

(Church Leadership) 1. Some Basic Principles

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of humility, responsibility, and genuine discipleship in church leadership.

Duration: 57:21

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:17, Matthew 5:22-28, Luke 9:23, Luke 14:26, Luke 14:33

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Knowing God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of truly knowing God and understanding His character. He highlights some of the challenging teachings of Jesus, such as the need to hate one's family and give up all possessions to follow Him. However, the preacher also emphasizes that through knowing God better, we can experience His mercy and love. He encourages believers to teach others about the true nature of God, who rejoices over His children and is deeply interested in their lives.

Transcript

The Lord has done a great work in the last 30 years in our land. And there are certain unique things that God has done. When there are so many hundreds of denominations, we can wonder, what was God's purpose in raising up another fellowship of churches? We're not the only believers in India.

And I won't even say that we are the best believers. I have met some excellent children of God in other denominations. We must always be humble enough to recognize that.

We must also recognize that there are many ministries in India that other people are doing, which we are not doing at all. The whole of North India, God has got many servants who are working much more sacrificially than any of us. We can send our children to good schools and educate them.

Many of those people who work in North India, there are no schools in those little villages where they've gone to serve Jesus Christ. I have the greatest admiration for them. I would have gone there myself if God had called me.

I said that to God 40 years ago. We have to each fulfill our own calling. But we must not despise somebody else with another calling.

And if we claim to know more than others of God's Word, that must not be in words, but in our life. That means not just that we share certain truths from God's Word, which nobody else knows. Those of you

who've been with us for many years, you know many truths which 99% of believers in India don't know.

But does that mean that our life is better than those 99% Christians? What about our churches? You know the condition of people in your churches. In a number of our churches, it's true that a lot of people sitting there are not even born again. Some people were born again and they've lost their salvation because they're backslidden.

So, it's good for all of us to be very humble. I think of a verse in 2nd Corinthians, and that's what the Apostle Paul said when he saw the condition of the church in Corinth which he had planted. They were his children, his spiritual children.

It's like if your children behave badly in school, or they're living badly in your neighborhood, you will feel bad. Supposing your teacher in the school calls you and says, your 10-year-old boy is not behaving in the class. What will you say? Will you say, that's not my business, I'm alright? No, that's your son.

And then another teacher calls you and says, your 11-year-old daughter is very badly behaved. What will you say? Will you say, oh, I don't know, that's my, I'm alright? None of you will say that. You'll go home and I hope you and your wife will weep that your children are such a bad testimony.

I want to ask you, how many of you feel like that about people in your church? When some brother or sister in your church is not what he should be? Do you say, oh well, I'm alright, I'm spiritual, what can I do about him? All I'm saying is, we have plenty of opportunity to be humble. Not only about our own failures, but about our church. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11, and, sorry, chapter 12, 2 Corinthians 12, he says here, last verse 21, he says, when I come into your midst, God will humble me and I will mourn over many of you who have sinned with impurity, immorality and sensuality and have not repented.

Who planted this church? Paul. Was that a greater apostle than him in Christianity? Look at the condition of the church he planted. See, this is not a verse for just believers, this is a verse for elders.

And the reason why we have called this meeting for many of you who are not elders, also, is because the elders in your church felt that in the days to come, you could help them in that responsibility. And I'll tell you one or two things. You know, I wanted to, I was praying, fasting last week, saying, Lord, what do you want to share in this session? And, initially, I thought I should structure all the, each session.

For a number of days, I was working on that. And then, finally, the last day, the Lord said, no, don't do that. Just talk to them from your heart.

So, I don't have a theme for any session now. We're going to have maybe 16 or 17 sessions, apart from question and answer sessions. I may talk 20 different things in one session.

But I hope that we will hear the Holy Spirit. And I hope that by the time we go away from here, our sense of responsibility in eldership will be at least 10 times more than it is right now. And that our fellowship with each other will also be far better.

So, here he says that he, God, is going to humble Paul. But, isn't it the fellows who have committed immorality who should be humbled? No, Paul says, God will humble me. Why should God humble me when two, three fellows sitting in my church are living in sexual sin? That's exactly like I said earlier, if the teacher calls you and says, your child is misbehaving.

This is what it means to be an elder. And I'll tell you something, if we don't have this attitude, just calling ourselves an elder is just going to increase your judgment on the day that Jesus returns. So, I'll tell you honestly, I have zero desire to be an elder if God doesn't put me there.

