

(Disciples of Jesus) Our Attitude to Material Things

by Zac Poonen

To be a true disciple of Jesus, we must have a right attitude to our family members, take up the cross every day, and give up all our possessions, learning from Jesus' example of humility and selflessness.

Duration: 1:25:33

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 14:26-27, Luke 14:33

Topics: "Discipleship", "Stewardship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prioritizing discipleship over material possessions. He highlights the two commissions given by Jesus: to preach the gospel and to make disciples. The speaker encourages listeners to focus on accumulating wisdom and knowledge of God rather than gathering material things. He warns against the spirit of competition and comparison that can arise in the church, urging believers to use the blessings they receive to bless others and bring glory to God.

Transcript

The third Bible study on the subject of discipleship. Let's turn again to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 14. As I was saying, my dear brothers and sisters, way back in the beginning when we started building the churches in India, the reason why we started afresh was because we felt there was not a sufficient emphasis on discipleship in the churches.

There was a lot of evangelism being done. People were being converted, praise the Lord, and even today I praise God for every evangelist, particularly those who, at great sacrifice, have gone to difficult parts of this land to serve the Lord. When I was young, I wanted to be an evangelist, and God never gave me that gift and never called me to that, even though I sought very much for it.

But I saw that God called me for something else, and I had to fit in to whatever God called me to do, which I did not want, but which God wanted me to do. And I saw that there was such a need for obeying that great commission. You know, the great commission in Mark 16, says, Mark 16, 14, 15, 16, Go into all the world, preach the gospel, and he who believes and is baptized will be saved, to every creature.

So that's one part of the great commission, the other is Matthew 28, verse 19, the other side of the same coin, which says, go and make disciples. So there are two commissions that Jesus gave. One is in Mark 16, go and preach the gospel to every creature.

The other is in Matthew 28, go and make disciples. These are like two ends of a big log of wood that Christians have to carry. And when you see 99 people standing at one end of the log, carrying the log, and one person at the other end of the log, if you've got a little common sense, which end will you go and help? Where? Where there's only one person struggling.

So that's how I saw it. I saw 99% of people engaged in evangelism, reach the lost, get the gospel out, praise the Lord, wonderful. We need more people because India is such a big country.

But I saw only about 1% of people who were preaching discipleship. Probably less. So we decided, let's support this other end of the log.

And the problem is that when we started supporting the other end of the log, all the people at that end of the log began to think that we are against them. We're not against them. We praise God for all those people who are holding up the other end of the log, but we felt there was a need at this end.

But now, as I said, as our numbers have increased in our churches, and the number of churches has increased, the great danger is that we shall stop preaching that message of discipleship, which we preached from the beginning. Or we can lower our standards. When we started 27 years ago, a hundred rupees, was a lot of money in 1975.

Today, a hundred rupees is not much. In the same way, discipleship has also got devalued through the years. That today when people talk about being a disciple, it doesn't seem to mean the same thing as it did then.

And so we want to try and restore that in our churches. And that's why we want to come back to the message of discipleship that Jesus preached in Luke's Gospel chapter 14 and verse 26 onwards. It says here, first of all, we saw the condition of discipleship was that we have a right attitude to our family members.

That means we do not give them the place that Jesus Christ should have in our lives. Basically it means that, that the place that Jesus Christ should have in my life, I will never give to my father or my mother, which is easy. But I will also not give it to my wife or children, which is a little more difficult.

And I will also not give it to my fellow believers, my brothers and sisters. Nobody will be my favorite. Jesus Christ will be Lord.

His commands will be supreme in my life. And I'm willing to offend father, mother, wife, all my children, all my fellow believers, if I have to please the Lord. If we don't take this position first of all, we cannot be disciples of Jesus Christ.

It's just completely out of the question. Please remember that. Many, many times through the years as we've encountered different problems in our churches, we've always come back to, I've many times discovered the problem here is because this brother has not fulfilled the first condition of discipleship.

