

Being Faithful With God's Gifts

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of being faithful with the gifts God has given us, highlighting accountability, humility, and the necessity of a deep spiritual life.

Duration: 52:17

Scripture: Genesis 12:2-3, Deuteronomy 21:23, Matthew 25:14-30, John 7:38, John 14:15, Romans 1:21, Galatians 3:13-14

Topics: "Faithfulness To God", "Stewardship Of Gifts"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faithfulness, gratitude, and humility in our walk with God. It delves into the parable of the talents, highlighting the need to be faithful with what God has entrusted to us, to avoid comparing ourselves with others, and to cultivate a heart of thankfulness towards God and others. The speaker stresses the significance of understanding God as a loving father rather than a harsh taskmaster, encouraging a life of submission, humility, and being a blessing to others.

Transcript

So I'd like to continue from what we have heard and I want to turn first of all to Matthew's gospel in chapter 25. One of the parables that Jesus spoke is called the parable of the talents. I'm sure you've all read it many times.

He's talking about his second coming. This whole chapter, the three parables, they all relate to the second coming of Christ. The first one is about the waiting for the bridegroom and here it says, it's like a man about to go on a long journey, that's Jesus, who called his own slaves and entrusted his positions to them, to the one he gave pipe talons, to another two and to another one, each according to his own ability and he went on his journey.

You have to read scripture carefully because these are the words of Jesus Christ. Storybooks or even my books, you can skim through, miss paragraphs, it doesn't matter. But when it comes to the words of Jesus Christ, you must not miss a single word because he spoke as he heard from his father.

So, it's very important and to study carefully the parables that he spoke, to learn from these parables what the Lord wants us to learn from them. So, here it says here, he gave one person five talons and that man went and traded with them, he did business with them and you know, Jesus himself was a businessman. He was a carpenter, he sold whatever he made, stools and benches and tables and earned his living.

Paul was a businessman, he made tents and sold and there's a lot you can learn when you do business where you have to learn to be faithful with money, that you don't cheat anyone, you take a certain amount of risk, but you can be cheated by others. But ultimately, if you do your work in your business trusting God, it will always prosper. I love that verse in Psalm 1 which says, blessed is a man who doesn't walk in the way of sinners, that means whatever he does, he doesn't do in any unrighteous way, he doesn't sit in the seat of the scornful, despising others, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, he tries to follow the law of the Lord and it says there in Psalm 1, whatever he does will prosper.

I have taken that verse for myself for many years. I say Lord, whatever I do, whether it's spiritual, physical, earthly, I do a business to support my family, it must prosper because I will never stand in the way of sinners, I'll never do anything unrighteous, I'll never cheat anybody, I will never take advantage of anyone, I will help the poor, and I will meditate on your word day and night. I won't read it day and night, I may have very little time to read it, but I'll meditate on it throughout the day.

If I wake up in the night, think about some word and seek to walk in the light of that, and then I can say Lord, I've done my part, I've not walked in the way of sinners, I've not sat scorning, despising other believers in other groups or saying Lord, I thank you, I'm not like them, none of all that, and I have meditated on your word whenever possible. Now you have to do your part, make my way prosper, everything that I do prosper, that's his part. I can't make everything I do prosper, but he can.

So here's a person who went and traded and I'm sure he followed those principles. Now some of you may not be familiar with what I read in Psalm 1, so perhaps I should turn there. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with that verse, I'm sorry, let's turn to Psalm 1. It's a beautiful Psalm, there are certain Psalms you must remember, Psalm 1, Psalm 23, Psalm 46, Psalm 91, it's almost double of 23 is 46 and the double of 46 is almost 91.

Okay, Psalm 1, how blessed, and some translations and paraphrases, it says to be envied. Blessed means to be envied. If you really want to envy a man, don't envy a man who's got a lot of money, got a big job.

