one day Christ will come back and we'll be married to him. It's the exact picture of a bride who's engaged, waiting for her wedding day and eager to correspond with her bridegroom, to telephone her bridegroom, to listen to her bridegroom and wanting to spend time with him until the day of the marriage. And during that time, how does she live? She's only interested in her bridegroom's opinion.

She's not bothered what anybody else in the world thinks about her. She wants to please her bridegroom and she doesn't do the minimum. You see a bride and a bridegroom, an engaged couple that are deeply in love with each other, when they get an opportunity to spend time with each other, do they think of the minimum time required? Do they look at the watch and say, okay, we've spent 10 minutes, that's enough? No.

They feel even five hours is not enough. When they write letters to each other, an engaged couple that are deeply in love with each other, how long are those letters going to be? Half a page? Do they say, well, that's enough. I just told you I'm okay and hope you're okay.

No. They may write 25 pages and next day they may write 25 pages again. This is due to love.

True spirituality is the result of a loving relationship with Christ. Religiosity, on the other hand, is a merely formal relationship with Christ, like a servant to a master. Let's seek to be spiritual.

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