

# Building the Church as a Home for the Lonely

by Zac Poonen

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**Scripture:** John 12:24, Jeremiah 29:13, Psalms 68:6, Hebrews 11:6, Proverbs 4:18

**Topics:** "Wholehearted Seeking of God", "Transformation and Fellowship in Christ"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Okay, let's continue in the same spirit we had yesterday in our four sessions. I want to begin with a couple of verses from Psalm 68. Even though we are not under the Old Covenant, remember, we still have a Bible with 66 books, all of it the inspired Word of God.

So don't make the mistake of thinking that because we are not under the Old Covenant, we can ignore the first 39 books of the Bible, which is the Old Testament. It's unfortunate that that is called Old Testament. Remember that it is man who called it Old Testament and New Testament.

There's no such separation in God's eyes. The whole thing is the Bible. The Old Covenant is not in certain books.

The Old Covenant is made with Israel. And that God has set aside. We're in a new covenant in the church.

But for us, the Bible is 66 books. And 2 Timothy 3, 17 says, all scripture is inspired by God, all 66 books. And all scripture is profitable that the man of God might be trained in righteousness and become perfect.

So if you ignore or neglect some parts of the Bible, you will miss out on what God wants to do in making you perfect. While reading, we recognize things which are not relevant to us, like certain passages of the

Old Testament. And even there, we try to see what is the spiritual lesson God was trying to teach through that.

So let's turn to Psalm 68 and verse 5 and 6. It's referring to God as the father of the fatherless. God wants to be a father. And this is fulfilled only in the New Covenant.

Of those who feel fatherless, you have to understand the thinking of an orphan. I've read about orphans. I've seen orphans.

And they're so insecure. And because they're insecure, they hit out at anyone who tries to say anything to them. They resent correction.

And if you're like that, you resent being corrected quick to hit out, you're an orphan. A person who's got a good father is secure. God is a father of the fatherless.

An orphan is fearful about the future. Who's going to take care of me? What's going to happen if this happens? What's going to happen if the coronavirus hits me? An orphan has no one to take care of him. No one to turn to in a time of need.

Maybe he's living in an orphanage. But there's a lot of differences between the director of a thousand orphans and the father who has time for each individual child. God is a father.

He's not the director of an orphanage. He's a father. And he has time for each child of his as if, listen carefully, as if you were his only child.

He has time for you. He's a father of the fatherless. And he's also a judge for the widows.

The other group of helpless people in the world are the widows. They have no one to turn to when they're in need. Jesus spoke about a widow whose property was being in Luke 18, being occupied by a neighbor.

And she didn't have a husband. She didn't have a son or daughter to go to the judge. She had to go herself.

The most helpless widow is the one who's got no children and husband is dead. No relatives. And she has a problem with people who try to exploit her.

She goes to the judge there in Luke 18 and the judge doesn't fear God or man and says, I have no time for you. But she doesn't give up. She festers.

The judge goes to his house at two o'clock in the morning, wakes him up, and he says, God, get away from here. But he she keeps coming back till finally he he's fed up with her pestering of him and says, OK, I'll do something for her. And he grants a request and pushes back the neighbor who is trying to occupy her property.

And Jesus said, it is an extreme example. God is not like a ruthless judge who has no time for needy widows. He said, if such a ruthless judge who didn't fear God could help a widow, what about a loving God who won't he bring justice for his children? He certainly will.

But Jesus said there in Luke 18, will I find faith in my people when I return? Faith like that widow had who could go back again and again and again and again. Read that passage sometime in Luke 18. I don't want

to turn to it now.

Take your time to read it. She went back. Will the Son of Man find faith like that on Earth? And that faith was seen in never giving up.

That widow saying, I don't care how much the judge bangs, shuts the door in my face and tells me to get out and tells me I'm fed up with you. I'm going to keep going back. And here I'm going to a loving father.

Now, I don't know why God has planned prayer as something that requires persistence. You know, when I think of an earthly father, Jesus said, if you earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give good things to those who ask him? But a child doesn't go to his earthly father even twice or mother. Mom, I'm hungry.

So he doesn't have to keep on saying, Mom, I'm hungry. Mom, I'm hungry. Once is enough for a good mother to do something or a good father.