Many times in the last 27 years, I've seen that. This brother loves his father and mother more than Jesus Christ. That's the root cause of the problem.

This brother loves his wife more than Christ. This brother loves his children more than Christ. That's why he has a problem.

This brother loves some brother in the church. That's why he forms a little group. I think that problem is more with sisters.

You know, in a church you can form a little clique. C-L-I-Q-U-E, a clique. A little group of your special friends, where you exclude all the others, can be even among the young sisters.

Just few of you who are a special little group, always together and always acting in unity and usually ending up in carnality and hypocrisy because some strong leader among that, it may be among brothers or sisters, influences all of them and if that leader is not a wholehearted radical disciple of Jesus, all these people end up as carnal. That's what happens in little cliques among sisters who sit down and gossip. That's because they love one another more than they love Christ.

So many, many times we have found that the problems in churches are due to not fulfilling the first condition of discipleship. It's very difficult to fellowship with some believers. I found that.

And when I traced the root cause of the problem, I discovered that the problem is the same. They love their father or mother or wife or children or some brother or sister more than Christ. And then, of course, if Jesus Christ is not Lord, it's very difficult to fellowship with such people.

I'm not saying I won't keep friendship. Fellowship is the best. Where fellowship is not possible, I go to the second level of friendship with everybody in the church.

I have friendship with everybody in CFC. I have to admit, I don't have fellowship with everybody in CFC. I don't want to blame them.

Maybe some fault is with me, but that's the honest truth. But I believe that two people who really seek to be disciples will have wonderful fellowship. It's impossible not to have fellowship if we are disciples.

When Christ is supreme and our only passion in life is to exalt Him, I'm not interested in pleasing my father or mother or wife or children or brothers or sisters. No, for example, I've said in CFC to the brothers, if Mrs. A and Mrs. B can't have fellowship, why should that hinder A and B from having fellowship? Unless they are ruled under the thumbs of their wives. But that often happens.

Mrs. A and Mrs. B can't have fellowship. I don't know why. I'm not interested in finding out the reason.

That's their headache. They can answer to God. But why should that hinder A and B from having fellowship? Because Mrs. A will whisper something into A's ear and Mrs. B will whisper something into B's ear and they both unfortunately lose fellowship with each other.

Why? Because both of them are not disciples. If they were disciples, the attitude of their wives wouldn't make a difference. And sometimes A and B don't have fellowship because they are more bothered about trying to bring fellowship between their wives.

Don't waste your time. You destroy your own fellowship when you try to do that. Or sometimes A's children have a problem with B's children.

Why should that hinder A and B from having fellowship? Unless they are not disciples. Where A values his children or B values his children, naturally A and B won't have fellowship. Always the problem can be traced to its root.

Somebody has not fulfilled the first condition of discipleship. See, that is not the problem in your life. See, if so many problems you have faced in your local church or with other people is because you are not a disciple.

Maybe once upon a time you were. But you backslid, you wandered away from that. Some of you young people.

You were little children when the church started. But now you have grown up. You are young brothers and you are young sisters.

Some of you are wonderful young brothers and young sisters and I praise the Lord for that. But your parents may not be radical disciples. Even though they were in the church when you were born.

They are not wholehearted, they are not radical. They can't build fellowship with others. And if you have a loyalty to your parents because you said they were in the church for so many years you will not be a disciple.

So I want to say to you young people I am not saying don't respect your father and mother. That we will never teach. We are not a cult.

Honor your father and mother till the end of your life. But don't follow their bad example. Don't be a backslider like your father is or your mother is.

Be a radical disciple of Jesus and don't let your father and his opinion and your mother and her opinion come between you and Jesus Christ. I fear that some of you young brothers your dad his opinion means more to you than Jesus Christ's opinion. Some of you young sisters your mother's opinion means more to you than Jesus Christ's opinion.

