

Destroying Every Idol

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our heart and destroying every idol in our lives, so that we can follow Jesus fully and make disciples.

Duration: 1:00:56

Scripture: Genesis 4:3-4, Isaiah 49:15, Matthew 22:36, Mark 12:41-44, Ephesians 5:25

Topics: "True Devotion", "Sacrificial Love"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God with all our heart and making sacrifices for Him. It highlights the significance of true devotion to Jesus Christ, prioritizing Him above all else, and the need to offer our best to God in love. The message stresses the principle of sacrifice in demonstrating love for God and others, drawing examples from biblical stories like Cain and Abel's offerings and the widow's sacrificial gift.

Transcript

Once again, we want to invite Brother Zain to share the word of God. Brother Ravindra will come and translate in Telugu. In our earlier session, I was saying how the overcoming life is to love God with all our heart, to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Because that is how Jesus defined the commandment of the law. So the first thing is to be devoted to Jesus Christ. Both these commandments are not equal.

One is first, one is second. So in Matthew 22 and 36, they asked him which is the great commandment in the law. And he said, love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind.

And he said, this is the foremost commandment. They are not equal. The other is second.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. So we must never forget that order. See, there are a lot of people in the world who do social work.

That's very good. To start hospitals for lepers, for poor people. And so many organizations to help people when there is a flood or a famine.

And throughout the world, most of these are run by Christians. It is obeying the second commandment. To love your neighbor as yourself.

But they don't teach them to love God. That is so. Social work, without putting God first, is not obeying this commandment.

That's why Jesus did not set up an orphanage. I am sure there were many orphans those days. But he didn't start an orphanage.

There were many lepers, but he didn't start a leprosy home. He didn't start a hospital. All these things are good.

But Jesus came and taught people to love God with all their heart. That's number one. And then you read the apostles, Paul, Peter, John, all of them.

They never started hospitals or orphanages or leprosy homes or any such thing. They planted churches. Why that? Is it because there were no poor people there? There were more poor people and lepers and blind people then than today.

But they knew one thing. If they start doing all those things, they will not have time to build a church. So all these other social services are very good.

It is an expression of our love for our neighbor. But remember Jesus said in verse 39, it is second. Those who make that first, never fulfill the first commandment.

So that is why in our churches, CFC, we don't start orphanages or hospitals or things like that. We are not against it. We thank God for all those who do such things.

But we want to concentrate on what is number one. In the same way, Jesus said when people go out into the world, there are two things to do. He said in Mark 16 and verse 15, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

16 and 15. So we have to tell people that Jesus died for their sins. That is called evangelism.

Many people are doing it. Many believers. Many mission organizations.

Very good. And that is one command of Jesus. To those who believe and are baptized will be saved.

Verse 16. And we thank God for all those who are doing that. But there also, there are two sides to this coin.

One is to preach the gospel to every creature. And bring people to Christ. The other is in Matthew 28 and 19.

To go into all the world and make disciples. A disciple is a learner and a follower. Those who follow Jesus every day.

Now you look around and you find that many people who have accepted Christ are not following Jesus every day. That is because those other churches have fulfilled Mark 16 commandment, but not the Matthew 28 commandment. They have made people Christians, but not made them disciples.

They have accepted Christ and got their sins forgiven, but they are not following Jesus every day. A disciple is one who sits at the feet of his master and learns. And he follows his master every day.

So, these are two commandments the Lord gave. Let's take India. Go into all of India and preach the gospel and bring people to Christ.

And get people to believe and to be baptized. That's all. The other commandment is, go into India and make these people my followers.

And then, verse 20, teach them to do everything I commanded you. So, we can compare this to, one is bringing a baby to birth. And the other is making the baby grow up to be a mature young man.

These are not against each other. All of you who got children. What do you do? You bring them to birth.

You don't leave them there. You bring them up to maturity. That's exactly what Jesus is saying.

Mark 16, go and bring them to birth. Matthew 28, bring them up to maturity. So, when we look at Christian work in India.

