

(Christian Leadership) Building the Home and the Church

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of building a strong home and church by making disciples, having a strong witness, and living out the mystery of unity in Christ.

Duration: 1:16:59

Scripture: Genesis 6:9, Genesis 12:1, Joshua 1:1, 1 Samuel 7:16, 1 Samuel 8:3, Job 1:1, Acts 13:2, Ephesians 3:10

Topics: "Christian Leadership", "Marriage Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that having a cooperative wife is not a requirement to be a prophet of God. He warns against complaining about one's spouse and using them as an excuse for not living for God. The speaker uses the example of John Wesley's difficult marriage to illustrate his point. He also highlights the importance of balancing ministry and family, citing the example of Samuel who neglected his family due to his busy ministry. The speaker encourages believers to embrace the differences in their relationships and not try to change their spouse, as God has made them different for a reason.

Transcript

We have so many visitors in India coming from western countries, preachers who conduct crusades, and I always tell people in our church, we don't know anything about his private life, we don't know anything about his family, we don't know anything about the local church he's in. That's what I'd like to know more about before we hear what he has to say. Because if the gospel doesn't work in our home, it's no use exporting it outside.

If it hasn't produced a brotherhood in our local church, then it's no use going and telling other people about it. I was born again when I was 19, about 41 years ago, when I was in the military, in the Indian Navy. And from there, the Lord called me out when I was 24 years, with a very clear call to quit my job and serve him.

It took two years before the Navy released me. And for the first nine years, I travelled all over the country, preaching, God gave me the gift of preaching when I was about 23. I've been preaching ever since.

And I travelled all over, and I saw that though the population, the Protestant population of India is only about 1% of its total population, the problem is not that we were 1%, but that that 1% was so pathetically

un-Christian in the way it was living. And I realized that the great need was to make disciples, and I realized that this is where Christianity had failed. Not only in my country, many parts of the world, they were interested in statistics, increasing numbers, and wanted to bring people to conversion, but not make them disciples.

So, I decided to quit all my travelling, preaching ministry, and we started with about 3 or 4 families 25 years ago in our home. And from there, in the last 25 years, first 6 or 7 years, we never did anything, but stay there in our own hometown and work, and build a brotherhood, and then it grew. We're now about 250 or so in our local church, and from there, it's gone out to many other parts of South India and about 35 churches that have come up over these years.

That's not a large number, but we've concentrated on making disciples. We believe that we don't have to go looking for people as much as being a strong witness. I feel that India is like a large haystack, which has got few needles here and there.

And those are those who are longing for a godly life, those who are needing Christ. We're looking for them primarily. And there are two ways in which we can find needles in haystacks.

One is by plunging into the haystack, and searching, searching, searching, searching, and in a country of a thousand million people as we are, that can take thousands of years. The other method would be to have a very powerful magnet outside the haystack, and pull out these needles one by one. So, that's what the church is meant to be.

A very powerful magnet that draws those who have a ear to hear. So, that's what we've sought to do, and we've been greatly encouraged by large numbers of young people who are eager to follow Jesus. Things are changing in our country.

The strong religious fundamentalism that has come up over the last couple of years, and already there's a lot of persecution in some parts of the country, that could spread to the whole country. That's about our church. I'm married.

My wife is a medical doctor, but she's never worked for money. She spent 30 years helping the poor people with their medical needs in different churches. And I have four sons.

We're all born again, grown up and left home, and are following the Lord. And I'm very thankful that the things that we have taught in 25 years have worked in my life, in our family life, and in our home, and in our local church. And therefore I can say, like the Apostle Paul, I'm not ashamed of this gospel, this gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God unto salvation.

It works in one's life, it works in one's home, it works in a local church. I work with other elders in our local church, and I can say that this brother with whom we started the fellowship, we worked together for 25 years, and we've never had contention between us even once in all these years. And that's the basis on which we have sought to build.

So I want to share a little bit today about building the home and building the church. Because I believe this is the culmination of the gospel message. All that we've heard so far is more individual Christianity.

What we need to do ourselves. But the test of whether God has done a work in us is when I have to live with another person and fellowship with another person. If I don't, if I leave that out, I can live in a world of

self-deception that I'm becoming increasingly holy and increasingly spiritual.

I thought I was a very unselfish person until I got married. And I discovered what a terribly selfish person I was. It's in the home, in marriage relationships that we discover whether the gospel really works or not.

In church relationships. And I thank God for those relationships because it protects us from deceiving ourselves. In Ephesians in chapter three, Paul says this is a very important passage, Ephesians three.

He says if by revelation there was a mystery made known to me, Ephesians 3.3 and he speaks about this mystery of Christ in verse four which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations but is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets. And what is this mystery which is not revealed in the old covenant, which is not known in those days, but is now revealed. A mystery means a secret that can be understood only by divine revelation.

We can't understand it by study. It's a mystery. It's as God revealed it to Paul.