Envy the man who does not walk according to the advice of godless people and says, tells us we can cheat a little bit here and cheat a little bit there. No, sorry. He does not sit in the seat of scoffers who make fun of others.

There are, you know, a lot of young people like to make fun of others. Don't ever join them. You'll destroy your life.

Don't make fun of those who stutter, stammer, who limp, who got peculiar habits, who dress in a peculiar way. Teach your children never to scoff at others unless you want them to destroy themselves. Don't make fun of people's accents.

I mean, you can be humorous, but don't humiliate people. Don't sit in the seat of scoffers. It's very simple.

Just don't stand in the path of sinners. Don't walk in the council of the wicked and don't sit in the seat of scoffers, but positively delight in the law of the Lord. That means you value God's laws and meditate on it day and night.

What will happen? That's all. Just two verses. You will be like a tree firmly planted.

You won't shake. Have you seen, you've heard of trees in Bangalore that fall in the storm and there are other trees which are much older that don't fall firmly rooted? And not only firmly rooted, but this is planted by streams of water. It's a picture of the Holy Spirit.

And the thing is, it's not outwardly that the tree is dipping into the water. No. No, you don't see a tree's branches dipping into the water.

No. Its roots go into the water, but you can't see that. What you see is the fruit.

Its leaf never withers. I like that. I said, Lord, I want to be like that.

I never want to be a gloomy person. A gloomy person is like a withered leaf or a withered branch of a tree. When does a tree branches and leaves wither? When it's not getting water.

The roots are not getting water. That means the hidden life is not connected to the Holy Spirit. It's not the outward.

Remember this, the tree does not dip its branches into the river. You don't even see what those roots are doing day and night, going into the river, going into the river and say, hey, I want some more water. I want some more water.

It's so different from a tree in the desert. It's in your hidden life, brothers and sisters, where you got to let your hidden life reach out to the Holy Spirit. The times when you're alone, when you wake up in the middle of the night or when you're all by yourself alone, even when you're sitting in the toilet or having a shower, when you're alone, reach out to the Holy Spirit.

That's the roots, your hidden life. Talk to the Lord and what will happen. If you're reaching out and receiving the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I can promise you, I've discovered this in my life, a leaf will not wither.

It was a great longing in my life because I used to be a very discouraged person in the early years of my born-again life, even early years of my married life. My wife will tell you that frequently, head in the hands, discouraged, gloomy. It's gone.

It's gone from my life for years because I pursued it. I said, Lord, I want a life where I would rejoice in the Lord 24-7. Not in my circumstances.

I don't care. Circumstances are like the waves of the sea. One day it's calm.

One day it's blowing wild. But in the Lord, there's no change. He says, I am the Lord.

I do not change. Every good gift comes from James 1.17, from a father of lights with whom there is no variableness and no shadow caused by turning. In the sun, if you turn, the shadow turns.

But it says about God, there is no shadow caused by turning. He doesn't turn. He doesn't change.

That's why we can rejoice in the Lord and always rejoice. If you try to rejoice in your circumstances or on people, it'll be difficult. Sometimes they're good to you.

Sometimes circumstances are okay. Sometimes they're not. But rejoice in the Lord.

Is there a single time when you cannot rejoice in the Lord? Tell me. Did He change? And if my heart is set on the Lord, I can always be in a good mood. I'm telling you from my experience.

You can be in a good mood morning, noon, and night. Every single day, no matter what happens around you, your leaf will not wither. And whatever He does, He prospers.

Whether it's a ministry, whether He's growing older, whatever He does, He prospers. He does a business, it prospers. He preaches a word, it prospers.

I believe that for myself. It's impossible that I can fulfill my conditions and God doesn't fulfill His. How can that be? You ask yourself, why is your leaf withering? Why is it what you're doing is not prospering? Go back to verse 1 and 2 in your life.