Supposing some university calls you and says, okay, I'm going to appoint you as head of the department of medicine in this medical college. Fantastic position. You don't know head or tail about medicine, you don't know the difference between one tablet and another tablet.

What? You go there as professor of medicine, the title. Print some letterhead, professor of medicine. What does it mean? It is as stupid as that to think that you can be an elder without having the heart of an elder.

Can you get a job today in any area where you are not qualified? Can you join a hospital even as a junior doctor without finishing MBBS? Can you get a job anywhere even in a call center without having some qualification? At least you must be able to speak English properly. For everything you need a qualification. The sad thing is in the church of Jesus Christ, multitudes of people are in leadership who are absolutely unqualified for it.

Some, I'm not talking about our churches, all over Christendom. A lot of them are doing it for money, some are doing it for honor. So, I want to tell you what will qualify you to be an elder.

If you can mourn because somebody in your area is not qualified, then your assembly has failed. If you are more interested in that than getting up on Sunday and preaching for 45 minutes, every carnal, godless person in the world would like to get up and speak for 45 minutes. That's not eldership.

Brothers, why do we have so many boring sermons in our church meetings? The biggest complaint I have heard from many brothers is, Brother Zach, our elder brother is absolutely boring. We wouldn't mind it if he spoke only 15 minutes, but he speaks for one hour. It's because we are not fathers and not mothers.

I know many, at least a number of women who got married without knowing anything about cooking. But, you see them 10 years later, they have become very good cooks. They knew less of cooking than me when they got married.

How did they become such good cooks in 10 years? That the children are so happy when mummy cooks a meal. And the husband says, My wife didn't know anything when we got married, but she is so good now. That did not come by her just lazily not bothering about her cooking.

She was interested, very interested in making it good for her husband and her children at home. So, she would humble herself and ask other women perhaps, whenever there was a good meal, how did you cook that? Can you give me the recipe for that? And you know with a recipe you can't cook a good meal. You've got to do it about 20-30 times before it becomes the way that person made it.

They make an effort because they have a heart for their children. There are women who don't know how to stitch. Clothes.

But they don't have money to go to the tailor every time. The children are growing up, they need clothes. They learn stitching.

Because they love their children. What am I trying to say? A mother will do anything when she loves her children. She will learn cooking, she will learn stitching, she will learn anything.

They will learn subjects they never learnt in their life in order to help their children in their school studies. When we have a heart like that for the people in our churches, then we will become a little more like God wants us to be. Then we will be elders after God's own heart.

So, Paul was humbled and Paul was mourning also, it says in this verse. Imagine the Apostle Paul going and mourning before God. You ask Paul, hey what's happened Paul, have you sinned or something? Oh, he says, no, I got victory over sin long ago.

What are you mourning about? Oh, he says, Brother Zach, you don't know. This brother in this church in Corinth and that sister also and that other one there. It's not going well with them.

They are not doing well at all. You say, Paul, that's none of your business if they don't do well. No, he says, those are my children.

See, Paul was a father. He was not a teacher. There are two types of elders, fathers and teachers.

Teachers are interested in honor as they come into the class. Good morning, sir. Is that what you are interested? When children are small, I walk into the room, they don't get up and say good morning, dad.

It's not a military camp or something. It's a home. We are not looking for that type of honor.

That's classroom. And this is, I believe, one of the greatest lessons we need to learn as elders. Lord, make me a father.

Make me a mother. That's what Paul was. And that's why as a church grows, we need more fathers and mothers.

Jesus himself did not feel as a human being he could handle more than discipling twelve people. What a proud person you must be if you think you can disciple a hundred people. Jesus said, I can handle only twelve.

He had seventy once. He sent them out to preach. But then he said, I can't spend time with all these seventy people.

It's impossible. So he prayed all night. We read that in Luke chapter 6. He went to the father and he prayed.

What shall I do? Luke 6 verse 12. He went off all night and prayed. And then in the morning, verse 13, he called his disciples.

Maybe these were the seventy. And from that, he says, OK, Peter, you come. Andrew, James, Thomas, and the other fifty-eight people are standing there.

And he's chosen these twelve. He says, OK, rest of you can go home. You know, we are so foolish that we would have even accused Jesus of being partial if he did that.

But he's not bothered what you think about him. He knew he had a job to do and he did it. He did not feel he could disciple seventy people.