I tell you in a hundred years you will never be a disciple of Jesus Christ and that is the root cause of your problem. Settle it today. I decided that long long ago and I have tried my best by the grace of God to maintain that attitude My dad was a believer.

My mother was a believer. My dad had many suggestions for me. I respected him.

I believe he was very sincere in the suggestions he gave me. I wouldn't listen to him because I had my conviction. I love my wife very deeply but she doesn't mean more to me than Jesus Christ.

Neither my children. I will not let my children influence my attitude to any of you. If they have a difficulty with your children that's none of my business.

I have been them. If they are not disciples what can I do? I am going to be a disciple till the end of my life. My dear brothers and sisters how much you young people and old people have hindered the work of God first of all in your own life and in the church in your own spiritual growth because you have never fulfilled

the first condition of discipleship.

I can never stop emphasizing that. Very very very very important. I believe you may have been a disciple once but you can backslide.

You can even lose your salvation. So why can't you go back from discipleship? Anybody can go back from discipleship. It says bind the sacrifice with cords upon the altar.

Psalms 118 you can bind it and then cut the cords and the sacrifice jumps off the altar. That can happen. So let me emphasize that again.

Very often when you have a problem in the church you may discover and all of you elders you may discover that the root cause of the problem why you can't have fellowship with somebody why there is a problem in some home or some situation with some brother in the church is that person loves some family member more than he loves the church of Jesus Christ more than he loves Christ and his body. His attachment he is a human being attached in a human way to human attachments to his human relatives more than to Christ. I am not saying we shouldn't love them.

I am not saying you shouldn't respect them. I emphasize that so much. But don't let them influence you away from the way of discipleship.

Don't let your respect for your born again father and mother who has been in the church from ages don't let that respect take away from discipleship. They may not be disciples today. I am telling you from what I have seen.

I have watched the development of the church in many parts of India over the last 27 years and I have seen that some wonderful brothers who were disciples many years ago are not disciples today. And their children if they follow the example of their parents will also not be disciples. So I have to warn you you have an independent connection with Christ quite apart from your father and mother.

We have to say that because we have a second generation growing up today. An independent connection with Christ. Let your mother gossip.

Just quietly get up from the table and say excuse me mom I have got to do something. Go and do something else in your room. Your dad may be running after money today.

Don't follow him. Your dad may be critical of a lot of things in the church. Don't follow him.

Be a disciple. Be radical. Don't form cliques.

You form a clique and you exclude somebody whom Christ has not excluded. You are an evil person. I don't want to exclude somebody whom Christ has not excluded.

But Christ is closer to some people than to others because some are more radical than others. And naturally I will be closer to some people more than to others. Why was Jesus closer to Peter, James and John than to some other people? And naturally we will be closer to some believers than to other believers because they are more radical Christians.

Always it is so. We don't exclude them but they are not radical. They are not wholehearted.

They were once but they are not today. I have seen so many cases so many cases of children who have fallen away because their fathers fell away. Isn't it a wonderful word? Do you know the story about in number 16 about Korah, Dathan and Abiram who rebelled against Moses? And you read in number 16 the earth opened up and Korah and Dathan and Abiram Moses told them you fellows get away from their tents because God will punish them and the earth opened up and all of them went to hell.

it says in number 26 verse 11 the sons of Korah however did not die. However the sons of Korah did not die because at the last minute when Moses said get away from them the sons turned around to Korah their dad and said dad we are not standing with you we are standing with Moses.