And then when he tells us what this mystery is, he says in verse six to be specific, this mystery is that the Gentiles that is the non-Jews are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. And when we read that and say, hey, that doesn't sound to be so great a mystery. What's so great about that? But let me explain what it means.

In our country, in Hinduism, there is a cast system. There is the upper cast who are the Brahmins and then there are the lower cast. They are called the untouchables.

And a Brahmin will never drink from a glass which is used by that person ever in his whole life. And they will not sit at the same table and they would avoid them. Particularly in the villages, it's been like that.

They wouldn't even let that person's shadow come near you. They would not allow the person to draw water from the same well. There was absolutely no possibility of contact.

These were almost like living on two different planets. And it's like that even today in the villages. But the attitude of the Jew to the Gentile was much worse than that.

They would have, they looked down on them and you know how difficult even Peter after the day of Pentecost found it to even visit Cornelius's house. And what a lot of explanations he had to give to those Jews who had become believers. The prejudice was so strong.

These were the two greatest opposites in the whole world. And the mystery is that the greatest opposites can become one. One body in Christ.

Now some of you may think a brother is very difficult in the church. Not as far apart from you as Jew and Gentile. Some of you may think your wife or your husband is difficult.

Not as far apart as Jew and Gentile. That's why mentions Gentiles here. That's the mystery.

That the two greatest opposites in the world can become one in Christ. And that was the result of the cross. It says in the previous chapter verse 16 of chapter 2. He reconciled them both in one body to God through the cross.

By having to put to death the enmity. He's made one new man out of He's made both into one, it says in verse 14. This is the culmination of the gospel.

The culmination of the gospel is not that I live a victorious Christian life. That's part of the way. Ultimately God wants to make these victorious brothers and sisters one body.

And if they don't become one body, their victory is a hollow victory. It's a deception to think that we've got holiness. Sanctification without fellowship is a deception.

And that mystery, how God can make two people into one, reconcile them both in one body, having put to death through the cross the enmity. There is an enmity in our flesh, which prevents us from being one. And that's why there's tension between husband and wife.

That's why there's tension between brothers. That's why it's difficult for people to become one body. What the Lord wants, it says here further down in Ephesians chapter 3, that He wants to make this wisdom, verse 10, known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

That means the Lord wants to show Satan and all those satanic forces, see what I can do with these people. You know, like in the time of Job, all that God could point out to Satan was, have you seen that one man Job? He was an upright man, but he had no fellowship with his wife. He had no fellowship with the other preachers who visited him.

He was a lonely man. That was all that was possible under the old covenant. But now, it says, what the Lord wants to point out to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places is this tremendous mystery, which is never possible from the time of Adam till the day of Pentecost, that two totally dissimilar people can become one.

And that is what the Lord is trying to point out to Satan in the heavenly places in different homes, in different churches. And when God doesn't find that, Satan says to God, see I told you, it doesn't work. And God is disappointed.

Now, if your wife is an unbeliever, not born again, or husband is not born again, we can understand it. But what when the husband and wife claim to be believers? And the devil says to God, that's not a believer and unbeliever. Those are two believers.

They even go to the same church. They're not one. They're always having tensions and quarrels and fights with each other, suspicion.

It's a tragedy. And we need to recognize that. You may think it's just little dispute in your home.

But there's something going on in the heavenlies. You got to recognize what's going on down there is a disappointment to God when He's trying to point you out to Satan. And when we see from that perspective, we see the name of God is being dishonored.

When God, and what is the reason for this? The first condition of discipleship as we just heard is Luke 14 26 If any man come to me and does not hate his father, mother, brother, wife, children, brother, sister, he cannot be my disciple. The Lord requires that we put him in the first place, in the place of supreme, in the supreme place in our home. If this mystery is to be fulfilled.

If this unity is to take place. That's why when God made Adam, you know, God could have taken two lumps of clay and dust and simultaneously made a man and a woman. I mean that may have, we may think that would have been a better way.

Make them simultaneously and breathe into them and there they are, husband and wife. But he didn't do it that way. He made Adam alone and there was a reason for that.

He made this man out of dust and then he breathed into him and as soon as Adam opened his eyes, the first person he saw was God. There was no wife, there was no he, there was no one but God. And it was later in the day that he got his wife.

And what the Lord was trying to tell Adam thereby was, I must be first in your life. When you open your eyes, you must see me first. Not your wife.

Me. And that's why when God wanted to make Eve, he put Adam to sleep, took her rib out and went somewhere else and made a woman and when her eyes were open, she saw God. She didn't even know there was an Adam.

And then, that was the same lesson to Eve. I must be first in your life. When you open your eyes, you must see me.

And then he brought them together and as if God was in the middle, they would have been one. What we read in Genesis chapter 3, I've often thought that if Genesis chapter 3 began with Adam pointing his finger at his wife and saying she is the cause and if the first 11 verses of Genesis were not there, I would know immediately the devils come between them. Because that's what happens.

When the devil comes in between, fellowship is broken and you find the pointing of the finger, accusing the spirit of the accuser. God was no longer between them. The devil had come between.