But yet in the two instances of prayer that Jesus spoke about only two parables of prayer. One is this one I mentioned in Luke 18, the widow going persistently to the judge and getting her request granted. And the other is in Luke 11 of a man who went to his neighbor's house.

When a guest had come to his house. And in the case of the widow, he was she is seeking for her own need. In the Luke 11 parable, it's where we are seeking to help somebody else, where we are looking for the need of others.

You know, once God has met our need, the next step is to meet the need of others around us. The guests around us, the people around us who are in need. This guest came to his house at midnight.

And this man was so considerate, he didn't have any food in his house. And, you know, some people, if there's no food in the house, they will not ask the guest, Did you eat? Because he may say no. So they would keep quiet.

But this man was so considerate and loving to his guest. He said, Have you eaten? And he said, No. He said, OK, I'll get you some food.

I've got no food in my house. The fridge is empty. I've got nothing here, but I'm going to get something for you.

And he went to his neighbor and he knocked and knocked and knocked at midnight. Remember, even if you know somebody well in the church, you will not go to his house at midnight and knock unless it's somebody dying or something, not for food. But here was somebody who loved his guest so much that he went and knocked.

This is a picture of prayer for somebody else, not for my own need. That's taken care of in the story of the widow. Now it is somebody else's need.

It's, you know, we are surrounded by a world in need. You've got neighbors, you've got friends, you've got children who are in need. Maybe you've got a wife or a husband who is in need.

Your own need has been met abundantly by the Lord. He's filled you with the spirit. The joy of the Lord is yours.

But there are people around you who are miserable, defeated, grumbling, complaining. And you say, Lord, I want to do something for them. And that's the first thing.

You have a burden for others. And then to recognize that you don't have what it takes to meet that need. Lord, I don't have anything in my house.

The fridge is empty. That's the second thing you need to recognize. First, a burden for others.

And then recognition that I don't have what it takes to help that person. And then thirdly, well, I know whom to go to. To go to my father in heaven and to keep asking him.

This child went to his neighbor's house. You read that passage in Luke 11. He went to the neighbor's house and kept on knocking.

Until the neighbor said, hey, I'm asleep and the children are asleep. You're waking the children up, man. Get away from here.

Now, if we hear that, we definitely go away. But not this guy. He just kept knocking.

He was shameless. Jesus used an example of a man who was shameless in banging at somebody's door as an example of how we should pray. We should be shameless in banging and banging and banging, saying, Lord, I want this.

I'm not going to give up until I get it. I remember when I was seeking God for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. I was seeking it so that I can preach and be useful to others.

And I went to different churches and there were a lot of counterfeits going on there. A lot of counterfeits I saw in many churches. Fake speaking in tongues.

90% of what those tongues I heard was all fake. I said, Lord, I don't want that. I don't want noise.

I want power. And I said, Lord, if it takes me 10 years to get it, I'll wait 10 years. But I want the real thing.

I don't want any cheap counterfeit to satisfy myself. Oh, yeah, I'm baptized in the Holy Spirit. I don't want that.

I want the real thing. The real anointing that will remain with me. And it took many years, but God gave it to me.

And he saw whether I persisted. So in both these examples, it's persistence, persistence. God is a God of the fatherless.

But you've got to keep asking. He's a judge of the widows. That's referring to the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, who is not only a judge of the widows, but we read in Isaiah in chapter 54, and verse 5, Isaiah 54, verse 5, your husband is your maker.

God the Father is our Heavenly Father. And God the Son is our husband, our bridegroom at the moment. One day we'll be married.

But it's this relationship with we are orphans and we are widows. In Psalm 68, 6. And God is a father to me as an orphan. And he's a husband to me as a widow.

See, I was married to the old man. And that old man, thank God, died. I don't want to roam around as a widow.

I want to be married. I want to be married to Christ. And then it goes on to say in Psalm 68, God, verse 6, Psalm 68 and verse 6. God makes a home for the lonely.

That's a beautiful picture of the church. The true church is a home for the lonely. Those who feel lonely in the world, do you feel lonely? You feel that there are not many people around you who are hardly anywhere around you where you live, who are seeking God wholeheartedly.

You feel yourself to be a lonely person. God makes a home for the lonely. I remember in my younger years, the church I went to had no interest in victory over sin.

Nobody there. They had interest in Bible study. And we studied the Bible like we study a book of chemistry in school.