And verse 3, whether your roots are going out to the streams of water, are you trying to claim a promise without fulfilling the conditions? Are you planted by the streams of water? Do you seek to be received from the Holy Spirit all the time? Not satisfied with one baptism in the Holy Spirit long ago? Yes, turn back to Matthew 25. That is why this man prospered. With five, he got ten.

He traded and whatever he did prospered. He gained five more talents. The same way, the other man who had two talents, Matthew 25 verse 17, he got two more talents.

He also was faithful. He could not produce five because he had only two. God gave him only two.

God gave the other man five and he did not sit and envy that other, more gifted brother. Oh, I wish I could preach like him. I wish I could do things like him.

I wish I could travel like him. He didn't envy that. He says, God, you give me two, I'm happy.

If he had envied him, he would have got zero. He was happy that he had what God gave him. He fulfilled those verses in Psalm 1 and he prospered in everything he did.

It's very clear that all of us sitting here, we don't have the same number of talents. It's very obvious that some have more than others. Don't envy the one who has more.

God will require more from him. If the five-talent man came with two talents, it's not good enough. And then it says there was a man with one talent.

What did he do? He dug a hole and hid his master's money. That is a picture of a man whom God has given something. There's nobody without a talent.

Only three people mentioned here and everybody had something. And I want to say to everybody sitting here, every single child of God has got something God has given him. Nobody can say, God's given me nothing.

He's given you more knowledge of the Word of God in this church than a thousand other churches. What are you doing with that? He's given you a tongue with which you can share. You're not dumb.

That itself is a talent. He allows you to meet people who are needy. What more do you want? Why not reach out to the river? Say, Lord, give me something.

I can't do what that brother does. He's got five. I can't do what that brother does.

He's got two, but I've got one. I can use that. Do what you can.

It's like it says in Ecclesiastes, whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might because once you go to the grave, you can do nothing. Very good advice. But he didn't do that.

He dug a hole and buried it. He said, I better keep this safe. And after a long time, the master of those slaves came.

That's when Jesus comes back and he settles accounts with them. Do you think the Lord will not settle accounts with every single person? I believe that. Everywhere in Scripture it says, we will stand at the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of everything we have done in our body, good or bad.

Everything. And each person comes one by one. You don't come together.

When we stand before the Lord, we come by one, you and I, and everybody sitting here, we go one by one by one to the Lord and the Lord will require, how much did I give you? He says, five. Lord, master, you entrusted five talents to me, verse 20. I have gained five more talents.

And the Lord's reply to him is, well done. Good and faithful slave. I'll tell you something.

I meditated on that. I said, Lord Jesus, one day, if you can look at me, despite all the failures of my early Christian life, before I knew what it was to follow you wholeheartedly, if you can look at me and say, well done, all the criticisms of men and all the people who call me the devil and servant of Satan and everything else will disappear in a moment. That one well done from Jesus will make up for every evil thing anybody ever said against you or did to you.

Live for that. Live for a well done from Jesus, not a well done from some brother in this church. No.

Say, Lord, I want to get that well done from you. Good and faithful, not successful. This is the important word.

Not successful. The Lord's not looking for what it calls success in verse Psalm 1, is what God gives. But I have to be faithful.

Then he will make me successful in my ministry and whatever I do. Whatever he does will prosper. But God, to God I have to be faithful.

Faithful means with whatever little I have, to be careful with that, not waste it. I think a lot of people waste when they get too much. When my wife and I were married, we had very little.

I think many people when they're married in the beginning, they have little. Now we have so much more that God has given us. We are not supported by anyone in the world.

We don't get any monthly donations from anyone. We've done our own work and our business and God has prospered it through the years. Our investments have brought in more.

It's God's blessing. But we still live in the same simple way that we lived when we were married nearly 50 years ago. Why should we live luxuriously with the minimum necessary things, without wasting? I want to be faithful, that's all.

I'm not here to tell you how you should live, that's your business. I'm just telling you how I sought to live before God. I remember a man of God, Brother Buxing, who's the only one whoever I respected in this country older than me.

