

Christ Wants a Body, Not a Congregation

by Zac Poonen

God wants a body, not a congregation, and He chooses people who are humble, weak, and base to build His church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Scripture: Isaiah 43:19, Haggai 1:2, Matthew 11:28, Mark 9:24, John 14:1

Topics: "Body Of Christ", "Forgiveness And Unity"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, overcoming offense, and having the right attitudes within the body of Christ. It highlights the need to overcome feelings of inferiority or superiority, the significance of fathers and mothers in building strong homes, and how God uses small and seemingly insignificant individuals to accomplish great things for His kingdom.

Transcript

I want to start with a, my subject today is Christ wants a body, not a congregation. And I want to begin with a promise, which we want to claim, Isaiah 43 and verse 19. I thought of this, especially in relation to abundant life, we've gone through some difficult times, but here's what the Lord says, Isaiah 43 and verse 19, behold, I will do something new.

Now it will spring forth. Will you not be aware of it? I will make a roadway in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. A promise from God is like a check.

When you say amen to that, will you say amen to that? God will do something new. He will make a roadway in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. When you say amen, you're endorsing it with your name at the back and putting it in the bank of heaven.

And there's never been a check endorsed with amen that's gone to the bank of heaven that was not cashed. Every single one of them. I've proved that for 55 years, it's really true.

So we want to think about this, that God wants to do something new, but he does it through men and women. God could do a lot of things on his own. There are millions of angels who would rush to serve him, but he's decided to use men and women.

There's an instance of that in the Acts of the Apostles, where there was a man called Cornelius who needed to hear the gospel. And an angel came to Cornelius and he could have given him the gospel.

Didn't the angel know that Christ died for the sins of the world? Christ rose up, repent, believe that God did not allow that angel to give the gospel to Cornelius.

And you need to understand the reason why. Even though he knew the gospel and he could preach it much better than any human being, God did not allow him. He said, send for Peter.

And Peter's coming would take three, four days because he was living in some other city. Cornelius had to send for him and he had to walk and come here. But it doesn't matter if it takes three or four days, but that angel will not be allowed to preach the gospel for one reason, because that angel could not say, Jesus died for me.

You and I can say that. That's why that angel was not allowed to preach the gospel to Cornelius. It's only one who has been redeemed by the blood of Christ who can say, this is what Jesus did for me, was permitted to preach the gospel.

So God uses men and women. So when we think of our situation here, there's no situation that's too difficult for God to handle. One of the great messages I get from the gospels and the miracles that Jesus did is that there's no problem that God cannot solve.

Every situation, God has got an answer. And that applies to your personal life, to your home life, and to any church. That's the message in all the miracles in the gospels.

You never find anyone coming to Jesus with a problem, and Jesus sort of scratching his head and saying, that's a tough one. Never. Never.

And I want to say to you, I don't know what your problem is. Jesus is not going to scratch his head today and say, that's a tough one. He can solve it.

There's no problem God cannot solve. So that's what we learn in many situations in the scripture. I want to turn with you to an Old Testament example in the book of Haggai.

Haggai chapter 1. This is a time when God's people were in a very discouraged state because they'd gone captive to Babylon. They were punished by God. And then 70 years later, God brought them back to Jerusalem.

Now Haggai chapter 1 in verse 2, they hadn't started building the temple, that the main thing was the temple which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed. And these people kept saying, oh, the time has not come, the time has not come for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt. And you know how the Lord rebuked them? In verse 4, he said in Haggai 1 verse 4, is it time for you to dwell in your paneled houses while my house lies desolate? Verse 5, consider your ways.

If our house was destroyed in a tornado or storm, we'd start working on it the very next day. We'd spend time, money, energy to do it. And the Lord says, what about my house? Are you concerned about my house? As much as you are about your own house, after all that I've done for you, consider your ways.

And so the Lord told them in that day to go up to the mountain and bring wood and build his temple, bring stones, etc. And that's what the Lord says to us, I want you to come to me in prayer and pray that God will, that I will do something for your church. And if all of us will do that, God is going to do something wonderful.

I want to say that. And I want to now share with you the subject, Christ wants a body and not a congregation. There are two pictures primarily in the New Testament of what a church is supposed to be.

First of all, in the Old Testament, the temple was in Jerusalem, it was a physical building. And if you wanted to worship God, you had to go to Jerusalem. If you wanted to offer a sacrifice, you had to go to Jerusalem.

But all that's changed in the New Testament. In the New Testament, you know, God says, I don't dwell in temples made with hands. I dwell in the midst of my people.

And the early Christians never had a church building. They would meet in caves, forests, all types of places, because they were persecuted. Or in houses, in little groups.

They were not meeting in a building primarily. The church was people. And those people, church was Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, church.

