

Being a Lover of the Truth

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon highlights the necessity of discerning truth in spiritual experiences and emphasizes the importance of freedom and self-control in the Christian life.

Duration: 24:47

Scripture: Mark 10:21, Luke 14:25-27, John 6:66-67, 1 Corinthians 16:12, Galatians 5:23

Topics: "Discerning Truth", "Spiritual Freedom"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning the source of supernatural experiences, highlighting the need to test teachings and actions against the examples set by Jesus and the apostles. It stresses the value of giving people freedom to choose and follow their conscience, rather than controlling them. The sermon also underscores the significance of preaching the uncompromising truth, even if it leads to people leaving, as seen in the examples of Jesus and His disciples.

Transcript

I've heard of people who say they went to some meeting. There are all kinds of spirits operating in meetings nowadays. And they say something happened to me and I couldn't control myself.

And I kept on laughing and laughing and laughing. I say, brother, that was definitely a demon. Because the Holy Spirit would have given you freedom.

Galatians 5.23 The fruit of the Spirit is self-control. If you can't control yourself, that is not the Holy Spirit. If you just lie down there and you can't do anything, that's not the Holy Spirit.

There's a lot of that today. People lay hands on somebody and they fall down flat. Do you know there are many Hindu priests who do that in India? You think it's only these TV evangelists who do it? Come to India and you'll see the Hindu priests doing that.

It's a supernatural power. But it's not from God. Anything that you never see Jesus doing, be careful.

To walk as Jesus walked. To serve as Jesus served. If you never see Jesus doing something, number one, number two, if you never see Jesus teaching it, number three, if you never see the apostles doing it, and if you never see the apostles preaching it, don't accept it.

Whatever it is, a four-fold test. I have followed this rule for many years. I study the scriptures.

You just have to study the New Testament. That's enough. You just study the New Testament.

You see something, somebody says, this is the Holy Spirit. Did Jesus do it? Did Jesus teach it? No, no. Did the apostles teach it? No.

Did the apostles do it? No. Then it's not Holy Spirit. How is it that believers are accepting so many things today, none of these four things, we need to be careful.

A lot of deception nowadays. I never see the apostles controlling anybody. Paul was the greatest apostle and prophet.

I want to show you an example. This is how I work with my junior, most co-workers in my church. 1 Corinthians 16, verse 12.

1 Corinthians 16, verse 12. Concerning Apollos, our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren, but it was not at all his desire to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

Apollos was much younger than Paul. A very junior co-worker. Paul was the apostle, prophet, evangelist, everything.

He tells this junior co-worker, Apollos, Apollos, I would like you to go to Corinth and share the Word there. What did Apollos do? He said, brother Paul, I don't feel free to go right now. What did Paul say? I am a prophet, thus said the Lord, go! Paul was not a false prophet.

He was a man of God. He knew that God gives freedom to people. He said, that's fine, Apollos.

Whenever you feel free, go. That's how the early apostles worked. The Lord told me, that's how you must work with your junior most co-workers.

I want to stand before God today and say that's how I worked for nearly 40 years now. I will not behave like the devil controlling people. I'll be like the Holy Spirit, give people freedom.

Do you know that God even gives people freedom to go to hell? How many people died yesterday in the world? A few thousand people. Most of them went to hell. Did God stop them and say, don't go to hell, come here? No, no.

He gave Adam freedom. All through the years, He's given freedom. If you want to disobey, go.

When Israel disobeyed God, He said, okay, disobey, you'll suffer for it. You'll suffer for it. But I'm not going to catch you by the neck.

When Solomon married 700 wives, and lived with 300 other women, did God stop him? Okay, you want to do it, do it. Israel will suffer, you will suffer. But I'm not going to stop you.

God gives people freedom. And even today, you can be free to sin, or you can be free to live a holy life. Because without freedom of choice, you can never be a holy person.

The second thing God gives us is a conscience. That's what makes us different from a dog. A dog's got free will to obey or not obey.

That's better than the planets. But a dog cannot be a sinner, and a dog cannot be a child of God. Because it doesn't have a conscience.

Now people train their dogs. You know, they even train the tigers and lions in the zoo. And in the circuses.