Jesus came to save us from that. And what was the reason? And there are important principles here which I believe we need to know if we want to restore what was lost in Eden. If we understand why did they get thrown out of Eden? Why did their relationship break up that as soon as the devil came, here they were accusing one another.

When the devil came to Eve, let's look at that first. And told her, Eve of this tree, what she should have said was well, sounds like a good idea, but God's given me a head. Let me just consult Him before I take this decision.

The story might have been so different. And the story in many homes would have been so different if the wife had taken that attitude when she got some bright ideas. God's given me a head.

So, I want to say to all of you sisters, remember that the most important and the most significant decision ever taken by a human being on the face of this earth was here, which brought chaos and confusion to the whole earth just because a woman took an independent decision without bothering to consult her head. She thought, I don't need to consult Him. I know enough.

And if we want to get man back into paradise, if we want our home to be like paradise again, we've got to change that. Now, let's go to Adam. I ask people, what was Adam's first sin? Everybody thinks that he ate of the tree.

No, I say that was the second. Do you know what the first one was? Let's turn to what God Himself told Adam in Genesis 3.17. God said to Adam in Genesis 3.17, First of all, you listen to the voice of your wife, and secondly, you ate from the tree. That's what God said.

I appointed you as the head of your home, and you let your wife run your home. That's your number one sin. Remember brothers, married brothers, that's the first sin man ever committed.

He let his wife run his home. And he meekly followed. And do you know the number of homes where that's happening today? That's exactly what the devil wants to do.

It's what he did there. It's written there plainly in the first pages of Scripture. And there are Christian homes today where they're following the devil as we read in Genesis chapter 3. And I'm not surprised that there's chaos and confusion.

It will be there till we come back to God's order where a man decides to take his God-appointed place as the head of the home. And where a woman recognizes that she'll only bring chaos and confusion into that home if she begins to run that home. When she learns to submit to the authority of her husband.

That is what God is looking for. That is the divine order. You see it very clearly in Genesis chapter 3. That was how sin came.

It wasn't just a simple question of eating a fruit from a tree. There are far more serious issues underneath that that would never have happened if Adam had taken his place and Eve had taken her place. So, it's not always sure that all married people understand that.

But that is God's way. And I see that in Ephesians chapter 5 when it speaks about the husband-wife relationship. It says the relationship of the husband and the wife, it's speaking the same thing.

You see, if there is to be this unity that God desires to manifest in a home, it can only be according to God's order. It says here in verse 28 of Ephesians 5 that a husband ought to love his wife as his own body. It says here in verse 23, the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.

The relationship of the husband and wife, if you want your home to be patterned according to God's order, and if you want God's blessing, full blessing upon your home, it has to be patterned according to God's order where the husband is the head and the wife is like the body. And when it says head, it means the brain. And you know how your body is.

You know, a lot of women are afraid of the word submission. Okay, let me describe submission to you. Every part of this body obeys my brain.

And when it obeys, there's such beauty and perfection. Have you seen a person playing a piano or an organ? Ten fingers, eyes, ears, feet pressing the pedals. Such perfect harmony, such beauty.

Because every one of those members in the body is 100% submissive to the brain. That's the glory of submission. Now, think of a body where there is no submission.

Think of a man with a paralyzed hand. The brain says, come on, lift yourself up. It doesn't lift itself up.

Or a paralyzed leg. Is there any beauty there? There are people who got Parkinson's disease. The brain can't stop the shaking in their hand.

No beauty there. There's a total lack of submission. Just like a lot of wives.

That's not God's way. There's something ugly about it. Do you want to be like that? Are you afraid of the word submission? Look at the planet.

For thousands of years, they've obeyed God with split-second timing. There's beauty in the universe because of submission. The devil has made submission an ugly word.

God has placed women in the church to show the beauty of submission. And if you're a submissive wife, you don't realize what tremendous honor you bring to God and how much God can point you out to Satan in the heavenly places. The beauty of a home comes through the submission of the wife to the body submitting to the head.

It's ugly. There are some people who got some disease where the hands are always flailing around like this. They don't listen to the brain.

Is there any beauty there? Think of a body which is totally under the control of the brain. Can sit quietly, stand up, play an instrument, do anything, every part under control. That is why God says to the wife, submit to your husband as the church is to Christ.

But that's not only what it says here. The husband is to be the head. And what does the brain do? The brain, boy, what a tremendous care that brain has for every part of this body constantly.

If there's a little injury here, the brain immediately is concerned and gets the other hand to come and get some water and wash off that injury, put some medicine perhaps. If there's a broken bone, immediately the brain gets active and a little infection here, the brain sends signals to the blood cells in the body to go and fight that infection. It's a tremendous care the brain has for a little headache, a little stomach ache and the brain gets active.

Boy, think if husbands were like that. Caring for, not to hurt the feelings of their wives. Sensitive.