There are many people doing evangelism and bringing people to birth. But there are very, very few people leading them to obey Jesus to bring them to maturity. Even these Christian television programs.

They are leading people to believe. And to praise God and all that. But, you will not even hear one television program that tells you how to overcome anger.

You listen to Christian television for 20 years, you will not hear one message on overcoming anger. Or overcoming dirty thoughts. Or overcoming the love of money.

Or rejoicing 24 hours a day. Or being anxious for nothing. Or giving thanks for everything.

Or never murmuring, never complaining. Many of you have watched Christian television. Do you hear these messages? But everything I told you is a verse in the Bible, what I told you just now.

A lot of them I quoted are just from one letter called Philippians. Why is it nobody is preaching it? So, I picture it like this. When I think of this picture, there are 100 people carrying a heavy wooden log from the forest.

They cut down a tree and they are carrying this big tree. 100 people. 99 people are holding one end and one man is holding the other end.

That is 99 people are preaching evangelism, evangelism, evangelism, evangelism. And one person is preaching, make them disciples. So, if you are a sensible man, which side will you go and help? If you want to be popular, go with the 99 people.

They will all appreciate, yeah, thank you for coming and helping us. But if you are trying to honor God, you will go and say, hey, this one man is alone at one end, let me go and help him. That is how we started CFC.

40 years ago. We saw so 99% of Christians are emphasizing, bring people to the new birth, bring them to be saved from their sin. Saved from hell.

Hardly anybody preaching about being saved from sin. So, we said if 99% are preaching being saved from hell, let me join those who start preaching about being saved from sin. We are not against them.

We are happy they are all holding one end of the log. We are holding up the other end. And I used to picture it like this in my mind.

See, Jesus was a carpenter. Supposing he got a big order in Nazareth to make 100 tables. So, he employs many junior carpenters to help him.

Because he has got to make 100 tables quickly. And he employs me also. In Nazareth.

So, when I go to this carpentry shop. Jesus has given them the job and gone away. Just like he went up to heaven after commanding us.

And I see everybody making the legs of the tables. Hundreds of legs. You know, we need legs.

But nobody is making the table top. So, I say. I am going to go there and make a table top.

And all those people are complaining. Why are you making a table top? See, are you against us? We are making legs. Why can't you join us? I say, brothers, I am not against you.

I am thankful. Because every table needs legs and you are doing a good job. But, if I don't make a top, there will be no table here.

So, you make the legs and I will make the top. So, 99 people are making legs and I am making the top. So, finally, after quite a bit of time, we have one table.

And if those people would come and help me, we would be able to make tables quicker. This is the picture I get. People are bringing people to Christ but not making them disciples.

So, what do I have to do? I must take them and make them disciples. Or to use another picture. They are bringing babies to birth and then throwing them on the street.

They are going and having more babies. So, I have to pick up these babies and bring them to maturity. So, that's what we do in CFC.

It's not the only thing we do. We also bring people to Christ. We have brought hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people to Christ.

We have two churches in Tamil Nadu. Two villages where there were no churches for 2000 years. Can you imagine a village in India with no church for 2000 years? CFC went and started churches in two villages like that.

So, I say that to say that we are also doing evangelism. But we don't stop there. We make them mature.

We teach them the scriptures. We make them elders. We make them youth leaders.

Not just to teach young people how to sing. But to teach young people how to fight against sin. That's the type of youth leader we want.

So, everything starts with loving Jesus with all of our heart. Let me ask you a question. Especially those who have read the Bible a lot.

It's a very simple question. In the Old Testament, the devil led Adam and Eve away from the tree of life to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We know that.

Can you tell me a verse in the New Testament which explains that? What was the meaning of that tree of life from which the devil led Eve astray? Where is that answer found? It must be a very clear answer. It must specifically refer to how the devil led Eve astray. It must be a very clear answer.

There is somebody here who has heard me before. I know. Very good.

I just wanted to know whether you remember it. 2 Corinthians 11 It explains that leading astray from what is the tree of life. The tree of life is a picture of something.