When I was a young 23-year-old man, he told me, he was 37 years older than me, he said, I'll give you three bits of advice. One, never in your life tell your physical, financial, earthly needs, your financial needs to any human being. If you've got a father in heaven, tell him, I've followed that for all these 55 years since then.

Secondly, he said, live very simply. Don't buy unnecessary luxuries. You need a few clothes, you need some toothpaste, and soap, and few things in life.

You don't need much. I said, sure. And thirdly, he said, when people accuse you, just make sure you keep your mouth shut.

Don't reply. Don't defend yourself by a letter or by words. He was a prophet, and what he said to me really stuck with me all these years.

And I tell you, it was prophetic advice. He didn't know what my future was going to be, but I needed all three. I want to say to you, long for Jesus to say to you, well done, faithful man, faithful woman.

If others, if God can use others more than you, don't just say they are gifted. That is one thing, it's true, God gives others more. But also remember that they are probably more faithful than you have been.

So don't just sit back and you can be lazy and say, oh well, I don't have those gifts. Okay. But what about the second area of faithfulness? Now I'll show you.

The man who had two talents, he came back and said two. This other chap came with five, this chap came with two, and he got the same commendation. Exactly the same commendation from God.

Well done, verse 23, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful in a few things, I'll entrust you with many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Compare that with verse 21. Word for word, exactly the same. Is it possible that you who got 10% of the spiritual gift that another brother has, you got only 10% or 1%, that in the day of judgment, the Lord will give you the same reward that that fellow who had 100 times more gift than you is going to have.

Do you believe that? I believe it. There are many people in Christendom who probably got 10 times more gift than me. It's okay.

I don't envy them. I don't compare myself with them. I'm not competing with them.

If I am faithful, God will give me the same reward as that man who's got 10 or 100 times more than me. I say that to every one of you. Some of you may feel I'm more gifted than you.

If God has done that, that's His work. But what I want to say to you in Jesus name is you can get exactly the same commendation and exactly the same reward I get if you are faithful. You don't have to have the ministry I have.

You don't have to preach like I do. You don't have to travel like I do. You don't have to have any of the gifts I have.

But you got to be faithful. It's faithfulness that matters and you'll get exactly the same commendation. It's a wonderful thing to know.

But if you spend your time gossiping, I don't do it. You spend your time gossiping, backbiting, and finally you say, oh, Brother Zak is more gifted. You're just fooling yourself.

God is not able to use you because you're a gossip and you're a backbiter. You're not serious. You're not faithful.

You're not faithful with money. You lavishly spend on yourself unnecessarily. Okay.

You earn much. One of the saddest things I have seen in this church, and I watched it for 42 years, people who've grown up, who were born in rock-bottom poverty have come to this church and been blessed, been helped spiritually, financially. The children have grown up and got educated and got big jobs and they become proud, arrogant, and think that they know more than the elders, fallen away.

Train up a child in the way he should go and when he's old he will not depart from it. I blame the parents who did not teach their children humility. They were proud.

You who came to the church in poverty and have been so blessed and it's gone well with you, even financially, materially, ask yourself, are you the same humble person you were when you first came to the church? It's gone so well with your children. Your children are earning 10, 15, 100 times more than you earned. Has it popped you up? Your glory in your children, in their earnings, they're not spiritual.

You should be hanging your head in shame and weeping every day. Why don't you do it? Because I'll tell you, when your children are on their way to hell and doesn't seem to bother you, wake up before it is too late. Wake up before you actually find them in hell and discover that you were the cause of it.

You didn't weep. You didn't cry out to God. God gives grace to the humble.

That is a universal law. There's no partiality with him. You will discover in the day of judgment that every human being who got grace was a humble person and if somebody got more grace than another person, it was because he was more humble.