This is the relationship, brothers and sisters, that God wants to demonstrate in a Christian home. We have fallen far short and we need to repent. We need to fall on our faces before God and say, Lord, we have gloried in the fact that our homes are a little better than those heathen homes around us and we have lost the vision of your staff.

Forgive us. God never designed, the Bible says, a woman to be exactly like the man. The Bible says that God said, I will make a helper suitable for Adam.

And when young couples were getting married, trying to get married, come to me, I draw a little diagram for them. I draw a whole eggshell. You see that? Now if I crack it, I draw these two halves of the eggshell with a lot of pokey, sticking out parts all around, every side, all around.

And on the other half, also equally pokey, sharp, sticking out parts. It's dangerous, looks dangerous. But when you put them together, what a perfect fit.

And I said, that's how it's going to be. Your husband, your wife, you've got strong points, but where you have a strong point, she'll have a weak point. Where there's a projection in the top half, there's a depression in the lower half.

And where she has a strong point, you've got a weak point. Do you believe your wife could have a strong point too, where you have a weak point? God gives you someone suitable for you. Someone who is an exact opposite.

You both love the Lord, but in so many other ways, an opposite. Because you can fit together. And that helps in bringing up your children.

There are two different viewpoints put together. It's like if I were to take a picture of a building from the northern side, and my wife takes a picture of the same building from the southern side, and we put it together, we get a three-dimensional picture of that building. But if as a stupid husband, I force my wife to have my view, and get her down to my side, I just get another picture just like mine.

Who's the loser? Or if it's a strong wife who forces her husband down to her viewpoint, the home is the loser. And so I say to you, brothers and sisters, don't try to change your wife. Don't try to change your husband.

God has made him different from you. Look at things from a different perspective. I think of the many times in our bringing up children at home, our four boys, that we had to talk together, my wife and I, can we permit our children to do this? This is going on in the school.

Can we permit our children to participate in that? Various things. Can we permit them to read this or do that? And it's so good to have two different viewpoints so that there's a balance. The Bible says that the glory of God was seen in Jesus Christ full of grace and truth.

There's a balance. It wasn't all grace, it wasn't all truth. It's a balance.

And that's what comes when a husband and wife value one another, value each other's opinions. The Bible says in Romans chapter 11, Behold the kindness and the severity of God. There's a balance in God.

And we are to represent God to our children. What must they see? Kindness and severity. And we all tend to be imbalanced.

I may be very severe. Well, thank God if I have a wife who's kind. There's a balance.

We're not in competition. It's kindness and severity. I don't think any of us have got it in perfect balance.

We need another to balance us out. There's beauty when there's grace and truth. I look at it like this.

Truth is like the bones in my body. But if I only had bones, I'd be ugly. If you're walking down a dark street and a skeleton came up walking up to you, you don't exactly feel attracted.

And if all that your children see in you is severity, severity, don't blame them if they don't feel attracted to you or to your God. But God has made the body such that those bones are covered over with flesh. There's grace.

And that's what makes a human being attractive. Now, the opposite is also true. If I were only flesh and no bones, I wouldn't be attractive again.

Like we heard the other day, we'd be just a glob or a blob or whatever. Well, it's, you know, in the church too, it's got to be like that. Grace and truth.

Both are necessary. And that's why God gives husband and wife, so that we can balance one another. Maybe a decision that you're planning to take in your home may be very severe.

Maybe the punishment you're planning to mete out to your son or daughter for some mistake they made is severe, but you discuss it with your wife and you're able to manifest God a little better there, with kindness and severity. Or maybe you are just a wishy-washy type of a person who just lets everything go. And thank God, if one of the two in the home is a little strict, there's a balance.

And that's why the most important thing to bring up children is for husband and wife to have fellowship with each other. If that is there, then the children will grow up right. If that isn't there, we're going to lose our children.

This is important. This is why Jesus died. That he might make two into one.

Whatever holiness you may preach, brother, sister, if it's not making you one with your wife, one with your husband, gracious and compassionate, forgiving, it's not holiness. You know, husbands and wives can sometimes have tension. We all know that.

And wherever I've gone in our churches, I've asked people this question. When a husband and wife have a conflict, who should take the first step to restore the relationship? I'll give you the answer from scripture. When God and man had a strain in their relationship, who took the first step? God.

Why? Because he was more spiritual. So when a husband and wife have a conflict, who should take the first step to restore that relationship? The one who is more spiritual. And since both of you think you're spiritual, you should be just running into each other's arms.

What are you waiting for? Don't you think you're spiritual? Don't you think the problem is with your husband? Or with your wife? Well, then you should be the one to take the first step. That's what God did. While we were enemies, God sent his son to reconcile us to himself.

The devil's got us all upside down in our thinking. We need to humble ourselves. We need to be quick to go and restore that relationship.

Something is going to be lost. It's like getting a hole in the vessel. If you've got water in that vessel, you're going to keep losing until you fix that hole.

The sooner you fix it, the better. God designed that a husband and wife should be one so that Satan can be kept out of their home. There's a promise in Matthew chapter 18 which reads like this.