That doesn't mean they had meetings all the time. But they recognized, I'm part of the church. And whatever two, three believers met together, that was church fellowship.

You couldn't be just sitting talking together in a home, two, three believers, and you talk about the Lord, it's fellowship in the church. And that's how the church got built, connections between different believers. We need to come back to that.

That type of relationship. The church is called a body, and it's called a building. So let's just look at those two pictures.

In Ephesians 2, verse 21, first of all, Ephesians 2, verse 21, the church is called a building fitted together that's growing into a holy temple in the Lord. And the individual bricks are you and me. You and I are the individual bricks in that.

Now here in the United States, you build buildings with wood. In India, we can't build with wood because there's a lot of problems with termites, etc. So all houses are built with bricks.

And that's a beautiful picture of the church, how the church is built. Each person is an individual brick being cemented with another, and that's how the house comes up. So when a house is built in India, the first thing that happens is, a truck comes with about 20,000 bricks, or 10,000 depending on the size of the house, and lays it by the side of the road.

And then they start building. Now if you leave that pile of bricks like that in India, they start getting reduced in number every day. Because somewhere down the road, someone else is building his house as well.

And this is a picture of a congregation, 10,000 people, what you call mega churches, not joined together, sitting together, just like in a movie theater, with no connection with one another. A pile of bricks. One day, one brick disappears, another one disappears, Satan just picks them up one by one.

And finally very few are left. That's because they're not built together. And then pastors preach about somebody stealing my sheep, and that's because they're just lying like a pile of bricks.

I mean if you build a building with bricks, a building like this, how could anybody ever steal a brick from here, it's impossible. Once it's built, you belong. That's the first picture of the church.

Brothers and sisters, we must not come together in abundant life, like a movie theater, to watch a performance, a praise performance, or a preaching performance. That only caters to, you know, preachers who make themselves like film stars, and super personalities, centered around one man. That is not the church of Jesus Christ.

And the church of Jesus Christ is centered around Jesus, is the head. He's the only head that the church of Jesus Christ has. And any man who tries to project himself in such a way that people are connected to him, rather than to Christ, I want to say that's not the church of Jesus Christ.

And unfortunately, we have a lot of these type of churches being built today, everywhere in the world, even in India. It's centered around one gifted man, who's very gifted, maybe he can heal or he can preach or he's very eloquent. And all the others are just like mushrooms, little mushrooms growing up under this big oak tree.

That is not the church in the New Testament. The church in the New Testament is where every single person is connected with Jesus Christ, the head, personally, and can respond. See this little finger? This little finger can respond to the commands of the head all by itself.

It's got a connection. That's the second picture you have in the New Testament, about the church being not only a building, but a body. God uses pictures to show us what he wants, and we need to be gripped by this.

So I hope you'll take what I'm sharing this morning, it's a burden on my heart, seriously. If you take it seriously, that promise we saw at the beginning will be fulfilled. God will do a new thing.

He will make a way in the desert. He will bring rivers in the desert, in the wilderness. So the second picture is in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 16.

I want you to turn to Ephesians 4 and verse 16, where we read of the whole body being fitted and held together. This is Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 16. The whole body fitted and held together.

It's like the building where there were bricks. Here it is speaking about individual parts of the body being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies. And here's the part where you come in, and you and I, according to the proper working of each individual part causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Now there's nothing else you can do, you can love. That anybody can do, even a little child. But there's a proper working of each individual part.

And that's the thing my brothers and sisters, you need to ask yourself whether you're doing your part. Every part of this body has got a function. It speaks about joints.

Joints are very important. Each part of this body has got a function. There's no part in this human body which does not have a function.

Some have a more important part, maybe a more prominent part. The eyes and the ears and the tongue, they are more prominent. But there are small parts inside the body like nerves and arteries and veins through which the blood flow and many other things.

I don't even know everything inside, but they are all very, very important. And there's no part of this body which is unimportant. Some are visible.

You know, we see hands and we're amazed when someone can play an organ or a piano. The eyes and the ears, the tongue are important. But what about the invisible parts? Are they not important? The visible parts are those who have a lot of prominence coming up in the platform.

The invisible parts are those who sit there. Are they important? Is your heart important? What about the kidneys and the liver? You never see them. None of us have ever seen these parts in our body.

There are parts of the body that never have a public function, but they are very important. For example, I often think of people who pray fervently. I don't mean just pray a ritual prayer, but who have a burden in their heart and pray.

They're like the heart that pumps the blood that makes the tongue to speak. How could the tongue speak if the heart doesn't pump the blood? I'm very conscious of that myself. The Apostle Paul once told Christians, pray for me, he says.

The number of those Christians who have been, when he wrote letters, he said, pray for me that God will enable me to open my mouth and speak boldly. Now, when I read that, I think, boy, you mean the Apostle Paul needs somebody to pray for him? I thought he's this type of guy who'll stand up and speak boldly anywhere. But to speak under the anointing of the Holy Spirit needs the functioning of a body.