Pretty boring and heavy. But we have to study it if we want to pass the examination. We studied the Bible like that and analyzed words and verses and compared this with that.

It's all very good. But it was all academic. Everybody there was defeated by sin, including myself.

But we studied the Bible. And we found a satisfaction in studying the Bible. That church was not a home.

I was spiritually lonely and there was no home there. It was not a family. It was a gathering.

It was an organization like many churches are today. The church is to be like a home for the lonely. There are many lonely people out there in the world.

Even though they've been in a city with 10 million people, they're lonely. Many people. And there are needy people all around us.

I remember hearing the true story of a man who jumped off the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and committed suicide. And when they picked up his body, the police, they found a note in his pocket that said, I'm fed up with life. I don't see anybody.

I'm a lonely person. He was living in a room all by himself. I don't have anyone who seems to care for me.

But I'm going to walk all the way many, many miles from my home all the way to the Golden Gate Bridge. And as I walked down the road, even if one person will smile at me, I will not commit suicide today. And he walked all those many miles.

I don't know how long. And not one person cared for him. Now, I'm not saying we should go smiling at everybody we see on the road.

People will think you're crazy. But you've got to learn a lesson from that. That there are lonely people in the world.

This man, all he wanted was a smile, some recognition from somebody that he was worth something. The world is full of people who feel worthless. There are many young people who feel worthless when they look at others who are accomplishing something.

Other people of their age have accomplished something in the world. They feel worthless. Dear brothers and sisters, do you feel like that? I want to say to you, God wants to make a home for the lonely.

It doesn't have to be a big home. You can have a home with father, mother, just two children, and it can be the most blessed place in the world. You don't need 25 people in a home.

What I mean is, you don't need a huge church. The important thing in a church is not how many people there are, but whether they love one another. See, so much misunderstanding today.

We talk about mega churches. Oh, there are 10,000 people there. 30,000 people in that church.

That's where I need to go. God is moving their rubbish. All men will know you're my disciples, Jesus said.

Not when your number becomes 1,000. No, or even 100. All men will know you're my disciples when you love one another.

It's very clear in John chapter 13. And don't get this crazy idea from the world that all men will know you're my disciples when your numbers are huge, and when you make an influence on the city by your numbers, and the number of cars parked in your parking lot garbage. All men will know you're my disciples.

Let's get back to the Bible. When you love one another, God makes a home for the lonely. And the primary thing about a home is that they love one another.

And that's the type of fellowship and church that we need to see in many parts of the world. Not just great preachers. There are many great preachers in the world who never built churches.

But yeah, many great preachers, evangelists who brought 1,000 to Christ or 10,000 to Christ in their life, or some even more than that. But if I were to go to some of these great evangelists and ask them, brother, I praise the Lord, because I've heard that 10,000 people came to Christ through you in many countries of the world where you went and preached. I think of the great evangelists, famous ones nowadays.

And I ask them, where are they today? I mean, people are born again. They're like children. It's like if I ask a father, where are your children? He'll at least know where they are.

Where are these 10,000 children? He'll say, I don't know. They're in different countries. I hope they found some church.

I hope they're doing well. But that's not how it was in the New Testament. If you went to the Apostle Paul and say, hey, Paul, I heard you had a vision once and you went to Philippi, and I heard a jailer was converted, and I heard Lydia was converted.

Where are they now? And I heard a number of others were converted. He says, come, come with me to Philippi. I'll show you where they are.

And he'll take you to the church in Philippi and say, here, you see these 100 people sitting here? These are the ones who came to the Lord when I came here. They're all here. They're in Philippi.

This is a home. And Paul, I heard that you went to Thessalonica as well. And some people were converted.

Where are they? He says, come with me to Thessalonica. I'll show you. And he'll take you to the church in Thessalonica and say, here they are, the people who were converted through my ministry.

They're here. And Paul, I heard that you brought some people to Christ in Corinth. Yes, even there.

Come with me to Corinth, and he'll show you there. And every place where Paul went, where people were converted, he proclaimed discipleship and put them in a home. The church was a home for the lonely, whether there were five people there or 50 or 500.

I don't know the numbers. That is God's plan that we see in the New Testament, Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles. And it's so rare to find that type of ministry today.

Today, we have churches which are run like worldly organizations. For example, think of some big company like Coca-Cola or IBM or something like that. When their CEO, the one who runs the show, retires, what do they do? They advertise with, there are agencies that look for CEOs.