Many people are familiar with this verse, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst. Let's apply this to a husband and wife, where two, two is enough. Where two are gathered in my name, the Lord says, there am I in the midst.

But, this verse begins with the word for or because. So then you've got to go back to the previous verse to understand this verse. And lots of Christians know this verse, but they don't know the previous verse.

And that's why this verse is never fulfilled in their life. What does the previous verse say? Because where two are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst is dependent on the previous verse. And the previous verse says, if two of you are agreed.

And the Greek word for agree there is symphonio, from which we get the English word symphony. If two of you are like a symphony. It's a musical word where instruments are all playing together.

The two instruments are playing together. Same scale and at the same pace. The same melody.

It sounds beautiful. And it's as if two of you are like that. You can ask for anything.

It will be done by my father in heaven. And he's speaking about binding satanic powers in verse 18. Because even verse 19 begins with again I say to you.

It's referring back to verse 18. The ultimate purpose. If you want to understand verse 20 and verse 19.

You got to go back to verse 18. It's talking about binding satanic powers that seek to disturb your home. It's speaking about losing your children from the bondage of satan.

Speaking about binding and losing. And it says the way to do it is two people must be in symphony. Two people must be agreed in spirit.

Now even if you don't know that verse, the devil knows it. And he knows that all he's got to do to enter your home is get you as husband and wife to get a little tension between you. And once he's got you having a little tension between you.

He comes right through to attack your home and your children. Remember that. I want to ask you sisters.

When your children are rebellious Where did they get that infection from? Where did they learn to speak in that rebellious way to you? Rebellion is like chickenpox. It starts with somebody in the home and then goes to the others. Did they perhaps learn it from the way you speak to your husband? I heard a brother once say in a meeting somebody asked him he said Brother, how are your children? Are they sort of submissive to you now? And she said well, when I'm submissive to my husband, my children are usually submissive to me.

Proverbs in chapter 14 verse 1 The wise woman builds her house. The foolish tears it down with her own hands. Remember it's the woman who builds the house.

Why doesn't it say the wise man? The wise woman. That is it's the woman who brings the spirit of submission which is the spirit of Christ. Jesus lived in submission all these 33 years on earth to the father.

It's the woman who brings that spirit into a home. What is the opposite of submission? Rebellion. How did sin originate in the universe? Through the rebellion of Lucifer.

How did salvation come from sin? Through the submission of Jesus Christ. Who is going to bring that spirit into a home? First, long before the children come. It's not the man.

It's the woman. And if she brings that spirit into a home, and children are born into such a home, she builds her house. But a foolish woman, she just tears it down with her own hands.

I just want to say a word about those who have difficult wives, like Job. He had a difficult wife. I often think when God said to Job, God said to Satan everything he has is in your hands.

You can destroy everything. Satan destroyed all his property, took away all his children and he kept his wife alive. You know why? God gave Satan permission to kill his wife but Satan said, she is better off alive

for my purposes.

That's sad. She became an instrument in Satan's hands to nag that poor husband who is already suffering so much. A foolish woman tears down her home.

Yeah, some people have difficult wives. John Wesley had a very difficult wife. I don't know whether you know.

John Wesley was one of the greatest men of God in the history of Christianity. Changed the face of England 200 years ago. One man God used so mightily to change the face of England.

You know what type of wife he had? One who would pull the hairs from his beard. Was suspicious of him. If he went preaching somewhere she would follow him on a horse to see if he was running after some woman.

She would open the letters that John Wesley had written before mailing them and add naughty sentences in between and mail them. She would insult him in the presence of his co-workers who esteemed him as a prophet of God. This was his wife.

He never spoke an unkind word about her. He preached entire sanctification. And he got a wife to test it.

Whether it was true or not. And he demonstrated that God had done a work in his heart. Now what I say is you don't have to have a cooperative wife to be a prophet of God.

It's not always a happy marriage that produces the greatest results. Sometimes a difficult marriage can make a man godly beyond anything that a happy marriage could have done. All I say is don't complain about your wife.

You know, I think in the final day of judgment if you stand before God and the Lord asks you why didn't you live for me? And you say, well Lord it was my wife. Because of her she never cooperated. She never helped me.

She nagged me. God said, just wait. Let me call somebody here.

John Wesley, come here. And the Lord shows you a videotape of John Wesley's wife. And his home relation.

The problems he faced at home. And he says, now tell me. And your mouth will be shut.

Yeah, I believe God will have in that day husbands who will stand as a living testimony to the fact that they love Jesus more than their wife or children or anything. And nobody stops them from living for God. Maybe you have a difficult husband.

That doesn't hinder you from being a godly woman. We have a big responsibility to bring up our children in the fear of God. Bible says fathers and the responsibilities placed squarely on the fathers to bring up the children in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord.

The instruction is the teaching them the principles of God's word. And the discipline is disciplining them when they go wrong. And if you have disciplined them when they are small, we will not have a problem with them when they are grown up.