That's why wherever I go, wherever I speak, I always ask people in all the 50 or more churches that I have oversight for to pray for me. And it makes a lot of difference. And it's because people pray, I'm able to speak.

Because the heart pumps the blood, the tongue can speak. So don't ever think that you can do nothing for the body. If you can't do anything else, you can pray and you can love.

Any one of us can do that. So remember that there is a function for every part of the body. When the Lord spoke through the Prophet Haggai to build a temple, he wanted the people to have a burden for it.

The tragedy was they were there and they didn't seem to have a burden. They were building their own houses in Jerusalem because they had come back from Babylon. And they didn't care about the temple of the Lord.

Don't you folks have a burden for my house, God says? And that's the question that the Lord asks us today. I want to ask all of you sitting here, if you have given your life to Christ and you're born again, you're a child of God, do you have a burden for his house? You treat his house as your house. I remember it many years ago in our own building back in Bangalore, where we meet as a church.

There was a time, a day when there were different maintenance jobs to be done and we allotted it one weekday to different brothers. And the brother who was supposed to clean the toilets, the restrooms hadn't turned up. I don't know, maybe he was held up, but he didn't tell anyone to take his place.

And initially, when I was there and I was a bit disturbed, and the Lord said to me, why don't you go and do it? Why you'd wait for him to come? Is this your house? Supposing somebody volunteered to come and clean the toilets in your own home every day and he didn't turn up one day, what would you do? Call him

up and say, hey, don't you come to clean the toilet, the restrooms in my home every day. Why didn't you turn up today? I wouldn't say that. That's my responsibility.

That day the Lord said to me, treat my house as your house. And I changed my whole view towards the church. It is not a place where there's somebody else's house.

I want to ask you whether you treat God's house as somebody else's house. Is he really your father? Jesus called it my father's house. Would you be just as happy to clean the restrooms here as in your own house? Always say that's somebody else's job.

Is it your father's house really? Do we come here to get benefits, to be blessed, but never think of offering our service to do something? Would you do it? If somebody paid you \$2,000 a month, you'd do it for money? Would you wouldn't do it out of love for Jesus Christ? That's the tragedy in Christendom today. We have merchants, money changers, who come to the house of God to make profit. That's why Jesus drove them out.

There's nothing wrong with selling sheep and doves for people who want to offer sacrifices to God. But there's everything wrong when people try to use that as a means to make money. That's why Jesus never offered a salary to his disciples.

He told them to trust him. God's work, it's not like the Old Testament Levites who were paid by the others. The new covenant is not like that.

We serve because we love. Jesus said, if you love me, keep my commandments. And I believe the great need, my brothers and sisters, is for all of us to express our gratitude to God for what he's done for us, for dying for us in the cross, for saving us from our sins, for giving us a hope for the future, to express our gratitude and say, Lord, what can I do for you? You know, when the apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, you know the question he asked the Lord? Lord, what will you have me to do? It's a wonderful question.

If every one of you who are converted, Paul asked that question the moment he was converted. As soon as he was converted, his first question was, Lord, what do you want me to do for you? That is the question of anyone who has seen how much the Lord has done for him. What can I do for you to build your body, to build your temple? Then I want to say one more thing, because we can think, well, I'm not so gifted.

I'm not so capable. I'm not so educated. What are the type of members that the Lord has in his body? Turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26.

In 1 Corinthians 1, 26 to 29, we read, this is the early church in Corinth. There were a few mighty, noble, educated people, but he says, consider your calling, brethren. There are not many wise, according to the flesh.

That means there are not many clever, intelligent people as the world considers in your church. Not many mighty, not many noble. Verse 27, God has chosen the foolish things of the world.

Do you feel that you're one of the foolish people, not so clever and smart? Maybe you're a blue collar worker. You know, that's the type of person God's chosen, to shame the wise, to shame all the white collar people. He's chosen the poor to shame the rich.

He's chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong. Verse 28, and the base things of the world, those who are considered low down. In India, we have, unfortunately, the Hindu religion has got a caste system.

But God has chosen sometimes Christians from the lowest caste to be his people, to be children of God. We've seen that. And they are wonderful.

They're anointed with the Holy Spirit and such a mighty ministry. We've seen that in our churches. The despised God has chosen.

Are you one of those who is despised and base in the world? That's the type of person God chose to be part of his church. And the reason is so that he might nullify or bring to nothing the people who think they are somebody. Verse 29, the whole purpose is so that no man may boast before God.

And I like to see a church which has got that type of people. That's exactly what abundant life is. Praise the Lord.

And God can do something wonderful so that no man can glory. It's through the power of the Holy Spirit that his church is built. I want to show you another verse in Acts of the Apostles 4 and verse 13.