Only proud, conceited men, elders think like that. And that's why they do such a useless job. Even in schools, they say that maximum size for a class beyond that, teacher will not be able to do a good job.

You see, in western countries and all, usually they say good schools means just maybe twenty-five students, that's all, in a class. Here we have hundred, hundred and twenty. How can the teacher help them? You go to some of these colleges in the western countries, there will be eight or ten in a class.

Or you go to these people who are studying for a PhD and those who are guiding them in their PhD studies. Even twelve is too much for somebody to handle. We need to recognize our limitation.

I'll tell you honestly, I'm not interested in a large church because Jesus was not. He didn't find great satisfaction when great crowds came. When we read once when great crowds started following him in Luke 14, in Luke chapter 14 we read, verse 25, large crowds were going along with him.

The sort of thing that would excite any evangelist or preacher today, the sort of thing that would excite elders if they saw their church growing in size, he turned around and said to them some of the hardest words that you find in all his preaching. He said some strong words. He said, if you get angry, you're in danger of going to hell in Matthew chapter 5. He said, you're in danger of going to hell if you lust after a woman, even with one eye.

These are much stronger. He said, you can't follow me if you don't hate your father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters. He said, you can't follow me in verse 33 unless you give up all your possessions.

He said, you can't follow me in verse 27 unless you die to yourself every day. Can you imagine what will happen if you say that to a crowd today? That's why today's preachers tell them, hey, Jesus will give you money, he'll give you a better car, he'll give you a better house. That's what they preach today.

The crowd becomes bigger and bigger and bigger. Two-fold children of hell. So I said in the beginning, why in the midst of all these so many denominations has God raised up another fellowship? To preach the things that other people are not preaching, which are in the Bible.

Not to preach strange things which are not in the Bible. Particularly to preach the things that Jesus taught which 99% of preachers are not preaching. Jesus' last words in Matthew 28 before he went up to heaven, he gave a commission.

And that commission was going to all the world and make disciples in all nations. What is disciple? That's what we just saw in Luke 14. All those difficult conditions.

And baptize them? Don't keep quiet about baptism just because you want to be interdenominational and please everybody. Baptize them. And baptize them the way I tell you to baptize them.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Don't change that. I remember a great servant of God saying this.

If I have some doubt in my mind as to what to do comparing the teaching of Jesus with the practice of the apostles and I find I am not sure I will follow the teaching of Jesus. Where did all this baptism in the name of Jesus come from? Because they don't value the teaching of Jesus. They go to the Acts of the Apostles which is a history book and not a teaching book.

So, then he said, after you baptize them teach them to do every single thing I commanded you. Are you doing that in your churches? Every single thing that Jesus commanded you are you preaching it? You know what is happening in Christendom today? People are preaching things that Jesus never taught. A

false faith.

A faith only for material things. Today praise and worship has become much more important than discipleship. And I don't believe that what many people call worship today is worship at all.

It's praise, it's thanksgiving. But the Bible says God is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and truth. And I will tell you where I can worship God best.

It's never in the church meeting. It's when I'm alone. Not even with my wife or children or anybody.

All alone. Sometimes just stretched out on my bed when I get up in the morning. On my face before God.

And when I tell him, Lord, today also, you are everything to me. Nobody, nothing in the world means more to me than you. I don't want anything.

I only want you. And you know, today God has given me more things materially. But I said the same thing to God 40 years ago when I was a very poor man.

Same thing. When I used to get 150 rupees a month, I said, God, I don't want anything but you. So, don't think I'm saying that only now.

When I have a house and a car. But God can take it all away. I don't care for those things.

I decided years ago that only God will be the only person I want in my earthly life. I don't even want a ministry. I sometimes say, Lord, you can take away my voice.

You can take away my ability to write. You can do whatever you like. If I have you, it's enough.

Therefore, I'm not unhappy with anybody. What can anybody take away from me when I don't want anything? If somebody, you know, say some church where I have responsibility, some elder brother starts a rebellion there and takes that church away. drags away all the people with him.

I won't lose one minute's sleep over that. I say, take it. That almost happened in one or two places.

No, it almost happened. I said, Lord, that's fine. I have no interest.

I don't own anything. I will not take anything. When, you know, my father-in-law was very upset with us for the stand we took for the Lord and upset with my wife too.