And they interview different ones. The board will interview different ones and select one to be the CEO. That's exactly how many churches today select a pastor.

Our pastor is now retiring or he's gone away. He's looking for a bigger place and gone to a bigger church. Now we need to hire a pastor.

And there are Christian organizations that will help you find a pastor. And different ones come. They preach a message, and the board listens to them and decides.

And they hear five or six of them and select one. What's the difference between that church and a secular organization? That's not the family. When children come together, does the mom say, hey, okay, children, let's find out who's going to be your father.

Let's interview a few people. And let's see who is fit enough to be your father. Is that how we have a family? No.

Where do we have churches where a father will stick with his family throughout his life? All stuck with all these people, kept in touch with them all the time. He wasn't a hired pastor. He didn't even have the title pastor.

He refused titles. All the early apostles refused titles. Go to Revelation chapter one and see the great apostle John who established so many churches.

He says, I, John, your brother. They were brothers. They were not pastors or reverends or right reverends or bishops or metropolitans.

They were fathers. Paul says that to the Corinthians. He wrote some strong words to the Corinthians.

He says, do you know why I speak such strong words? Not to shame you, but because I'm your father. Dear brothers and sisters, make your church a home for the lonely. Some of those people who sit quietly in your church, they may be quiet because they're lonely.

I hope some of you will go and encourage them. I hope some of you will visit them. Lonely people who need some encouragement.

They're born again. They're believers, but they haven't found fellowship. Some of our children are lonely.

They need good fellowship. That's what the church must be. You know, I'm so thankful when I think of the early days of CFC in Bangalore in 1975 onwards.

I had only three children then and the youngest was just six months. And the third one, the youngest was not even born. But I thank God that my four sons grew up in a church that was like a home.

None of us were perfect. Not me, none of the elders, none of the people. But we imperfect people love one another to the best of our ability.

We learn through mistakes. We made mistakes, sure. It's like a child who learns to walk.

We learn to walk as a church and we learn to walk as individuals. We didn't start out with victory over sin. We heard about it.

We sought it. We prayed. We fasted.

We said, Lord, we want to overcome sin. We want to be a family. We want to be the church you want us to be.

It wasn't ready-made. It took years. It took years of prayer and labor and sharing with one another and people taking advantage of us.

Some people were crooks. They came just for money or financial help. There's a lot of that in India.

It can be anywhere. And okay, we were exploited. What did we lose? A little bit of money.

But we learned. Throughout trial and error, we learned many things. And God saved us from making serious mistakes.

And the devil could not destroy that church because the Lord had planted it. He sets the lonely in a family. A church is a place where lonely people find a family.

Every one of you. If you haven't found a family in the church, brother, sometimes the problem may be with you. There are people who sit in a church and they really have no desire for fellowship with others.

They come there to listen to a message. And it's possible that in your church, there could be people like that. The only one to mark present, attendance, marked present.

Is that all you want on a Sunday? How eager are you for fellowship to be built together as a body with the others? For that, you'll have to take time. You may have to spend a long time in fellowship with individuals in that church to get built with them. Not by just sitting in the church on Sunday morning and marking your attendance and saying, I'm here.

I'm not a backslider. I'm here. You could be the biggest backslider in the world and yet attend church every Sunday.

Seek for fellowship. Have you found in the church a home for the lonely? Are you seeking to make others in the church feel at home who are lonely? Or is your whole life centered around yourself? You're making money and you're perfectly okay. Everything's okay with me.

I couldn't care less about anybody else. I'll tell you, you're not fit to be in a church of Jesus Christ. You're fit to be out in Babylon in some other dead church.

The church of Jesus Christ is for those who care for others, who want to make it a home for the lonely. I hope every one of you will do that. And some of you are in places, come from places, or are listening to me, are in places where there is no fellowship.

Well, everything starts with one person. The Lord often told Israel, remember, you started with one person, Abraham. He reminded them later on in life, to one person I chose.

And from that has come that nation of Israel. And the same is with the church. Very often it starts with one person.

You think of the little fellowship that there was in the time of Daniel. Daniel, we can see a picture of a little church in Babylon, but he was one man. That's all.