You know, Peter and John were preaching there and all the high priest scholars saw the boldness, the confidence, verse 13 of Peter and John. And they understood they were uneducated and untrained men. Filled with the Holy Spirit.

And they were amazed. How could these uneducated, untrained men speak so powerfully? And in the living Bible, it says they were uneducated non-professionals. So if you're an uneducated non-professional who never went past eighth grade in school, you qualify to be along with Peter and John to be even an apostle.

Those are the type of people whom God chose. Christianity has drifted from that. Thinking you need great scholars and mighty CEOs of companies to be board members.

It's not true. The first disciples of Jesus were fishermen. Uneducated non-professionals but anointed with the Holy Spirit.

That is how he built his church those days and we need to come back to that. We need to come back to seeking for the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the reason, I'll tell you myself, when God called me to quit my job 50 years ago, I was in the Navy.

I decided I would never go to a Bible school. I said, I'm gonna demonstrate in my life that we can serve God without ever going to a Bible school or Bible college or seminary with the anointing of the Holy Spirit alone and reading the Bible. And that's what I've done in 50 years.

And because I say, we have to go back to that first century, the way they did it in those days. And I want to encourage you, my brothers and sisters, one reason I said that was more than 99% of God's people who sit in the church never get a chance to go to Bible school. And if we give them the impression you got to go to some Bible college before you can serve the Lord, that's a lot of rubbish.

You can serve the Lord just, what you need is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Sure, without that you can do nothing. But I want you to have that faith that every one of you, and when I say every one of you, every

one of you who's born again and a part of this church, I want to encourage you to believe that God can use you to do something to build the body of Christ here.

It's not just educated people. God is the God of the week. In Deuteronomy chapter 10, let me show you how he said that in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 10, 17. He said this, The Lord your God is the God of gods. The Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.

Verse 18, He exercises justice for whom? For the orphan, for the widow. He shows his love for the stranger by giving him food and clothing. Widows and orphans and strangers who come into a new land are the people on the fringes of society.

They're not the big people in the center of society. They're on the fringes. And God is saying, I'm the God of the people who are the outcasts and on the fringes of society.

And he's the same today. I want you to know that. I want you to be encouraged.

Jesus was despised and rejected by people. And he's the first body of Christ. Let me show you another verse in James and chapter two.

See, it's very important for us to be gripped by this because so many wrong concepts about Christianity and today's Christendom that need to be erased as we come to the scriptures. James chapter two, verse five. Listen, my beloved brethren.

Whom did God choose? God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith. And heirs of the kingdom. Who are the heirs of his kingdom? The poor of this world, which he has promised to those who love him.

And if you don't happen to be poor, well, seek to be poor in spirit, which means to have a sense of your own need. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You know, in the very first miracle that Jesus did in the marriage in Cana, you know whom he used? He did not use all those big shots who were there in the wedding, all the important people.

They sat there. They couldn't do anything. He was in the kitchen.

He was using the servants. You read that in John chapter two. He called the servants.

He said, I'm gonna use you, servants to do the first of my miracles. And those servants poured the water and the servants drew out the wine. There's a message in all of this that we must not miss.

And God is always on the side of the underdog. The one who's despised, the one who's rejected. He's not on the side of these mega churches.

Don't you believe that? He's looking for the weak and the helpless. And says, I'm the God of the widows and the orphans and those on the fringes of society. I've chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith.

Those are the ones I'm gonna use so that I can put to shame the wise and the great and the mighty so that no one will boast in my presence. Turn with me to Luke chapter four when Jesus said he was preaching the gospel. To whom was he gonna preach it? Luke four verse 18.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, Jesus said in his first sermon in Nazareth. He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. Have you read that? Why does God place such an emphasis on that? Because he knows those are the ones who nobody cares for.

I've seen, I remember when I was a young Christian and I saw the different churches and they were always giving importance to those who were very big in the world who were very rich. And all the pastors would want to gather the rich people. And I said, Lord, if you ever give me an opportunity ever in my life, I was just 20 years old then.

And I said, Lord, if you ever give me a chance to build a church for you, I will seek for those who are godly irrespective of whether they are rich or poor. I'll be blind to whether they are rich or poor. Are they God fearing? Are they humble? That's what I look for.

And that's what we have done in all the churches that God's helped us to plan in the last 40 years. We've given honor to those who fear God. Now, I was saying about the proper functioning of each part.

You know what happens when this hand does not function properly? Think of a person playing the piano but both all the fingers working together. It's not because they fellowship together, but because they've got a connection with the head. That's what makes all the fingers.

Every little finger is obeying the head. That's why the piano plays so beautifully. It's not by our spending time together that we can work together.

Sometimes we think that's how it is. That's good. But it must come through a connection with the head.