They train the whales in many places. Always by giving them some reward. It's a control.

There are preachers who control people in their church like that. Oh, I'll give you some responsibility. Come, I'll make you a deacon.

It's like giving a little food to the tiger to control it. This is not God's way. God gives people freedom to follow their conscience.

And if you don't give people freedom to follow their conscience, be careful. The dictators in the world don't give people freedom to follow their conscience. And it's so sad that so many preachers, pastors, prophets don't give people freedom to follow their conscience.

Paul gave freedom to Apollos. Jesus did the same thing. When a rich young ruler came to him once, do you want to walk as Jesus walked? This rich young ruler came to him, and Jesus loved him.

It's a great verse in Mark 10. It says Jesus looked at him and loved him. Mark 10:21. Jesus felt a great love for him.

And he said, there's so many good things in you. But you have one thing missing in your life. You love your money too much.

How many preachers have you met like Jesus Christ who will tell you, you're a good brother, but you love your money too much. You want to be a part of my church? Get rid of your love of money. Jesus said to that man, Mark 10, go and give your money to the poor.

Come to me without your money. And you can be my disciple. Have you ever in your life met a pastor like that? Who says to you, go and give your money to somebody else.

Come to my church without your money. I have said that so many times. I have gone to people and said, you can give your money where you like.

I'm not interested. Come to our church to hear the word of God. Be a godly person.

We don't want your money. We want you. What type of father is there who's more interested in his son's money than the son's health and growth? Are you fathers and mothers covetous for your children's money? Or do you want them to be spiritual? What type of preacher and pastor is that who's interested in money coming into the church offering box? They're not like Jesus at all.

Jesus told the rich young ruler, come without your money. And he said, I can't do that. What did Jesus say? What do today's pastors say? They'd say, okay, don't give it all now.

Give a little bit. Next year a little more. We don't want to lose you.

You're a young man. You're an influential man. You're a rich man.

We want you in our church. Not Jesus. He said, goodbye.

If you're not willing to fulfill the condition of being a disciple, go. Jesus never went after him. He never went after people who rejected his standards.

I see that is how Jesus did his ministry. We read in another example in Luke chapter 14. This is how Jesus lived and preached.

And I tell you, if you really say you want to follow Jesus, you better look at these examples and follow it. No. Luke 14, 25, great multitudes came to Jesus.

I have thought, what would a pastor do today? What would a pastor do if he saw great multitudes coming to listen to him because he's such a wonderful preacher? He would be so happy. He would say nice things to keep them all there. He would say a few funny things to make them all laugh.

But that's not what Jesus did. But this is not what Jesus was doing. When Jesus saw this great multitude coming after Him, He turned and said to them some of the hardest words He ever said to anybody.

He said, if you want to come after Me, verse 26, you've got to hate your father, mother, wife, children, everything. And verse 27, you've got to take up your cross. You've got to die every day.

And verse 33, you've got to give up your possessions. Is that the type of word that today's preachers will preach? That will not increase your congregation, it will decrease your congregation. That's how Jesus preached.

Let me show you a third example. John chapter 6. You know, if you are serious about walking as Jesus walked, preaching like Jesus preached, serving the Father like Jesus served the Father, I tell you, it's very different from what you see in a lot of Christendom today. Even the people who say they are filled with the Holy Spirit, maybe they were filled with the Spirit once upon a time.

Maybe they did have some supernatural experiences. They came through a gate, but they did not walk the narrow way. There is the narrow way.

John chapter 6. Again, a great multitude. Verse 2 was following Him. And He turned around and tells them.

Verse 53. I say to you, you have no life unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood. Again, in 54, you've got to eat My flesh and drink My blood.

Again, in verse 55, eat My flesh and drink My blood. Again, in verse 56, eat My flesh and drink My blood. I say, Lord, how many times do you have to repeat it? Four times? It's already offending them.

No, I've got to repeat it. I've got to repeat it. Repeat it until those who are getting offended will get thoroughly offended and leave.

And the disciples heard this. Not the Pharisees. Verse 60.

Disciples. Not just the 11, but many other disciples of Jesus. There were many people who were disciples of Jesus.