You know, when they sat around in the king's table, they were selected, a number of young people were selected to be servants for the king, his counselors and advisors. And when they were having a meal, Daniel was a God-fearing man. And he saw food offered there, pork, which Leviticus 11 said you should not eat.

And wine, fermented wine, which the book of Proverbs says you must not even look at. When the wine stirs itself, fermented in the cup. Now, those are little commandments.

Those are not the big commandments like don't commit murder, don't commit adultery, small commandments. And Daniel said, well, I'm going to obey those commandments. I'm not going to touch this pork.

I'm not going to touch this wine. And most of the food there was forbidden in Leviticus. And Daniel said to the steward there, just give me some vegetables and water.

That's fine for me. He was one man who took a stand. Only one man.

And as they were out of the woodwork, came three others, who we know better as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was not their original Jewish names. But we know them like that, so I'll call them that.

They joined them. They would never have joined him if he had not taken a stand. Supposing Daniel, I said, I don't want to make, I don't want to act as if I'm particular about these small little rules.

I don't commit murder. I don't worship idols. I don't commit adultery.

I don't bear false witness. I don't steal. These small little things, I suppose God doesn't matter.

It doesn't matter to God if I ignore them. He didn't take that attitude. Because he was particular about obeying those small, teeny, weeny rules in Leviticus, which others would ignore, God saw his wholeheartedness, his radical attitude, and he says, you're the type of man I want to make a leader.

I'm going to build a little church here. It wasn't called church, but a little fellowship here. And there were three others who had a desire for that.

They wanted a leader. You know, there are many people like that in the world today. Many Shadrachs, Meshachs, and Abednego.

Who don't have the courage to take a stand on their own, but they are waiting for a Daniel who will take a stand. Will you be that Daniel wherever you are? Don't have high thoughts about yourself. Humble yourself.

If you are radical about obedience to God in the smallest little thing, like Daniel was, you can be a Daniel. And if you remain humble, Daniel was humble for 70 years. All the way to, he was about 17 when he first came and took that stand.

He was about 87 years old when he was thrown into the lion's den. He was faithful all those years, the years of captivity. He never sought anything for himself.

He was not afraid. If you're like that, yeah, God will make you a blessing to others. And he will draw people to you.

So it starts with one person. But that one person has got to be faithful about little things, about the little commandments in God's word. I remember when Sandeep was starting a church in his home in California, in the Bay Area.

He taught that the sisters should rail their heads when they pray or share in the meetings of the church. And as he taught that, most of the people there left. The women, they were powerful.

And the husbands meekly followed the women and they left. There were very few people left. And I said to Sandeep, you're a son out of my own heart.

Don't worry if there are only three people in your church until Jesus comes. That's fine. But don't be a compromiser.

Just small little things. Don't eat this meat. Don't drink that wine.

Those are not in the Ten Commandments, but that's the man Daniel whom God chose. God sets the lonely in families. But to build that family, he needs someone who's got that spirit.

And you know, in that mighty land of Babylon, which was the most powerful nation on earth at that time, it was four people who shook that nation, who shook even King Nebuchadnezzar. And Daniel went on even to the next, the Medo-Persian Empire that conquered that Babylonian Empire. And Darius, the new king, Daniel was an influence there too.

What God can do through one man who is totally committed to obey God 100%, who doesn't care for the approval of men, who's not interested in money, not interested in honor, not interested in anything, was willing to face opposition, ridicule. Be like that, my brothers, sisters. And you will accomplish something for God in your generation that will last for all eternity.

I believe God wants that. It also says here in Psalm 68, verse 6, God makes a home for the lonely. He leads out the prisoners into prosperity.

That's the other thing. The world is full of prisoners of sin. And he doesn't want just to deliver them, but to lead them into prosperity.

Imagine taking a man out of a prison and making him a billionaire. Wow. Not just releasing him, releasing him itself would be a great thing.

But making him a billionaire after he came out of prison. That's what God wants to do to us. The world is full of prisoners of sin.

They're defeated by lust. They're defeated by anger. They're defeated by the love of money, murmuring, grumbling, complaining, bitterness, grudges, all types of things.

Prisoners, they're in prisons and they don't even know it. Some of them, most of them don't have any desire to be free either. Can you imagine a man in a prison not wanting to be free? Are you in some prison of sin in your life? Do you have a desire to break free? I know I had that desire.