We can work together when each finger is connected to the head. When your personal relationship with Jesus Christ seven days of the week is right, then our fellowship will be glorious. Then our praise as it sounds in heaven will sound beautiful in God's ears.

See, I don't know whether you realize that God's not primarily interested in how good our music is or how well the instruments play. That's good. But more important is the condition of our hearts.

I've said this before and I don't mind repeating it. There was a time in our church once when some of the instruments were not playing together properly and that disturbed me. And the Lord said, I'm not disturbed by that.

I'm disturbed because the husband and wife here are not playing in symphony. The two brothers here who are not in fellowship, two sisters are not in fellowship. That disturbs me.

There's a lack of symphony here. That disturbs me more than whether the instruments are playing together. And I prayed a prayer that day.

I said, Lord, from now on, if something doesn't disturb you, don't let it disturb me anymore. But the things that do disturb you, I want that to disturb me. We read that verse in Ephesians about where the joints need to function together.

The joints are, for example, here, think of this hand. If it gets paralyzed, its connection with the head is gone. And then it can't play with them.

When the head says, come on, play something along with the left hand, it can't because it's paralyzed. Its connection with the head is gone. And it's that type of person who does nothing for the church.

If you've got a connection with the head, you will do something. Every part of the body is important. And then it speaks about the joints.

Think of this hand, how many joints there are. There's a joint here in the shoulder. There's a joint at the elbow.

There's a joint at the wrist. And there are a number of joints. Each finger has got three joints.

And think if these joints didn't function. Think if your joints were stiff. Think if this elbow was stiff and couldn't bend.

What would you be able to do? You can have a muscular upper arm, a powerful lower arm, but you couldn't do anything because the joint is not functioning. You know what the joint speaks of? Fellowship. You can have a husband who thinks he's very spiritual, an upper arm, and a wife who thinks she's very spiritual, a lower arm, but if they can't fellowship together, they are useless.

Useless for God. Or two brothers, one who's very proud of his ability, another one who's proud of his different ability, but they can't fellowship together. They can't work together.

They're useless. It would be like a hand like this. What can you do with a hand where the fingers can't bend? The elbow can't bend? It's useless.

It's far better to have a little child who's not so strong, but whose joints are functioning. The joints are very, very important. That's why we need to build fellowship.

And that's why in our church meeting, on Sunday morning, we gather together about 9.30. We have our service till 11.15 or 11.30 sometimes. And then we hang around till 1.30 to fellowship with one another, to meet one another, to get to know one another. If one member is suffering, that all members suffer with it, we get to know one another.

We don't just rush off. They do that in a movie theater. Once the movie is over, they rush off.

Don't treat church like a movie theater. Take time to get to know those who are part of the same church. If you believe that we are to be one family.

The church is meant to be a family, not a congregation. In the Old Testament, it was a congregation, a huge crowd. It was the biggest mega congregation, 600,000 men plus so many women and children.

And then there was this one mighty leader, Moses. That was old covenant. And when people build churches like that, we have to call it what it is, an old covenant church with huge crowds of people with one mighty gifted pastor or preacher.

I want to say that is not the type of church Jesus is building. In the Old Testament, it was like that because they didn't have the Holy Spirit within each of them. And that is the condition of many churches today because most the people sitting in those churches are not encouraged to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

They're not encouraged to fulfill a function in the body because that will take away from this mighty pastor who's trying to make himself so great and appreciated by everybody. Such people are a hindrance to the building of the body of Christ, however gifted they may be. That's why you read Jesus saying on the last day, some people will come up to me and say, Lord, we did this for you.

We preached and we did miracles and the Lord will say, get away from me. You never knew me. You never knew that I was building a body.

And it's very interesting to see a paraphrase of that in the Message Bible. He says, you used me. You read that verse in Matthew 7 in the Message Bible, Matthew 7, 22, 23.

It says, you just used me to make yourself important. Do you know the number of people in the world are doing that today? Preachers and pastors using Jesus to make themselves important. You know, when one little cell in the body or a group of cells takes all the nourishment to itself and crushes out the other cells, you know what doctors call it? A cancer.

That's a cancer. It's supposed to be this size, small, but it doesn't want to remain that size. I'm not happy with the size God made me.

I want to be bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger. That's what doctors call a cancer. And a lot of cancers in churches worldwide today need to be cut out.

If Jesus were here, he'd do that. He's building a body. We recognize that there are different functions.

Some are more important than the others. I agree. But what I say is, everyone has got a function.

Everyone's got something to do. And the joints are very important. So seek to build fellowship with one another.

It's very, very important, my brothers and sisters. Without fellowship, there'll be no body. In the old covenant, it was like that.

One king in Israel. He was the superman there. Or one high priest.