I believe firmly with all my heart that if you train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it. Either that is true or the word of God is false. It's true.

If my children go astray, I can't say, well, children are different. Somewhere I did something wrong. Somewhere I gave priority for the world or for money or something else in my home and my children saw it.

And it's good for us to judge ourselves. And let me give you a word of warning. This is not for you to judge somebody else.

It's not for you to sit here and say, well, thank God that man is sitting here and listening to this message. Then you are in fellowship with the accuser of the brethren. It's for you.

Lord, let me judge myself. Train up a child in the way he should go. When he is old, he will not depart from it.

And that's why the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3 that a man, if he is to be an elder in God's house, he must be able to keep his children under control in his home with all dignity. Because if a man cannot run his own family, how in the world can he be an elder in God's church? That's not possible. And that verse teaches us that God tests us in our home before he gives us responsibility in the church.

And that's why we must never neglect our home. I know preachers who have neglected their homes and gone traveling here and there. There's an example in Scripture.

The Lord told Samuel about Eli's children, how they were going astray and Eli was not rebuking them and how Eli lost the position in his ministry. And Samuel grew up and his children went astray. Why? Because he was traveling all the time it says.

He had no time for his family. He was busy in his ministry. He was a very godly man.

But you read those, I don't have time to show it to you. I think it's 1 Samuel 7 or 8 or something. But in close connection those verses come.

It says Samuel was traveling here and there in a circuit. And maybe I should show it to you because it's an important verse. It's good for you to know what it says there in 1 Samuel chapter 7 verse 16.

Samuel used to go annually on a circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mispah. And he went here and there and he returned to Ramah for his house was there. And chapter 8 verse 3, his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after dishonest game.

You see the connection? He was so busy in his ministry that he had no time for his family. Something is wrong. When we are so busy in the ministry we have no time for the family.

It's one of the, I saw this when I was a young Christian before I got married. The children of preachers going astray. And I said, Lord, I'm not here to judge them.

You are their judge. But please, please save me from this. And so, all these 32 years that I've been ministering and being a father, I have, whenever my children have needed me, I've been there.

I'm even willing to cancel ministry to be at home. The order in my life is first the Lord Jesus Christ, second my family, and third my ministry. And the devil says, put the Lord first, do His work.

And ultimately his aim is to destroy your ministry by destroying your home. Be careful. And if you are a mother, you have a very, very important responsibility.

Think of Moses. Pharaoh's daughter gave that baby, Moses, back to the mother, not knowing it's the mother, saying, nurse him for me. And then give him back to me.

Moses' mother knew that she had that little boy just for a few years. And then he'd go into the most wicked palace that existed on earth at that time. With money and sinful pleasures.

Can you imagine how that mother worked with that boy? And we read that beautiful verse in Hebrews that when Moses grew up, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. That what his mother had put into his head in the first seven or eight years. I don't know, maybe seven, eight years or ten years, that's all.

But that remained with him. Forever. He rejected the pleasures of Egypt.

He rejected the treasures of the world of Egypt. Because of the work his mother had done in him. In the first eight or ten years of his life.

Take that as a challenge, sisters. Timothy had a mother who was a God-fearing mother. His father was a great businessman who had no interest in family prayer or God or any such thing.

And that mother single-handedly brought up that little boy so that when he was about eighteen years old, he was so wholehearted that Paul took him into his team. And he grew up to be an apostle. That was the work of one mother.

It's tremendous what a mother can do. Who knows but your little boy may grow up to be an apostle. But that depends on you.

It's a tremendous responsibility we have to manifest a home where divine principles are seen for others to see. This is the way God intended a home to be. I want to move on to the church.

In Ephesians 1, we are told that the church is the body of Jesus Christ. We've seen that. The church is not to be a preaching center where one man, one powerful gifted man gets up every Sunday and gives a wonderful sermon and everybody sits there like in a cinema theater and nodding their heads and appreciating it and going home.

That's not the church. That's the preaching center. The church is a body where everybody has a function.

Now, everybody may not be a preacher. It's a good thing everybody is not a preacher. God calls some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some shepherds, some teachers.

He gives different gifts. Some He gives the gifts of administration, healing, tongues, helps. There are different gifts.

But like every member in this body has got a function, every member in the body of Christ has got a function. And the true servant of God is the one who is able to make the members fulfill their function. Not

just the one who is able to get everybody to nod their heads and say Amen when he preaches.

Now, that's not the great servant of God. Christianity today is full of preaching centers. It's a one man show.

And when that one man dies, that's the end of it. God never intended the church to be like that. God intended the church to be one where people are one with each other.

And that's where we need to take up the cross. It's impossible for me and another brother to be one unless we die to ourselves. In our relationships with one another, there are differences.

And I need to see that that person is different from me. I'm imbalanced. His viewpoint is different and it's necessary to balance out my imbalance.

We're not all called to do the same thing. Think of evangelism. Making, we can say, to make someone who is not a member of the body of Christ a member of the body of Christ.