Many of Jesus' disciples heard and said, this is a difficult statement. I want to ask you, my dear brothers and sisters. When was the last time you heard a difficult statement from your preacher or pastor? Where

you had to die to yourself.

Where you had to give up your love of money. Most people never hear that in a whole year. Jesus was preaching it all the time.

And He didn't explain. He didn't explain, well, actually, My flesh and blood means this or that. He never explained.

He just said the words I speak, verse 63, are spirit and life. Why was He not disturbed? Why was He not afraid all these people would leave Him? And it says here in verse 66, many of His disciples left Him. When was the last time in your church where many people left because they got offended with the truth of God? We planted many churches.

And we always start with driving people away. Because so many people come because, oh, Brother Zach preaches so nicely. Ok, you come and listen.

You're going to listen to some hard words. And you'll get offended. And you will leave.

My sons planted two churches in America recently. And right at the beginning, so many people left. Some people left because they thought the sisters must cover their heads when they pray and prophesy.

Some left because the sisters were taught to cover their heads. Americans, these women, don't like to cover their heads. So my son said, oh, you've got to cover your... sisters must cover their heads when they pray and prophesy.

Not all the time. But when you pray and prophesy. And none of this half covering here and there, a full head covering.

There's a half obedience and a full obedience. And a lot of people left. I told my son, praise the Lord.

Drive away the people who don't want to obey God's Word. Let them call you legalists, let them call you what they like. Obedience is tested in the little things, not in the big things.

And, little by little, other people came. Many of Jesus' disciples withdrew. And were not walking with Him anymore.

And verse 67, there were 12 left. What do you think Jesus said to them? He didn't say, oh, I hope you won't leave me. He said, you also want to leave? Jesus asked, you also want to leave? You can leave.

And Peter said, Lord, to whom shall we go? These are the words of eternal life. Do you think Peter understood eating his flesh and drinking his blood? He didn't understand it either. He didn't understand it any more than all the others.

And I've thought about this. Supposing one of these fellows who left, came in the evening to Simon Peter's house. Hey, Peter, you said these are the words of eternal life.

What did Jesus mean when He said, eat my flesh and drink my blood? You know what Peter would have said? Listen, I'm just a fisherman. I don't know what he meant. But I know the man.

I've never met a man of integrity like that. He is a man of God. And I may not be able to explain everything, but I trust the man.

That is why he stuck with Him. And I've said in my church, the only people we want in this church are those who hear the strong preaching and say these are the words of eternal life. And we don't want to go anywhere else.

And we've had many people leave our churches. To me, that is one mark of the church Jesus is building. If you have a church where many people don't leave, you better check whether you're following Jesus or you're really preaching a compromising message.

We teach modesty and dress for the sisters in our church. There are a lot of western styles coming into India. And all the fashions of modern, modern dress.

We say we don't permit all that type of dress in our church. There are many other churches. You can join them.

They'll allow you to dress as you like. I know one sister said to me, Brother Zach, your standards are too high. You can't join your church.

She said, God bless you. We love you. God has arranged many other churches for you to join.

We are great suppliers of members to other churches. Those who don't want to be disciples. Because I know Jesus gave me a commission.

He said, go to another church. Go into every nation and make disciples. He never said make a large church.

He had only 11 in his church. That's all. I say, Lord, if I finish my ministry with 11 people, I'm happy.

If they are the 11 like yours who turned the world upside down, I would say, let your servant depart in peace. I've done my job. What's the use in producing a whole lot of compromisers who just sit and sing praises? God's work in the wilderness, in Canaan, was done by two people who went in by faith.

In the midst of 600,000 compromisers. In Noah's time. God's work was done by one family.

One man who brought up his three children properly. Got them to marry God-fearing wives. That's the man who saved the world.

The Bible says the last days will be like the days of Noah. With sex and violence, all types of worldliness. In the midst of such people, there has to be a few Noahs.

Who are such good fathers, they make all their children disciples. And who make their children marry God-fearing partners. And who will save the world.

Are you one like that? That's what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit in the last days. May God help us. We have some questions which we will try and answer in the evening.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's stand up and pray.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net