And all the others were just sitting around. One high priest, one king, and very often just one prophet. But as soon as you come to the pages of the New Testament, what do you see? Jesus sent out his disciples two by two.

There is no more of this one person. John the Baptist was the last, lone, great individual prophet. But as soon as you come to the New Testament, Jesus sends out his disciples two by two because that is where there's fellowship.

You can't have fellowship with just one person. We need to understand that from the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came, he baptized them into one body. It was like 120 pieces of iron that were dropped into a fire and they came out as one piece.

And that's how a church should be. All functioning together. Think of the picture of a body.

And I trust that we will never, ever go away from that. So we spoke here about, in Ephesians 4, about this building up of itself in love. The most important requirement in the church is that we learn to love one

another.

And that comes out of our love for Jesus Christ first. We love him because he first loved us. And because he's loved us so much, he's put us in debt to love others.

I'll tell you why you're supposed to love others. Because God loved you. Because he forgave me, I have to forgive others.

That's what we pray in the Lord's Prayer. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive us. In Ephesians 4 it says, since God has forgiven you, forgive one another.

Whenever people have difficulty in forgiving. See, we're a bunch of imperfect people. Even in the best church in the world, we're imperfect people.

But God wants to build us together. Imperfect people. And one of the great requirements in building a body is to learn to forgive.

Because we are working with imperfect people, a husband and wife. They're both imperfect. And if they don't know how to forgive, they'll never build a family.

I remember a young couple once came to me who just got married in some other church. And they were rushing to catch a train. And they came to my house and said, Brother Zach, we've just got two minutes to see you before you rush to catch a train.

Can you give us a quick exhortation? I said, sure. I said, be quick to ask forgiveness from one another. Be quick to forgive one another.

Now go catch a train. You'll be all right. I said, that's enough.

Learn to forgive one another as God has forgiven us. So when a husband and wife, and I can apply that even to a brother and brother having a tension. I want to ask you here.

Are there two instruments here that are not playing in symphony? A husband and wife who are having a tension. Two brothers who can't get along with each other. Sisters, you can't stand the sight of somebody.

Yet she says she's a believer. You say you're a believer. So when two believers have a tension or a husband and wife have a tension, who should take the first step in asking forgiveness? Isn't that always the big question? Who is going to take the first step? Well, the answer is very simple.

God and man had a tension because of sin. Who took the first step? God. Why? Because he was more spiritual.

So if two of you have a tension, who should take the first step? The one who is more spiritual. And when a husband and wife have a tension, since both think they are more spiritual, they should be just running into each other's arms. Why isn't it so? When you hesitate to take the first step, you are thereby proving, I am carnal.

You're not spiritual. God took the first step. God commends his love to us.

It says in Romans 5, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. That is the one we are to follow, be imitators of God. So that's one very important thing, forgiving one another.

Another very, very important thing, if you really want to be overcomers, I've discovered when I began to seek for this victorious life. One of the things the Lord showed me was one of the first things I need to overcome is getting offended. There are many sins which are so deep-rooted in us that it takes a long time, many years sometimes, to be free from them.

For example, if you have a tremendous problem with anger, you're not going to get overcome it in one day as soon as you're born again. You will overcome it if you're serious about it. I had a problem with it and it's gone, but it took years.

It takes time. With men, there's a tremendous problem with sexual temptation in the mind and with all the bad habits, bad thought patterns that most men have. It takes a long time when they're converted to be free from that, to have a pure thought life.

It'll come, but it'll take time if you battle it. And love of money, that's another thing which every human being has. It's not only the rich people who love money.

I've never found a homeless person who doesn't love money. No. No tramp who doesn't love money.

Everybody loves money. It's in us. But, it takes time to get rid of it, but you'll never get rid of it if you don't battle it, if you don't acknowledge it as something that's destroying you.

As much as anger or dirty thoughts, it destroys you and if you fight it, you can overcome it. You can make it your servant instead of it running your life as your master. But these are difficult ones.

It'll take time. But getting offended, that's something we can overcome easily. Because that's not a deep-rooted thing in us.

It's just our pride that makes us get offended with somebody because they didn't treat me right, they didn't smile at me, they didn't shake my hands, they ignored me or they did something that hurt me. What all stupid things we get offended with. We need to overcome that.

If you're serious, anybody here who's serious about victory over sin and living an overcoming life, let me tell you the first step, the kindergarten lesson is to overcome getting offended. And if God sees you're serious and willing for that, He will lead you into overcoming your anger and overcoming your sexually dirty way of thinking. And love of money and every evil habit that the devil's put upon the race of Adam.

Start with, I'm not gonna get offended, Lord. I'm gonna die to myself. Dead people, here's a dead man here, you can do nothing to offend him.

Absolutely nothing. You can call him the devil, you can kick him, he won't get offended. I'll tell you that.