That's the purpose of preaching the gospel. Basically, to make someone who is not a member of the body of Christ a member of the body of Christ. And the illustration the Lord has given me in this connection is like this.

Here is a potato on the plate. It's an unbeliever. It's not a member of this body.

And I want to make that potato a member of this body. That's what preaching is. That's what evangelism is.

That's what ministry is. What do I do? Many parts of this body has to work. The first part is evangelism.

The hand going and taking that potato and putting it inside the mouth. But, if we stop there, what's going to happen? That potato will get rotten inside my mouth. I'll spit it out after a while.

And that's exactly what's happening with a lot of evangelism today. Here's an evangelist picking up potatoes all over the place and putting them in and they never get digested. They never become a part of the body and they get finally thrown out.

And then some other evangelist goes and picks them up. But, how does this potato become a part of the body? It goes in and this is a very gentle action. The potato likes that.

But, once it gets inside the mouth, there are a few problems. Have you found that once you get into a church? There are teeth that are grinding you and reducing you to your proper size. You got all these high thoughts about yourself when you come to the church and you get crushed.

And then you finally think it's all over and you go down to the stomach and boy, it's worse there. They get acid thrown at you over there. Prophetic ministry coming here and there and finally this potato doesn't even look like a potato.

It's lost it's individuality. Oh, people speak about individuality. It's lost it.

It has disappeared into some other form. But, wait a few weeks and lo and behold that potato has become part of this body. That's how we are to build the body of Jesus Christ.

When people come in, they all come in with high thoughts about themselves. We've got to reduce them to size. Godly elders who know how to discipline them, keep them under authority.

Yeah, we say we don't have rules and regulations and chains and all in the church, but that doesn't mean there's no discipline. If a woman walks into my church consistently with an immodest dress, I'd have to talk to her. I'd say, sister, that's not the way to come into the midst of God's house, in the midst of God's people.

And if you're not happy with that, well there are many other churches that'll accept you. You can go there. But we believe in godly standards.

So, there is discipline. There is a place for that. Ultimately, but it's in love.

It's ultimately the purpose is that this potato becomes a part of the body. And if this potato at any stage, whether it's when it's in the teeth or in the stomach, does not want to be part of the body, it has the option of being vomited out, fine. There's no compulsion.

You can go out. But those who submit to authority, loving, gracious authority, you know, like I said, the brain, caring, finally become a part of the body. That's how God wants to build this body.

Brothers and sisters who are in fellowship, between whom the devil cannot come. The Bible says there was no place found in heaven for the accuser of the brethren. He was cast out.

We spoke the first day about days of heaven upon earth. That's how our church must be. There must be no place found for the accuser of the brethren in the midst of the church.

He must be cast out. I want to ask you, brothers and sisters, are you willing to cast the accuser of the brethren out? In Jesus name. Because he's trying to bring a division between you and a brother.

He's trying to separate two sisters. Jesus said if you got something against a brother, go and talk to him in private and win him. Don't go and talk to everybody else.

When some brother comes to my house and begins to speak something evil about some other brother, I listen and I say, ok. Let's tell that brother about this right now. He said, no, no, no, no.

I didn't mean you to go and tell somebody else. I didn't mean you to go and tell him. No.

If I hear something from you about another person, I have to go and tell him. And I'll tell him that you told me that. That way I have saved my house from a lot of gossip and slander.

I would recommend that course of action to all of you. That's loyalty to the body of Christ. If somebody tells me something about you, the very next time I meet you, I'm going to tell you so and so told me this.

Is it true? Perhaps it's false. We need to preserve the church in these days if it is to be an army against which the gates of hell will not prevail. And I want to say something about valuing each other in the body of Christ.

You know, we read in Acts chapter 13 about the time when the Holy Spirit said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Acts 13.2 In the Old Testament, God used individual men. There was a Noah.

There was an Abraham. There was a Joseph. There was a Joshua.

None of these people had any fellowship with anybody. They were lonely men. I don't know anything about their family lives.

I know that Moses quarreled with his wife, but I don't know much more than that about his family life. He had no fellowship with others. There was an Elijah.

There was an Elisha. And these prophets, they were all lonely men. And it's interesting if you read some of these about these prophets.

There were other prophets also in Israel at the same time when there was another prophet here. Apparently, they didn't have much connection with each other. But, as soon as you come to the pages of the New Testament, you read Jesus sent out His disciples two by two.

Because now, He was building a body. And one person can never be an expression of a body. The minimum is two.

And so, we find the Holy Spirit says, separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work to which I've called them. And if you know the personalities of these two, you know why He called them. Paul was hard, severe, and Barnabas was kind and gracious.

Together, they would manifest the kindness and the severity of God. Paul couldn't do it alone. Barnabas couldn't do it alone.

And the devil succeeded in separating them. That's a tragedy. Over some silly matter, Paul said, we must never take that fellow John Mark again.