And when he divided his property, we gave nothing to my wife. Zero. I said, fine.

I won't sleep over that. In fact, I was happy. Why? Because of Romans 8.28. That even that will work for my good.

That if he had given something to my wife, I don't know, maybe some problem will come with that which God saved me from. Thank God. I'm just using that as an example.

Nobody can take anything from me because I don't have anything. I use things. You know, you can't steal my ministry from me because I don't have a ministry.

The only one I have, you cannot steal, and that is Jesus. He can't take that away from me even if they lock me up in a jail. Maybe they can take away my Bible from me, but they can't take Jesus from me.

And they can't even take God's word from me because that's in my heart. It's not here. What a blessed position it is.

Nobody can steal anything. Are some of you worried that one day you may not be an elder in the church? I better behave properly so that I remain an elder till Jesus comes. That's why you're a failure.

You have to give it up. God is a jealous God. He's so jealous that He wants us only for Himself.

It's like a husband telling his wife, My darling, are you happy just with me? Supposing I can't give you a house. I can't give you money, nothing. When Brother Bakht Singh brought this proposal for my wife Annie and me.

And I spoke to her. I said, I have nothing. I don't know where I'm going to go.

I have no salary. I don't know where I'll live, which place I'll go. I said, you still want to marry me? Don't give an answer now.

Think about it for three days and decide. She decided after three days. But she has no regrets today.

But I asked her, How did you think we're going to live? Without any money. She said, I thought Brother Bakht Singh was paying you regularly. Because Bakht Singh paid me nothing.

But I know, even if she thought Bakht Singh was paying, it would be very little because she knew how all the workers of Brother Bakht Singh were living. Very simply. And his workers.

So, that's what the Lord asks us. Are you happy with me? Or you want a ministry also? You want to be an elder? You want to be a famous preacher? I want you for myself. You know, to teach people discipleship means to bring them to that place.

But you can't bring them to that place if you're not in that place yourself. The Lord says in Jeremiah chapter 3, you know there's some churches that say we are Zion. I hope we don't say that.

We want to humble ourselves. But in Jeremiah chapter 3, there's a beautiful prophecy and concerning the church, I believe. And see how it begins.

Jeremiah 3.13, this is how we begin. Only acknowledge your sin. That's all you got to do.

Don't blame anybody else like Adam. Acknowledge your sin that you have sinned against the Lord. You have not obeyed my voice.

And come back you wandering children. And in the message translation it says, I am your true husband. Come back to me.

Then he says, I'll pick you out one by one. One from this city, two from that country. And I will bring you here, one from here, one from there and bring you to Zion.

That's the church. And how will you know when you have come to Zion? Because many of us have wandered through many, many places before we finally arrive where we are today. Some of us were worshipping idols.

Then we maybe went to some denomination. And then we left that and went to another church. And then we left that and came to another church.

And now we are here. How do you know whether you have arrived at the right place? Or do we have to leave this also and find some other? There is one way to know. When you come to Zion, verse 15, you will find there a shepherd after God's own heart.

Who will feed you with knowledge of God and understanding of His will. Zion is not a place where everybody makes a lot of noise. Some people think only noises happen.

What about when there is no noise? Have you read in Revelation 8 verse 1 that there was silence in heaven? It says there, for half an hour there was silence in heaven. So what happened? Was it hell for half an hour or what? Because some people think Holy Spirit is there only when there is noise. So did the Holy Spirit disappear from heaven for half an hour? This is the type of stupidity going on in Christendom and there is hardly anybody who speaks against all these things.

Ask yourself whether you feel like that also unconsciously. See, you may be in a Sunday morning meeting and you have seen the Pentecostals and you hear their accusations and you say, ah, that's the Holy Spirit and you find your meeting is a bit quiet this morning and so you deliberately make some noise to bring Holy Spirit into your meeting. You are just another Pentecostal, what are you? You are not a man of God.

You don't know God at all. You want to try and bring the Holy Spirit with noise exactly like those blind people. When somebody prays, you must still say this, that and the other to become a little more Pentecostal.

Otherwise somebody will say, you don't have Holy Spirit here and you will feel, hey, that's terrible. And one day when there was a lot of meeting and good singing you say, boy, that, but those two people there still can't get along with each other. How can it be a wonderful meeting? And those two elders are having a strife.