Only reason. We will discover that when you evaluate all the people in eternity and you meet the different believers from different parts of the world and you saw that you look at their past life and you see the video of their past lives. I'm looking forward to seeing the video of all the lives of the great saints through the ages and I'll discover how in the world did this guy accomplish so much because he was humble.

God gave him grace. He always humbled himself. He never exalted himself.

He never wanted to push himself up and become somebody over others. God just kept on giving him grace. My brothers and sisters pursue that way.

We have taught it for 42 years in the church and I'll tell you honestly, please listen to me. Some of you don't know how proud you are. Some of you senior brothers and sisters do not know the pride that comes out of you.

I never tell you. I can see it. I can sense it.

I can smell it and I don't say it because it's not my job. The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin. It's not my job.

I can only tell you. But I have seen people who've been here for years. They've not lost grace completely but it has gone down.

They used to get 90 percent. Now they're getting 60 percent. They haven't failed.

They haven't come to 35. They're still passing but they should have gone from 90 to 95, from not 90 to 60. Consider that.

So faithfulness, faithfulness. And this man who had one talent, see the reason why he buried that talent in the ground was he had a wrong understanding of his master. He said in verse 24, one talent, he said, Master, I know you are a hard man.

You reap where you don't sow. You expect a crop when you have not sown anything. You gather when you never scattered any seed and I was afraid how you would treat me if I didn't.

If I took a little risk with this and I lost it, I knew you'd come down hard on me. So I just was scared and I went away and hid your talent in the ground. Here you are.

You gave me one. Here it is. You got nothing from it? No, I didn't get anything from it.

And the Lord says, what is he saying? What is the opposite of faithful? Unfaithful? No. You wicked, lazy. The opposite of faithful is wicked and lazy.

You knew. That's not true but he's sarcastic. He quotes his word.

You said I don't reap. I reap where I don't sow and gather when I'm scattered. At least then you should have at least given my money in the bank where you wouldn't have got 100%.

You'd have got 10%. No, Jesus taught us it's not wrong to get interest. Put in the bank and get some interest.

If you had invested it, you'd have got 100% perhaps. Okay. You didn't have the wisdom to invest that money.

At least you could have put it in a bank and got 10%. Why didn't you do that? No, you didn't do that either. Take it away from him.

The Lord says in verse 28, give it to the man who's already got 10 talents. Why? Doesn't that look a bit unrighteous that a man has already got 10 and God gives him one more which this fellow is supposed to have? Let me paraphrase verse 29 to you. Because everyone who has and is faithful with what he has, more will be given.

Do you know that your 10 can become 11? Not only your 5 can become 10, your 10 can become 11. That means God gives you one more. He gave you 5 initially.

He gives you one more. You get 6. You can go and produce another 6. If you are faithful with what you have, it says more will be given and he'll have an abundance. But from the one who's not faithful with what he has, even what he has will be taken away.

That means you can start off with one talent and you're just careless and unfaithful. Even that's taken away. Throw out that worthless slave into the outer darkness, verse 30, where they'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It's a pretty serious thing to be unfaithful with the talent God has given you, to accuse God of being a hard master. He's such a loving father. I learned something from that, that if you want to really use your gifts God has given you for his glory, and if you want to be faithful also, you have to begin with the proper knowledge of God.

This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, what he's like, who he's like, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. And if you've got, and this is possible, you get the idea that God is a hard demanding God. Now I have a fear that some of you are like that.

Why do I say that? Because I had that feeling for many years after being born again, who is such a hard demanding God. I slip up once and he'll jump on me, and I didn't read my Bible this morning and he's frowning at me. He's a hard demanding master.

In those days I was fruitless. What I did did not prosper. Why? Because I never sat under the smile of a loving father.

I have a picture in my house of the prodigal son coming back and the father with tears in his eyes welcoming him. I like to think about that. And I have another picture of Jesus picking up a child saying, don't be afraid, trust me.