Here it is. 2 Corinthians 11 Paul says to the Corinthians I am afraid that like the serpent led Eve astray that is from the tree of life you will be led astray from simple devotion to Jesus Christ. So the devil led Eve astray from the tree of life and he says I fear the devil will lead you astray from devotion to Christ.

So there I understand what the tree of life is. Fervent devotion to Jesus Christ. If I have that I have got the tree of life.

If I don't have that then I am led astray to anything else. Maybe Bible study maybe casting out demons maybe serving the poor or many other good things. The devil has led me astray.

So I have made a decision in my life. I will never allow the devil to lead me astray from the tree of life. That is simple devotion to Jesus Christ.

To love Jesus with all my heart more than anyone and anything on this earth. If you have started loving something more than Jesus Christ the devil has led you astray. Remember that.

You young people, older people, everybody if you started loving your job more than you love Jesus Christ you have been led astray already. You don't realize that because you say I am not committing any terrible sin. But you have been led astray without knowing it.

It says here that by his craftiness the serpent led me astray. Do you understand craftiness? It means a very clever way he leads you astray. Not by making you do evil but give something else more importance in your life than Jesus Christ.

Then you have not obeyed the first commandment. The first commandment is you got to love Jesus with all your heart, soul, strength, mind. Some people love their husband or wife more than they love Jesus.

Or they love their children more than they love Jesus. Or they love their house or car or something of the earth. And they get so upset when something goes wrong with some earthly thing.

That's how you know you love something more than you love Jesus. Because if that idol of yours is damaged in some way you get disturbed. It's like some of these people who worship idols their idol is damaged.

They get very disturbed. Is there an idol in your life like that? I remember years ago when I bought a new scooter. You know when you get a new scooter you don't want any scratch or anything.

So you are very careful. The scooter started making some noise inside the engine. So I took it to a workshop.

The man said there's nothing wrong with it, it's perfectly okay. So I said Lord, what is wrong? The Lord said this has become your idol that is why it's rattling. There's nothing wrong with the engine.

This is the truth. It's an absolute truth. So what did I do? Like Abraham put Isaac on the altar I took that scooter and I said Lord, I don't care.

Anybody scratch it, damage it, I don't care. If somebody wants to borrow it he can borrow it. Otherwise I wouldn't borrow because he may scratch it.

I wouldn't lend it to anybody. Because my idol should not be damaged. And once I laid it on the altar this rattling stopped.

This is the absolute truth. I learned something that day. This is many years ago 35, 40 years ago.

And I said Lord, I will never have an idol in my life. Not my house. Not my bank account.

If somebody steals some money of mine okay, I'll be more careful next time but I'm not going to steal again. I was traveling in a bus in Madras once and when I got down I found my wallet my purse was missing. Somebody had very cleverly taken out of my pocket but I didn't feel anything.

He did it so well that I felt he deserved to get it. But you know there was not much money in it so I lost my money but I did not lose my joy because my joy was not in my purse my joy was in my heart. Some people their joy and their money is in their purse.

Money goes but joy also goes. I said no that won't happen to me because my money is not an idol. So to test me the Lord allowed it to happen and second time in one of the crowded trains in Bombay but one thing I could do I prayed for that man who picked my pocket.

I said Lord maybe you allowed him to pick my pocket so I can pray for him. Maybe in his life nobody has prayed for him at least let me pray for him. So I found something good to do when somebody did something bad to me.

You know if you have an idol in your life you will be very upset with somebody who destroyed that idol. Somebody did something because that you lost your job and you are upset because that job was your idol. Somebody cheated you of your property and you are very upset with your brother in law or brother or somebody.

Then you don't realize that there was an idol in your life and God allowed your brother to cheat you to show you what an idol you have. If it was not an idol you won't be disturbed. Many Christians have got idols in their life.

They don't have simple devotion to Christ. There are other things they love more than they love Christ. God allows us to have many things in our life but nothing must take the place of Christ.

See what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10. This is real overcoming life to love God with all our heart. In Matthew chapter 10 verse 37 If anyone loves father or mother more than me he is not worthy of me.