And the Bible says, we have to reckon ourselves having died with Christ and alive with Him. You couldn't offend Jesus Christ, you know that? You called him the prince of devils, the people called him the prince of devils, he didn't sue them in court for defamation. You know what he said? He said, I'm the son of man, you're forgiven.

I asked the Lord once, Lord, what do you mean by son of man? He said, I'm just an ordinary man. That's what he meant. You call me prince of devils, I'm an ordinary man.

You're forgiven, just make sure you don't blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. Was he an ordinary man? Not at all. He was almighty God walking on this earth as an ordinary man.

When the Lord opened my eyes to that, I said, Lord, help me to the end of my life to be an ordinary man, to live as an ordinary man among other people. Not to think of myself as some great preacher or a great servant of God, an ordinary man, the greatest man who walked on this earth called himself an ordinary man. That's why he was not offended when they called him prince of devils.

Do you get offended with lesser words that people spoke against you? Let's learn to follow Jesus. He didn't get offended when they spat on him. He said, I'm an ordinary man.

So forgiveness and getting offended, very, very important. Let me show you this verse in 2 Corinthians 2. 2 Corinthians 2. I'm a little different from most preachers today. I quote a lot of scripture because I don't want to impress you with my eloquence.

I'm not interested what you think about my eloquence. I want your faith to be founded in God's word. That's the one thing that'll see you through rough times in your life.

Not you're being impressed with my eloquence. That won't help you one bit. That's just temporary.

2 Corinthians 2. And verse 10. Whom you forgive anything, I forgive. Paul is saying, indeed what I have forgiven, I've forgiven anything.

I did it for your sake. In the presence of Christ, I forgive that person. Now he tells us the reason in the next verse.

Verse 12. It's verse 11, sorry. In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan because we are not ignorant of his schemes.

Now, take those two verses together. 2 Corinthians 2, verse 10 and 11. If I don't forgive somebody, Satan gets a foothold in my life.

How many of you knew that? How many of you knew the reason why you have so many problems and you're not able to sleep properly at night and you have so many dirty dreams and scary dreams and so many other things is Satan's got a foothold in your life somewhere. And he gets a foothold when somebody doesn't forgive someone. Learn to forgive.

He gets a foothold in your life when you get offended with what somebody did or said or didn't say or didn't do and you retain that grudge. You got a little bit of the devil inside you. Do you want that? Do you want a little bit of hell inside your heart? Get rid of it.

Let mercy triumph over judgment like the Bible says. Now, I wanna turn with me, turn with me please another verse in 1 Corinthians 12 to speak about, I wanna say a little bit about attitudes that we can have towards one another in the body. Attitudes are important and there are people who feel inferior and there are people who feel superior.

When both are mentioned here in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 15. 1 Corinthians 12, 15 it says here, if the foot says, because I'm not a hand, I'm way down at the bottom of the body. I'm not a hand.

I'm not a part of the body. These are the believers in the body of Christ who feel inferior to others. You see, I'm not so gifted as that person.

You remember the story of the person who got one talent and he looked at the person who had 10 and he said, well, I don't have as much as him. I don't even have as much as this guy who got five. I got only one.

So he was discouraged and he buried it and he was cast out by the Lord finally. He could have done a lot with that one talent. You know, 11 people with one talent would do better than one person with 10 talents.

It's true. A lot of the church suffers because a lot of people with one talent do nothing about it. They just bury it.

So there's this inferiority complex. I'm not the hand. Or it says, verse 16, if the ear says, because I'm not an eye, I'm not a part of the body.

Do you ever feel like that? Oh, I can never stand up there and preach. I don't have that gift. So you're not a part of the body? Who said that? This is speaking to those who have this inferiority complex and God wants you to get rid of it.

And then it speaks further about those who have a superiority complex. And the verse 21, the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you. You know, this is the person who thinks it doesn't matter who goes away.

I'm the great eloquent leader here and I can run this church. I cannot say that. The eye needs the hand.

And now this is the most wonderful part is that second part of that verse. The head does not say to the feet, I have no need of you. You know who the head is? Jesus.

You know what the feet is? The feet are the lowest members in the body. And Jesus looks at the lowest, the weakest, the most ignorant, the most foolish, the most helpless member in his body and says, I need you. Have you heard that? I need you.

Do you remember that time when the Lord was sending his disciples to prepare the room for the last supper? And he said, go into that. Not the last supper, sorry. Before that, when he was going to ride into Jerusalem, he sent his disciples and he said, you'll see a donkey there.

Tight, loosen it and bring it. And if somebody says, why are you doing that? Say the Lord has need of him. The Lord has need of that donkey.

I have a little picture on my table at home of the Lord sitting on a donkey with these words underneath. The Lord has need of you. I always look at that and I'm greatly encouraged.