This is the picture of God and Jesus that I always want to keep in mind. He's not a hard demanding master. He's a very gracious, loving, merciful, forgiving father who if I slip up, doesn't come and say, why did you do that? No.

He says, don't worry son, let's fix it. After fixing it, I'll tell you how to be more careful next time. This is how my dad speaks to me and it's made my life so enjoyable.

When I get up in the morning, I'm not in a bad mood because I don't have a frowning policeman looking down at me. I have a loving father. It's not a hard taskmaster.

Therefore, I know that whatever I do that day will prosper. I don't condemn myself at the end of the day saying, I didn't spend every moment profitably. How did I spend my day from seven to eight? I tell you sometimes, sleeping, because I went to bed at one o'clock or two o'clock.

Sometimes it's true. Sometimes I go to bed at one or two o'clock. I don't condemn myself.

I used to and it always led to discouragement. I don't condemn myself. I have a father smiling at me.

I have my aches and pains and getting older, but he's merciful. I've hardly ever been sick in 78 years. I've got to be thankful for that and he's preserved me in all my travels with all the hundreds of accidents that are in the world and God's preserved me.

I'm thankful. I don't get upset with myself because I didn't do something perfectly. In fact, I'll never do anything perfectly till Christ comes.

But I'm pressing on to perfection. This church too and the fact that we still have that board in front of us shows that after 42 years, we still haven't got there. I'm still pressing on to perfection.

But all these years, we moved forward because we are under the gaze of a loving father who says, son, I delight in you. Many times I ask the Lord, father, can you say about me what you said about Jesus? This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. I want to hear that.

I don't want to make more money. What do I do with it? If I have enough to take care of myself, if you have enough to take care of yourself and feed and clothe your children and give them a house to live in and educate them, what are you going to do with the rest? What do you do with that extra amount in your bank account when Jesus comes? To save for the future, excellent. To provide for your children, excellent.

But don't pursue that. Just avoid walking in the way of sinners. Avoid doing unrighteous things.

Be careful with your mouth, especially, and let the roots go into the rivers of water. Whatever you do will prosper. And don't ever think of God as a hard taskmaster.

He's not. So one day as you and I will stand before the Lord, I hope we will hear those words, well done, good and faithful servant. What a tremendous blessing you can be.

Not only when we think of our own faithfulness in the Lord's commendation. I mean, it's not only the Lord's commendation we look for because the purpose of our life on earth is not just to get a commendation from the Lord. We are to be a blessing to others.

You know what the Lord told Abraham? I will bless you, Genesis 12 verse 2 and 3, and you will be a blessing to every family on the earth. And do you know that that promise is for you and me? Did you know that? Do you know that's why Jesus became a curse on the cross? Read scripture exactly. Galatians in chapter 3. Why did Christ become a curse on the cross? To be accursed, not just crucified.

The pain of crucifixion a lot of people think of, okay, but to be accursed by God. How many of you knew till today, till I just said it, that Jesus was cursed by the Father? Read it. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, becoming a curse.

He became a curse for us because it is written, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. See there's a law in the Old Testament. You read it in Deuteronomy 21 and verse 23.

Everyone who hangs on a tree is cursed and when God gave that sentence to Moses, what was God thinking of? He was thinking of Jesus, 1500 years later, hanging on a tree. He was thinking of that when he gave that curse to Moses. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree and the Father looks forward 1500 years and says, let's refer to my son.

So Christ became a curse for us and now you say, why Lord Jesus? So that the blessing of Abraham, what is that? I will bless you and you'll be a blessing to every family, can come upon us who are not Jews. I'm not a descendant of Abraham, but it can come upon us Gentiles through the promise of the Holy Spirit. So that is why God fills me with the Holy Spirit for two things, that he might bless me and make me a blessing to every family that I meet in my life.

I want to be that. Not every family will accept what I say. Not every family accepted what Jesus said, but that's if they're rejected, that's up to them.