He's not wholehearted. He's not radical. That's the severity of God.

Barnabas represents the kindness of God and says, listen Paul, God gives all of us so many chances. Give the fellow another chance. Don't just write him off just because he made one mistake.

And it says in Acts 15, the disagreement between them was so great that they separated. That which the Holy Spirit said was to work together, they got separated. Who was right? I believe both were right.

We had an instance like that recently in our church. A brother and I, who are elders in our church, who I told you we worked together for 25 years. We were considering the matter of a certain discipline for a young brother.

And I said, I feel we must deal with that person in a very strict way. And this is what we've got to do. And my fellow elder said to me, well, Brother Zach, I don't agree with you.

I think we've got to just give him another chance. Let's see if he'll change. So I went home and thought about it.

I said, God's given me this brother to balance me out. So I called him up later. I said, yes, brother.

Let's please speak to him again. And if you feel that, if you still feel that way, I'll go along with you. And you know what finally happened? That young brother came through.

And I saw through that, that when God calls two people together, they will have strong differences of opinion. But they're meant to work together. They're meant to balance out each other.

If they don't, it's those young people in your church who are going to suffer. And I thank God, here we cast out Satan, who tried to come between us. I want you to think about that in your situations.

There are particularly some of you who are very gifted. We are the ones who can be the biggest hindrances to the building of the body. Strong personalities.

And the more gifted you are, the more you stand apart from others, the more you'll be a hindrance to the building of the body of Christ. The first principle of all effective service is Jesus was made like his brothers in all things. We have to become like the others.

We have to let them feel that even though my gift is different from you, I'm a brother, like you. I need you, you need me. And God arranges circumstances where we sense our need like that.

When I'm sick, I get other brothers to come and lay hands on my head and pray for me. So that I can be healed. And initially they were hesitant to do it.

But I encourage them to do it. And when I get healed, they say it works. Yeah.

And when they're sick, I pray for them. We're not to be like in so many denominations, churches, pastors who go on our pastoral visits to drink coffee and eat biscuits in different homes once a month or something like that. I'm going to be a brother.

Not a leader to you in the sense of that you're dependent on me and I'm not dependent on you. I need you and you need me. There is no... You know that amazing verse which says, even the head does not say to the feet, I don't need you.

Who's the head? Jesus. He doesn't say to the feet, I don't need you. Where are you and me? I asked a brother once, one of our elders, whom I have to watch over.

I said, brother, do you ever call a younger brother? Have you ever in your life, in your church, called a brother younger to you and said, please come and pray with me. I'm going through a struggle here. Never.

I said, do you know that even Jesus called Peter, James and John when he didn't get so many and said, come and pray with me. I need your help to get through this. How big we have become.

That we don't need our younger brothers. Where are we? Even the head does not say to the feet, I don't need you. It's the gifted brothers, the people with strong personalities, who hinder the building of the body of Christ.

We need to humble ourselves. We need to pull back and give room for others to grow. I've seen this in India so much.

Strong people come from America or Europe and dominate some poor brother there. They got money, they got power, they got everything. The body of Christ is not built.

It's no different from Coca-Cola coming and setting up an office in India and promoting their work. Not much different. It's not the body of Christ.

The stronger we are, the more we are a danger to the building of the body of Christ in our locality. God has to break us. God needs broken people.

Only broken people can become one. Only broken people. So don't think you're going to build the body of Christ with your gift.

Thank God for your gift. And your gift can be tremendously useful if God can succeed in breaking you. Then your gift will be useful in the body of Christ.

May God help us to build His church wherever we are. One last word I want to say in this connection is in Luke chapter 22 where Jesus said about lording it over others. He said the kings of the Gentiles verse 25, lord it over them.

Those who have authority over them are called benefactors. That's how my NASB translates it. Benefactors.

You know who a benefactor is? A very rich man who graciously condescends to help some poor man. He's not a brother. Condescension is not compassion.

It's not love. And when you condescend to somebody who you don't really feel is your equal, but you the great man, you the great gifted man, condescends to fellowship with him, I'll tell you, I'll prophesy, you'll never build the body of Christ in that place. Not in a hundred years.

We got to come down. He was made like His brothers in all things. And when we are willing to become like our weak stupid brothers in all things and let them see that we also are weak people like them.

And I need them and they need me. And I refuse to let I refuse to allow them to give me some throne to sit on. Then we can build the body of Christ.

May God help us. Let's bow before God. Lord you've given us a tremendous task on earth.

The time is short. You're coming soon. We've wasted many years.

Help us to wake up in our homes, in our churches to do your work before you come again. Give us wisdom, Lord. Give us wisdom.

Give us humility. Give us brokenness. That we can build our homes and build our churches for your glory.

That Satan can be put to shame. That our sons and daughters can be delivered from his hands. That our brothers and sisters in our churches can be delivered.

Lord do a great work in the many places that are represented here in this congregation this evening. Do a tremendous work, Lord, of building the body of Christ. Building godly homes, we humbly ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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