I was defeated by sin. Thoroughly defeated by sin. When I was born again, and it took me a number of years before I was free from these different sins that were in my thoughts and my words and language and attitudes, anger.

Oh Lord, I prayed and I cried and I fasted. And God saw whether I was earnest. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek in Hebrews 11.6. Not those who half-heartedly seek Him.

There are many, many believers in CFC churches who seek the Lord half-heartedly or quarter-heartedly to overcome sin. I don't believe they'll overcome sin in their entire life because God is not a rewarder of those who seek Him half-heartedly. He's not.

The Bible is very plain, Hebrews 11.6. He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. And it says in Jeremiah 29, a verse I never get tired of quoting. Jeremiah 29.

It says here in verse 13, you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. Not with half your heart or part of your heart. You will seek me and you will find me.

Absolutely certain. God's word will never fail when you search for Him with all your heart. Whatever you search for with all your heart.

I remember a brother telling me, brother, I prayed for 40 years for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I didn't get it. Uh-huh.

Whose fault was that? Is God reluctant to baptize in the Holy Spirit? He who sent His only begotten Son to die for us and rise up from the dead and to pour out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Is He reluctant to give us the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Certainly not. But I prayed for a long time, I have to say.

And I saw all the counterfeits around me. And I said, Lord, I want the genuine thing. If it takes me 10 years to get it, I'll wait 10 years.

And it did take me time. But I prayed, I fasted, and God saw. I sought Him with all my heart and I found Him.

And I sought for the gift of prophecy. And not everybody's called for that. But in my case, I knew that God was calling me to preach the word.

And I sought for the gift of prophecy. Like it says in Romans 1, Corinthians 14, 1, earnestly desire prophecy. First of all, it says, pursue after love.

Love people, love people, love people, and love people so much that you want to feed them. This guest who has come to your house at midnight and you want to feed them and you don't have what it takes. So seek God for the gift of prophecy.

That is the three loaves that He gives. In Luke 11, we read about three loaves He asked for. Give me three loaves.

And you know what those three loaves are? It's mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14, 3, the gift of prophecy to encourage and to challenge and to build up. Those are the three loaves. I said, Lord, I want it.

And I knocked and I knocked and I knocked and God gave it to me. He gave me that gift when I was 23 years old because I was seeking God for power. And I've been seeking Him ever since for the power of the Holy Spirit to prophesy.

What a great need there is in the church. For those who will minister the Word of God with power, not who will, oh, I have to speak for 20 minutes. It's only 10 minutes past for me.

Let me drag on. Let me say something more. I'm looking at the clock.

Let me say something more because I was asked to speak for 20 minutes. You think such a person will ever get the gift of prophecy? He's just trying to fill up the time. God have mercy on the church which is to suffer under the leadership of such people.

Dear brother, even a sister, you should seek for the gift of prophecy. You're not called to teach in the church, but what about sharing, prophesying to sisters when you speak to them on the phone? What about prophesying to your children when they are at home? What does that mean? To encourage them, challenge them, and build them up? A woman can prophesy in the church with her head covered. She can't teach.

But is it an opportunity for her to share the Word with other sisters? Sure. And with children in the Sunday school? You need to prophesy to the children, Sunday school teachers. We need to seek for their prisoners.

And we want the prisoners not only to be liberated, but to come out into prosperity. Psalm 68 6. He leads out the prisoners, not only releases them from prison, but brings them to prosperity. And then the third category, the rebellious.

They dwell in a parched land. The only people who remain dry, dry, dry, sitting in a church without the freshness of the Holy Spirit are those who've got some little bit of rebellion in their heart. I believe that word.

Only the rebellious live in dryness all the time. I never want to be in dryness. I want to be fresh all the time.

I want to have the joy of the Lord always, 24-7. And you can have it if you seek the Lord. Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit.

Give me that anointing from God. Let me stand under the waterfall of the Holy Spirit from heaven that drenches me continuously. Grace, grace upon grace.

That helps me to overcome sin in my language, in my thoughts, in my attitudes to people. Delivers me from moaning, grumbling, grudges, bitterness, anger, hatred, unforgiving spirit. I can't do it on my own power.

I need to stand under this waterfall of the Spirit of grace. And that's flowing today, brothers, sisters. It's flowing from heaven.