You love son or daughter more than me he is not worthy of me. See father and mother and son and daughter are the ones we love most on this earth. Our parents and our children but Jesus said if you love them more than you love me you cannot be my disciple.

You are not worthy of me. There are many many many Christians who love their children more than they love Jesus. What is one proof of that? They give their children food, education, clothing everything but they don't teach them to love Jesus Christ.

And they are proud when their children do well in the world but their children are not really following Jesus. I remember one brother told me Brother Zach God has really blessed my son. I said you mean he has become like Jesus? No he got a job in Dubai.

Oh is that what you call blessing? I'll show you one thousand Muslims and Hindus whose children got better jobs in Dubai than your son. God has blessed them also. So if we think that is blessing you love your children more than you love Jesus Christ.

You love earthly things more than you love Jesus Christ. If you examine your life you may find there are many idols in your heart and that is why we are not able to follow Jesus fully. Every idol is like a chain that is tying your leg to something.

And you try to run and you can't run. There is some chain in your life. If you really want to run get rid of all the chains.

You know it says in Hebrews 12 Hebrews chapter 12 Verse 1 and 2 is talking about running the race. Verse 1 last part let us run the race laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us. So to run this race we must get rid of sin.

And every weight anything that will hinder me from running have you seen these people who run in the Olympic games races. I have seen them Olympic races. I have seen them they come with a very thin vest and shorts.

Have you seen anybody coming with a suit and tie to run 100 meters race. No. Because they will never win.

There is so much weight even if they are fast runners. They make themselves as light as possible their pockets won't be full of heavy books and things like that. Nothing.

Lay aside every weight. That is how we teach people to follow Jesus. So to love Jesus with all our heart means we have to lay aside many things like love for our children.

We are more interested in their earthly education than in their following Jesus Christ. We are excited when they do well in their school or college but not so concerned that they are not following Jesus Christ. Many believers are like that.

So how did God show his love for us? I told you by giving the very best in heaven for us. So how can we show our love for God? By giving our best in return to him. Not something cheap.

If somebody gives you a very very expensive gift one day when you want to give him a gift you won't give something cheap. You will want to give him something really good. Right through the Bible we see one thing.

God is watching the type of gift that you give to him. Sometimes you don't realize that. Let me show you.

Turn to Mark's Gospel. Chapter 12 Verse 41 It says Jesus sat down opposite the treasury. Treasury means the offering box.

Now if you see somebody sitting near the treasury watching how people are putting money inside. You would wonder why is he watching? Imagine if there was a treasury box here and Jesus is sitting there and watching how people are putting, what they are putting. The Bible says Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

If he sat watching the treasury offering box then he is watching the offering box today also. Listen, he is not seeing how much you put in but how you put it. Not the quantity but how much sacrifice was there in what you gave.

So, he saw one widow. He saw first of all rich people putting in large sums. Then one poor widow came, verse 42 and put two small copper coins which were like one cent.

You know it is like hundreds of rupees other people were putting in. Thousand rupee notes. Here is a poor widow putting one rupee coin.

All the pastors on earth will despise that. Who cares for this one rupee? But Jesus called his disciples. They hadn't seen that.

It says in verse 43 he called his disciples. And he told them I just saw this widow putting one rupee inside. And I saw all these rich people putting thousand rupees and all that.

You total up everything inside that box. Take the total of money in the box. Verse 44 this woman has put more than all of that.

Because they had plenty and they put something in. But she had so little. And she gave what she was living from.

So she sacrificed something. The Lord was not watching how much they put. Pastors watch that.

You give more your pastor will be your special friend. No pastor will be the friend of a widow who puts one rupee. But Jesus was the friend of this widow.

Because he is not counting how much you put. He is seeing how much sacrifice is there in your life. Not how much you give but how much sacrifice was there.

And he is the same today. Why is sacrifice important? Because the person's love is measured by sacrifice. God so loved the world that he sacrificed the best.

And if you love Jesus with all your heart, you will sacrifice your time, your energy, your money, everything for him. I am not preaching what I have not practiced. I have practiced this for 56 years.