As far as I'm concerned, God's called me. I'm convinced God has called me to be blessed by my Father in heaven and to be a blessing to every single family I meet on the face of the earth, in any part of the world, or with whom I correspond, whom I never meet. I don't have to meet.

I can be a blessing to families whom I never meet just by correspondence. That is the purpose of being filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the meaning of rivers of living water flowing out from you in many directions.

Is that only for one or two people? No, my brothers and sisters, he who believes in me, Jesus said, he who believes in me, out of his innermost being, rivers of living water will flow. Why don't you claim it? Why not? Isn't it worth being faithful? What do you gain with all that gossiping and what do you gain with all that lavish spending on yourself? What do you gain by it? What are you losing by it? Tremendous lot. Be faithful in your home.

Let your home be a holy sanctuary. The conversation and the things you do and the things you talk about. If you accidentally hurt your wife or husband with a word, immediately apologize.

I'm sorry, darling. I shouldn't have spoken like that. Forgive me.

Move on. Jesus will be there immediately. Otherwise, the spirit, like a dove, will fly away from your house.

He doesn't like jarring words. The dove does not like jarring words. It will fly away as soon as he hears it.

I heard a story, a true story, of a man, a Christian, who discovered there was a dove sitting outside his house. But if he banged a door in the house, the dove would fly away. The banging of a door was enough to scare the dove.

And if he raised his voice at his wife, the dove would fly away. And he learned a lesson. Does the dove fly away from your house now and then? Then it would come back, but another banging of the door or harsh word, and it would fly away again.

It's quite amusing. I didn't even know that it was like that. This is a true story.

And he told his wife, hey, let's make sure this dove never flies away. I want to say to you, brothers and sisters, don't let the dove fly away from your house. The Holy Spirit came like a dove and rested upon Jesus and never left him.

I say, Lord Jesus, I want it to be like that. This is what it means to walk in Jesus' footsteps. Some of those things we heard from the beginning are very important for that.

Submission to authority. Wives, submit yourself to your husbands. I know there are husbands who take advantage of that.

God be merciful to those husbands. He'll judge them. I'm not saying that you must submit to your husband's cruelty.

Your husband is cruel. I still will not encourage divorce, but I've encouraged wives to stay away, stay apart from your husband, because he may kill you. He's cruel.

But otherwise, try your best to be in submission, especially in submission to the elders in the church. There are people who bypass the elders in this church and try to come to me, and I tell them, you've got elders. Go to them.

Learn to submit to them. There you will find help. I remember reading a writing of Madame Guyon, a great saint of God, who lived in the 1600s in France.

She says, I had it written at the back of my other Bible, she says, sometimes we may think that we'll progress most by spending a lot of time with great saints and very mature, godly people. But it's not always true. She says, sometimes God can bless us through some ordinary believer, who's not such a great saint, who's not such a mature person, but in fellowship with that ordinary believer, because the blessing comes from God.

I read that years ago, and I believed it. And I can tell you today, after all these years, I've experienced it. I have been blessed by fellowshiping with people who are not as mature.

I learned something. If I'm looking for the source of the blessing in Christ, I'll get it. He can send an ordinary brother to me to bless me, if I'm humble enough to receive it.

See, if somebody has sent me a money order, I don't care if the postman or the courier is a young boy. What does it matter? I don't say, hey, you're a young boy, I can't take it. Sir, I've got a check for 10 lakhs.

No, no, no, you're a young boy, go away. Foolish. Why can't God bless you through someone young? He does it.

It's a question of where is it coming from? I believe very often our humility is tested. And I really thank God for that word I heard from Madame Dion years ago. It taught me never to despise any believer.

And I have to confess that I've become very rich spiritually. But my wealth has not come just from the great preachers. It has come sometimes from very ordinary brothers and sisters, and sisters too.