If the Lord could look at a donkey and say he has need of him, I want to say to you, my brothers and sisters, I hope all of you at least have this much confidence that you're better than a donkey. I want to say to you in Jesus name, the Lord has need of you. It's a tremendous encouragement to see this picture of the Lord riding on a donkey.

The Lord has need of you. And that's what I always think of myself. You know, people were throwing the coats in front of the donkey and if that stupid donkey ever thought, boy, I'm an important person.

He'd really prove himself to be a donkey then. You know, he thought he was important because he was walking on the coats of other people. Because as soon as Jesus got off him, nobody cared for him.

That's how it is. You know what makes us important? Jesus. I remember once in our church, I wanted to teach this to the children.

And I said, I want, you know, in your children in school, you're always in a competitive world where who's going to come first in the class, who's going to get A plus in mathematics and who's going to come first in the hundred meters race, et cetera. And some of you children are not so gifted. You come a little lower down in the class and you don't win those races and you don't qualify for the football team or the baseball team.

The Bible says, we're all basically without God, we are zeros. So I said, we're all zeros. And I got them to hold a plaque with zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero.

I said, what about me, the great preacher? I said, I'm also a zero. And I stood there with a zero there in front of me. I said, you know what gives us value? Jesus.

He's one. You put one in front of that zero, it becomes 10. You put one in front of three zeros, it becomes 1,000.

Just three people with Jesus in front of them. Without them, they're useless. And they got it.

I was so encouraged. It's wonderful to teach children right from the beginning. You are worthless without Christ, but you're exceptionally valuable once you receive Christ into your life.

You've got a very important function in the body of Christ. And since it's Father's Day, the church is built through homes. I want to say that.

Fathers have a very, very important function. And I hope all of you who are fathers will remember that. You have a very important function in building the body of Christ.

The body of Christ is built by homes that are strong. This church is as strong as the homes here are. And I want to not only be appreciated the fathers who are here by God's grace and His goodness.

I'm a father of four children and a grandfather of 13.9 children, grandchildren rather. God's been very good to me. But I think of a lot of others who may be here in many parts of the church who are single mothers, widowed mothers, whose husbands have deserted them, divorced them, died.

You know what they're doing? They're doing the job of a father and a mother. I want you to give them a hand. You know, single mothers, widowed, who are doing the job of father and mother together.

Praise God for them. You have a very important function to build your home. John Wesley's mother, Susanna Wesley, was like a father and mother to her seven or eight children.

She would spend one hour with each of them every week telling them about God. She did more for God than if she had traveled around the world preaching. Timothy's mother did more for God as a mother, bringing up Timothy in a godly way than if she had traveled preaching.

And so you mothers who are fathers, I want to say to all of you who are building homes, whether single mother or father, you have a very, very important function in building the body of Christ. The strength of the church is dependent on the type of strength, the strength there is in your home. I believe that.

We've seen that through the years as we've sought to plant churches in India. We've built homes. Every conference we have, we have a meeting for families to encourage husband and wife to live together in love, to bring up children in the fear of God, bring up children who love Jesus from a very young age.

It's the most important thing to give them. Faith in God, that's greater than any inheritance that you can give them. And finally, let me conclude.

God always begins with something small. Sometime when you get time, read Judges chapter seven. It's a great chapter.

Book of Judges. Can you remember the chapter? Seven is the perfect number. Chapter seven.

It's about Gideon. He had a huge army of 32,000 people and he was going to fight against the Midianites who were torturing and ruling Israel. And God looked at that army and he said, you're too many.

Send all those who are afraid home. 22,000 people went away. 10,000 people were left.

God said, it's still too many. Take them to the river and I'll test them there. And when they came to the river, 9,700 people buried their face in the river.

Forgot all about the enemy. Occupied with themselves and their thirst. God said, reject them.

People are occupied with their own self. That's all they're interested in and not in God's enemies. Send them home.

But there were 300 people who did not bury their face in the water, forgetting about the enemy. They stood on their feet and alert for the enemy and slapped up water with their hands. Said, those are the ones I want.

300 were left. And with those 300, the Midianites were defeated. That's how God does his work so that no man may boast in his presence.

So that all the glory will be God's. He uses servants in Cana. He used a little boy with five loaves and two fish to feed 10,000 people, 5,000 men and many women and children.

That is God's way. So don't ever feel you're unimportant. Don't ever feel you're too small.

God can do a miracle through you. In Ezekiel 47, we see a little trickle of water coming out of God's house and finally becoming a river. Let's pray that that'll happen in abundant life.

A little trickle that becomes a river that blesses many people in this Bay Area. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, help us to honor you.

And I pray in Jesus' name that here you will do a new thing. Lord, that you will bring rivers in the desert, make a way in the wilderness and build the body of Christ here. That'll be a testimony for your name and all the glory will be yours.

We give it to you in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you very much.

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