Because I loved Jesus 56 years ago. And I decided that time nobody will take the place of Jesus in my heart. I said if I get married my wife will be second, Jesus will be first.

And I wanted to marry a wife who will also put me second not first. That's the only type of marriage that will be happy. All other marriages will be unhappy in some way.

So this widow put God first. Do you think she starved and died because she did that? Not at all. I am sure God provided her much more than what she put in.

God said you give me and I will give back 100 times to you. So this principle of sacrifice is very important in the Christian life. You see that right from the beginning.

We can say there are two offerings. One is the widow's very little offering. And then the other offering is all the other people's offering.

So you put this big pile of all the other people's offerings and this widow's one rupee. And after counting it Jesus says that is more. The Pharisees said no no no you can't count properly.

This is more. That is the difference between the way God looks at things and world looks at things. Now you go to the beginning of the Bible.

Genesis chapter 4. Do you know the first story that is mentioned in the Bible after Adam and Eve were put out of Eden? That is the first story of the human race. The first story of the human race. You know what it is? It's about two people bringing an offering to God.

That is the first story that Jesus put in the Bible. It's very interesting. The first story the Holy Spirit put in the Bible is about two people bringing an offering to God.

And it is not a sin offering. There are many types of offerings in the Bible. Some people think everything is sin offering.

You read in Leviticus there is burnt offering. And then there is a thanksgiving offering. Many types of offerings.

This was a thanksgiving offering. Lord, we want to thank you for blessing our work. A farmer will bring grain from his field as an offering because God has blessed him.

A shepherd will bring some sheep from his flock as an offering. This is not for sin. It is a thanksgiving offering.

So Cain was a farmer so he brought some grain. That was okay. And Abel was a shepherd so he brought some sheep.

But it says God accepted Abel's offering but he didn't accept Cain's offering. Just like we saw in Mark 12, God accepted that widow's offering but not the other offering. Why? Very important to understand.

Have you read it carefully, Genesis chapter 4? See the difference in verse 3 and 4 between the type of offering these two people brought. Can you see a difference? Some people they think it is a sin offering and they say Abel brought blood Cain did not bring blood. But there is no law here given about blood.

That all came in later on in the time of Moses. Till then it was only thanksgiving offering. Nobody gave sin offerings before Moses time.

Everybody Abraham or anyone they gave only thanksgiving offering. There was no teaching on sin offering till the book of Leviticus. So these people were bringing a thanksgiving offering.

Why did God accept Abel and not Cain? If you have noticed it, this is the reason. Cain brought an offering. Abel brought the best of his flock.

That shows their love. Let me use an example. Supposing you are invited to a wedding.

Two weddings. One is a wedding of just a casual friend you have met somewhere, you don't know them well at all. Everybody brings a gift so you have to bring some gift.

Maybe somebody who works in your office. Somebody you don't know so well. You have to take some offering.

Some gift. And the other wedding is someone who is very close, someone in your family. Whom you love very much.

What type of gift will you take here and what type of gift will you take there? There you may take some cheap 50 rupee, 100 rupee gift. I hardly know that person. I will take some cheap gift.

Well here, I mean if it's a father and his son's wedding, he may even gift him a house or a car. Why a car for this person and only a small little car? Or a little pen or something for that person? Why? Because of love. Here there is tremendous love for my son.

I love that person but he is a stranger. That is the difference between Abel and Cain. Abel said, Oh God, I love you so much that I want to bring the best for you.

Cain said, Oh yeah, God's good, I have to bring him something. And God noticed it. He saw their heart.

And he sent a fire on Abel's offering, no fire on Cain's offering. If you see a fire of God in somebody's life, this spirit of the baptism of fire in somebody's life, and you wonder why hasn't God given it to that person? You know the answer now. God saw something in the heart of this person he did not see in the heart of that person.

There are many people today who are praying, Oh Lord, baptize me in the Holy Spirit and fire. One old man told me, Brothers, Jack, I have been to Pentecostal church 40 years, I prayed for baptism in the Holy Spirit, I never got it. Jack, I have been to Pentecostal church 40 years, I prayed for baptism in the Holy Spirit, I never got it.