Are you willing to die to your own reputation and die to yourself? One last verse. Please turn with me to John's Gospel, Chapter 12. John's Gospel, Chapter 12, we read about certain people.

It's a wonderful passage. Some Greeks, John 12, 20, went up to the feast. And they came to Philip in John 12, 21 and said, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

They knew Philip was a disciple. Now, Greeks, they were the most influential people in the world at that time. The scholars, the philosophers came from Greece.

The philosophers didn't come from Rome. The military leaders came from Rome at that time. But the philosophers, the great scholars, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, they came from Greece.

They were the great intellectuals of that time. And imagine a person today, a highly educated intellectual coming up and saying, you know, I'd like to see your church. This man is a big shot.

Maybe he's a professor in some university. A number of them say, I've heard of your church. I'd like to join there.

Are you excited? I wouldn't be. I want to see if they are poor in spirit. I don't care if they are intellectuals.

I don't care if they are professors or scholars or anything. Now, Philip was excited. He was only a disciple.

He came and told Andrew. And they told Jesus, John 12, 22. And Jesus didn't get excited.

Oh, you mean these professors have come to see me? Wow, wonderful. No, he was not at all excited. I don't know whether he even saw them.

He said, the hour has come. He was pretty close to the cross for the Son of Man to be glorified. I don't know whether these intellectual professors want to go the way of the cross.

I'm going, they want to see miracles. Maybe they want to hear powerful preaching. But I tell you, this is the answer to these professors who came to see him.

Verse 24, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, dies to all its reputation as an intellectual or a professor or a Greek or whatever it is, a Roman or whatever it is, unless you're willing to die to everything that you have of this world that gives you honor, your education, your job, your salary, your house, unless you're willing to die to all that, you will be a fruitless, barren person. But if that grain, you may be a very small grain, not a big, huge ball, but a small teeny weeny grain, you're willing to fall into the ground and die. It's guaranteed.

Not only there'll be fruit, there'll be much fruit. In other words, he explained it, verse 25, you got to lose your earthly life. Your soul life, which is so proud of its accomplishments, its degrees, its qualifications, its cleverness.

You're not like one of those dumb people. You're one of the smart ones. You're one of the rich ones who made it in life.

Your business has prospered. It's not like these other guys who started a business and flopped. If you're not willing to lose your reputation for that, you're not willing to fall into the ground.

You're not willing to lose your self-life and all the glory and honor you got in this world. You will not get eternal life. But if you're willing to hate all that and say, all this has got no value, then you'll have life eternal.

So tell the Greeks, verse 26, Jesus said, if you want to serve me, you got to follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. You'll see me a few days later on the cross.

Where I am, my servant must also be there on the cross. And if you serve me like that, my Father will honor you, which is greater honor than the honor that the Greeks can give, and the professors of the world can give, and the businessmen of the world can give, or even the preachers in any church can give. The Father honoring you and me.

Oh, brothers, I'd give anything in the world for that. I remember once crying out to God and said, Lord, my heavenly Father, on the day of the baptism of Jesus, you opened the heavens and sent the Spirit upon him and said, this is my son in whom I'm well pleased. Will you do that for me? I cried out, oh, Father, do that for me.

Open the heavens over me. Pour your Spirit upon me and say, this is my son in whom I'm pleased. And I'd give anything in the world for that.

I'm not interested in anything in this world, or honor, or even in the church. I want that. My dear brothers and sisters, yearn for that.

And say, Lord, I'm willing to pay any price for it. God will give it to you. Because he's no respecter of persons.

And you end your lives in a blaze of glory. Not sort of withering down. You're not going to be a shooting star that just appears for a moment and disappears.

You're supposed to be like that star that shines brighter and brighter and brighter. Proverbs 418, unto the perfect day, like the sun that shines brighter and brighter as it descends in the sky. May God bless you all and make you witnesses wherever you are.

To make a home for the lonely, to deliver the prisoners and bring them prosperity, to build the church of Jesus Christ against which the gates of hell will never prevail. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us, we pray.

I want to say to all of you who are listening, please take a moment to think about what you heard today and say, Lord, the challenge you gave me today, I want to follow it. And I don't want to forget it tomorrow. Remind me of it again and again by the Holy Spirit until it becomes reality in me.

Until the day when that word becomes flesh in me. Heavenly Father, make that true in our lives. And all those who are listening, we pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

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