How can it be a wonderful meeting? And the husband and wife go home from the meeting and still shout at each other, how can it be a wonderful meeting? If you want to be a man of God, break away from all these human traditions. You know, when we started meeting here 30 years ago in my home, we were baptized in the Holy Spirit and fortunately, fortunately none of us came from a Pentecostal background. But we were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

We spoke in tongues, but we didn't know what it was. We didn't know how interpretation is to come in a meeting. We didn't know what prophecy was.

We didn't know what word of knowledge was or word of wisdom. So you know what we did. What do you do when Of course, if you were Pentecostal, then of course we have seen it for years and we just do what they do.

I'm not criticizing them. I think there are some very good people there. But I'm absolutely convinced they've got a lot of things which are not in the Bible.

Just like many other Christian groups, the Jacobites and the Brethren and the Pentecostals all got a lot of things which are not in the Bible. So in God's fantastic wisdom we started and not one of us was a Pentecostal. So we didn't pray like the Pentecostals.

We prayed from our heart and God heard us, answered us. We had amazing experiences those days where things happened in the country things were changed in the government in Delhi by the prayer of a few people here in Bangalore. Yeah, we have some amazing testimonies of what we experienced.

It was not because we shouted. So when we didn't know how to exercise these gifts we went to the Bible and by trial and error we didn't do it all right perfectly we made mistakes did it a little better and gradually we learned from the scriptures and we're so thankful and we saw what Zion was Zion is a place where God has shepherds after his own heart who cannot hit the people but feed the people it says. You know there are some brothers who come to the church with a whip I believe Jesus also had a whip but that was for the money changers those who are selling and making money in the name of religion you certainly need a whip for such people But all those people sitting in front of you in your church are they sellers of sheep and doves?

Then why are you using a whip on them? Oh, you say, Brother Zach, they're all so carnal Hey, after so many years of preaching they're still not getting along Actually, you mean they were like the disciples of Jesus for three and a half years how they were? Exactly like that Even after three and a half years they're fighting who's going to be the leader When did Jesus use a whip on those disciples? Not even once But you and I have used it foolishly I have repented I did it because I didn't have anybody to guide me in that You have somebody to advise you and especially if you're a young brother In Zion we don't use a whip, we feed people Feed them with knowledge with the knowledge of God that he's a father that he loves us that he's so interested in his children Have you seen a mother I mean a married woman who never had children for 10 years and then she gets her first baby and in India especially if it's a baby boy in America if it's a baby girl but in India we are Indians so it's a baby boy To God it doesn't make a difference but to us Indians it makes a difference because we haven't become like God yet But anyway it's a baby boy In the first time the mother holds up that child in her arms I mean 10 years later she may look like this at that child but the first time there's no frown she's so happy and even says a lot of things to the child the child can't understand anything Do you believe God is like that towards you He's a holy God That's our problem We haven't known God like the way Jesus revealed him We're still thinking of that Old Testament revelation under the law with lightning on Mount Sinai and everybody trembling there Brother that's Old Covenant Have you heard the good news that Jesus came to the earth 2000 years ago and died you know and took away our sins and he rose up from the dead and he ascended to heaven and he sent the Holy Spirit to show that he's gone to heaven and the Lord your God rejoices over you with singing today That's the knowledge of God that the shepherds in Zion will teach every one of their children Not take a whip and say you're not like this and you're not like that There are tapes of mine here which I never allow anybody to listen to or circulate Those are sermons preached 20 years ago I say nobody should listen to them now Doctrine is correct If you only listen to the doctrine it's absolutely correct even 30 years ago What does it prove?

It just proves that I've come to know God little better in 20 years That's like saying in kindergarten my handwriting was not very good That's like saying 15 years ago I didn't know anything about computers So what is there in saying that we are growing, we are learning more and we've got to know God better We should be growing and when we grow we are ashamed of certain things we did even last year I'm ashamed of the way I used to react when driving a scooter and somebody came in front of me 20 years ago How I would look at that man and say things like Who gave you a driving license Well, I've come beyond all that I don't say all that now Because I've come to know God better I've come to see God is a very merciful God Now you see there are some people who are naturally like that Even if the world

collapses they'll just sit quietly They are not spiritual I mean, their problems may be in other areas spiritually I mean, their problems may be in other areas spiritually But most of us are not like that Maybe one or two of you are like that But most of us are not like that But when you overcome that Because you've come to know God better That'll affect our ministry in the church as well

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