He has been praying for 40 years, he never got anything. Other people just pray and they get the fire. What is the reason? I remember when I prayed for the anointing of the Holy Spirit in my life, I didn't know much.

I was baptized in water when I was 21. Two years later, I was praying for the baptism of fire. Anointing, to be able to preach.

I did not know much about overcoming life those days, so I was not praying for that. That came much later. I wanted to preach and I said, Lord, give me power to preach.

In two years, when I was 23 years old, God anointed me. I could preach boldly. I see that God wants to give that baptism of fire to many people.

You have to hunger and thirst for it. You must be willing to get rid of all idols in your life. You must be willing to sacrifice the best for the You love Jesus more than your father, mother, children.

More than your job. More than money. More than everything.

God has got no partiality. He will do for you what he did for anybody else. But where there is true love, there is sacrifice.

There you see Abel loved and he sacrificed. Cain loved but it was not a real deep love. You know when God wanted to tell Israel about his love, how did he describe it? Not a husband's love for his wife.

Not a wife's love for her husband. There are many good husbands who love their wives deeply. There are many wives who love their husbands deeply.

That's good. But when God wanted to talk about his love, you know what he spoke about in Isaiah 49? Isaiah 49, verse 15. He spoke about a mother's love for a child.

Not any child but for the baby who is still nursing. That means two three months old. Three months.

See mother loves all her children but a small child. Three months. What a lot of sacrifice the mother makes.

To feed the child so often. The child cries so often at night. The mother has to wake up.

And the child dirties the diapers. You have to change that frequently. And it may fall sick.

Babies fall sick very often. Rush to the hospital. What a lot of things a mother has to do for a newborn child.

She doesn't have to sacrifice like that for her husband. A father doesn't have to sacrifice like that for a child. So of all the family relationships, husband, wife, wife, husband, wife, the mother child is the greatest love relationship in the family.

And that also a little baby. Because when the child is eight or nine years old, it can do many things by itself. But a mother's love is shown in sacrifice.

You don't sacrifice so much for a ten year old child as for a three-month-old child, so the Lord takes that relationship and says, that is the proof of my love, that they may forget, I will not forget you. So you see when God talks about his love for us, he talks about sacrifice, a wife may sacrifice for her husband, but it is nothing compared to what she has sacrificed for her three-month-old child. And it's true, most women love their children more than they love their husbands.

It shouldn't be like that, but unfortunately it's true. And God takes that example and says, that is the greatest manifestation of love on this earth. What is the main feature in that love? Sacrifice.

What is the main feature in God's love for us on the cross? Sacrifice. And on the cross of Calvary, God showed the world one thing. I run this world on the principle of sacrifice.

And that is the principle on which he builds the church. One last verse, Ephesians 5, verse 25. It says in the middle of that verse, Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for her.

He sacrificed, that's how he showed his love for the church. Why are some brothers really good elders in churches and some not so good? Why does God bless the ministry of some elders and other elders not so much? One reason. Some elders love their church so much, they sacrifice everything for that church.

Other elders just get up and preach. Organize everything. Count the offerings.

Arrange the conference. They don't make much sacrifice. And God sees that.

One is like Cain, the other is like Abel. And then God sends the fire on that elder but not on this elder. I have seen that in CFC churches.

There is a fire in some place, no fire in some other place. What can I do? Some are like Cain, some are like Abel. Christ loved the church and sacrificed everything for her.

And there are elders who love the church and sacrifice everything. Others were always thinking it's not convenient for me or it's not easy for me to do that. There are many brothers in many churches who want to be elders.

They think if I preach well I can be an elder. No. If you sacrifice everything you can be an elder.

This is how the Lord does His work. Sacrifice. This is the most valuable brother in a church who can sacrifice everything for the Lord.

You can be a young brother like that. When I was young I decided I'll be like that. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, help us to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/yJN7Ot28QM4.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/destroying-every-idol/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net