Madame Dion is a sister. So I've learned through the years not to despise anyone, even from nominal Christians. Think of a man who was determined to crucify Jesus Christ, Caiaphas.

Do you know that Caiaphas prophesied a true prophecy? It says in John 11, Caiaphas said, verse 49 and 50, Caiaphas was the high priest. And he said to the other priests, this is the guy who was out and out to crucify Christ. You don't take into account verse 50, you don't see it as expedient.

It's good that one man dies for the people. One man dies for the people. He accidentally prophesied.

He did not say this on his own initiative. An ungodly man was saying something which is unconsciously as it were, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation. It's an amazing thing that God can speak through not just an unbeliever, but someone who hated Jesus Christ.

There's no limit to what God can do. Can God speak to me through a non-Christian? If I'm humble enough, he can. I'm not saying I believe what others believe, but I learned something there.

This man who was so evil, God could even use his mouth to say Jesus would die for the whole nation. So what I say is, my brothers and sisters, learn to be faithful. Don't compare yourself with others who got more gifts.

God is not looking for success. He's looking for faithfulness. Submit to authority.

Humble yourself and be grateful. I've often quoted Romans 1.20 which says they were not grateful. And because they were not grateful, they began to backslide, backslide, backslide, backslide.

The first step is they were not thankful. Romans 1.21. They did not honor God. They were not thankful.

And then you find a slide that goes all the way down to make them envy. Verse 29, they do unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, strife. Verse 29, Romans 1.29, deceit, malice, gossip, slanderous, haters of God, arrogant, boastful.

All these things, where did it start? What is the first step downwards? Verse 21, they were not thankful. And so, I read that many years ago. And I said, Lord, I want to be thankful.

I want to pray to God when I'm all alone. All alone. Because what you say to God when you're alone, you mean it.

Lord, I thank you for my wife. You've given me such a wonderful wife. I thank you for my children, each of them by name.

See, if you pray along with your wife and say, I thank you, it may be just you want to avoid a fight or something. You just say something nice and keep her happy. Say it when you're alone.

Lord, I thank you for my husband. I thank you for my children. I thank God for my fellow believers here.

Learn to be thankful. I've tried my best not to forget the little things that people have done for me. A cup of cold water somewhere, a trip somewhere, people taking my children to school when I was out of town.

I never want to forget it. It happened 40 years ago. I don't want to forget it till I die.

And I want to be grateful to them. I mean, some of them have left the church who helped me in some ways. But I'm thankful for what they did.

Learn to be thankful to God and to men. Don't take your wife for granted. Don't take your husband for granted.

He works hard to earn the money. Your wife slogs away looking after the house, cooking, looking after the children. It's not an easy job.

You think your work is tougher than your wife's? Have you heard of the man who told the Lord, one day, Lord, can you please, this is tiring, can you exchange jobs with my wife for me? And he decided one day he would look after everything in the house. And of course, his wife couldn't get the job, but he said he tried to take over. After one day, he said, Lord, I better go back to my job.

Learn to be thankful to man and to God. Don't criticize people who preach here. You think it is easy to stand up here and preach? You try it.

Try for five minutes. So don't be so quick to be judgmental on people who preach. They are trying.

They are trying to give to you God's word. And if it's not always perfect, pray for them. Don't just criticize, that is a boring message.

Is the man an unfaithful man? That is one thing. But just because he did not have the gift, or he struggled, but he didn't do it perfectly. Your wife had a tough time and was busy with many things, and the food was not perfect.

A sermon which is not very good is like a meal that your wife prepared, which is not all that perfect. What do you do? Ah, not so good. I hope you never say like that to any meal you get at home, your children especially.

Teach your children to be thankful. They won't go down all the way to be evil, slanderers, murderers, like you read in Romans 1. Just teach them, not just to say sorry and thank you like civilized people, but to be really grateful when they say thank you very much. God bless you all.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/gdUYpopJX68.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/being-faithful-with-gods-gifts/>

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