They ran and they escaped the judgment at the last minute when the earth opened up and swallowed those tents the sons of Korah escaped and they wrote many psalms you read in the psalms many many psalms written by the sons of Korah as the deer panted for the water brook so my soul panted for thee O God psalm 42 verse 1 written by the sons of Korah psalm 46 verse 1 God is our refuge and strength even if the mountains slip and the earth opens up and swallows it up we won't be there because God is our refuge and strength psalm 46 written by the sons of Korah they were speaking from experience they stood with Moses against their dad and sometimes we have to do that because we are disciples the second condition of discipleship also we saw that we have to take up the cross every day and follow

Jesus this is not something I can do once for all there are certain things we do once for all baptism once but there are certain things we do regularly like breaking of bread just like certain things in ordinary life you take a smallpox vaccination once immunize for life but a bath how often in some places where it's hot and sticky more than once a day you can't take a bath once for life you can't eat once for your life every day take up your cross every day and your life will be clean not only clean there is a wonderful verse I forgot to mention it to you yesterday I can mention it today it's in John 12 in verse 24 which teaches us the reason why some believers always remain alone they never seem to come into fellowship they are always alone John 12, 24 if a grain of wheat does not fall

into the ground and die it remains alone but if it dies it brings forth much fruit I told you the other day God's will for your life is much fruit my dear brother, sister don't ever believe any lie of the devil that this is only for some gifted people no it's for you you may not be a preacher never mind I told you you can bring forth fruit even as a mother with many children sitting at home that you can't even go for the Wednesday meetings because you are so busy with your children you can go for only one meeting a week on Sunday morning and if you got little children even that Sunday morning meeting you got to miss half of it because your child is crying and you got to go outside or you have to sit in the mother's room and the other mothers there are gossiping so you can't even that's

worse than your child crying and so you can't listen to the meeting that happens in CFC sometimes we have some gossipy mothers I tell you that so what you can sit in your home and take up the cross everyday and God will make you a blessing to many people you can bear fruit even though you come for half a meeting in a week because you got little children if you are a radical disciple God will send people to your home I tell you in Jesus name God will do it if you are a radical disciple but why should God send people to your home if you are just going to give them juicy mouthfuls of gossip why should God send anybody to your home He'll keep them away from your home He'll send all the gossipers to your home and He'll keep the hungry people away from your home you don't have to be a preacher

you got to be a disciple and if you fall into the ground and die according to the guaranteed promise of Jesus in John 12.24 you will never be alone you'll have fruit and you'll have fellowship give me 10 brothers who are willing to fall into the ground and die and those 10 brothers will have wonderful fellowship with each other and put in the midst of those 10 brothers one brother who is not willing to fall into the ground and die who is stubborn clever, smart unwilling to fall into the ground and die he will remain alone all the other 10 will have wonderful fellowship all 11 will be in the meeting but 10 of them will have fellowship this brother will have friendship fellowship is deeper than friendship same with the sisters you got to fall into the ground and die die to your reputation

die to fighting for your rights die to your feelings and attitudes selfishness pride die to everything every rotten thing that you and I have inherited from Adam all your opinions about people your prejudices against certain people against certain communities your being uncomfortable with certain people I'm also a human being like you I am uncomfortable with certain people I die to it and I have fellowship with them if you are not willing to die you won't have fruit you got to die to so many things and God will show you more and more areas to die and the more you die the more fruit there will be in your life this is the way of the cross this is the way of power and today we come to the third condition mentioned in Luke 14 and that is our attitude to our possessions our attitude to our

family we saw first of all our attitude to our self life Adamic life or the flesh the way of the cross we saw secondly and thirdly now our attitude to our possessions Luke 14 and verse 33 these are the things we emphasized right at the beginning of our ministry in this land and these are the areas to which we these are the areas we need to reemphasize after so many years we want to learn from Jesus as we see in this picture here we want to learn how he what was his attitude towards his earthly parents towards his earthly brothers what was his attitude when people insulted him treated him badly took up the cross everyday and finally what was his attitude to possessions we got to learn from him Luke 14 33 if any no one of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions

all his own possessions not 90% not 10% all that he possesses he must give up what is he got to give up he doesn't have to give up everything he has he has to give up everything he possesses and I want to explain to you the difference between having something and possessing something you can have things and not possess them and the clearest example of that in the Old Testament is Abraham offering up Isaac on the altar Abraham possessed Isaac for more than 20 years this is my son he was proud of him naturally when you get a son at the age of 100 you are going to be pretty proud of him he would show him off and he possessed him and I am absolutely sure that Abraham loved Isaac more than he loved Sarah without a doubt he possessed him and gradually Abraham loved Isaac more than he loved God

that's the time when Abraham become an idol worshipper he was an idol worshipper in Ur of the Chaldees at the age of 75 God pulled him out of all that idol worship and brought him to Canaan and he was a wonderful brother till he got Isaac and Isaac grew up he became such a possessive father that he became an idol worshipper all over again this time the idol was not made of brass and stone like in Ur of the Chaldees this was an idol made of flesh and blood his own son there are many parents who are very proud of their children who worship their children who will always defend their children against every Tom, Dick and Harry in the world they are idol worshippers and God decided to break that idol worship in Abraham's life and he told him one day and remember we know the end of the story

but Abraham did not know the end of the story when God told him offer up your son on the altar he really thought he had to offer him think of that without knowing the end of the story that God told him tomorrow

morning you got to get up he did not tell him tomorrow morning he said go and offer your Isaac on that mountain three days away and it says the very next morning Abraham got up I do not think he slept that night tossed around in bed and said boy what is God asking me of he never asked me for anything like this so far he asked me to give up my ancient country he asked me to give up my father my mother Lot Ishmael so many things I have given up now he is asking me to kill my son and he got up next morning he was obedient and for three days have you thought why God told him to go

three days away to mount Moriah why did not he say just take him around the corner to some close by mountain you read in Genesis 22 God told him to take him to that mount Moriah but three days journey away because God did not want to force Abraham to make a sudden decision which he may regret later think about it Abraham is it worth it take three days to think about it think about it as he walked and walked and walked with the donkey and with Isaac Abraham must have been must have talked very little on that journey and at the end of three days he said it is worth it this God is my God and I will give him the very best I have and he took Isaac to the altar took the knife and was about to stab him offering him up Isaac was his possession and God said no do not kill him I just wanted to test

you take him take him home the next day he walked back another three days Sarah never knew thank God she never knew where Abraham was taking their son he never told her there are some things it is better not to tell your wife do not burden her with things which she cannot bear and when they came back Abraham would look at Isaac after this long trip and come back and said he would have said now I have Isaac in my house I do not possess him like I did for 20 years he had forsaken his possession and he had him that is the difference between possessing and having there must be nothing we possess on this earth everything must be given to God have you got a house in your name you have to give it to God if you want to be a disciple it will still remain in your name in the sub registrar's court

it is your name you can't put it in the name of Jesus Christ there they won't accept it it is in your name but you have made a secret transaction with God on your mount Moriah where you offered that house to God do not play games do not play games here with God only if you mean it lay that house on the altar and say God it is yours yeah that's what I did with the house I got 31 years ago here in Bangalore I offered it to God and said Lord it's yours I offered it as soon as I got it I said I don't want to possess it it's yours I'll have it it's in my name if you go in the registrar's court you'll find it's in my name but it's not mine it's God's I have it but I don't possess it God is free to use it exactly as he likes he's the landlord I'm the tenant he's allowed me to live there free of

rent and I'm very thankful and I say Lord that's your house you can use it as you like any way you like it's for your glory if you give your house to God like that you'll find he uses it have you got a vehicle put it on the altar anything valuable in your house put it on the altar one day it may pack up okay I've got some valuable things through the years electronic gadgets and things like that sometimes other people use it spoil it I don't get disturbed okay if God has permitted that that's fine I'm not going to get upset with someone just because he banged my vehicle or spoiled something I mean we got to be careful I'm not saying we are careless don't give it to people who don't know how to use them like your little children but some people you know everything on earth no matter how

careful we are with it one day it gets spoiled and somebody may be the last person to use it it's not he who has spoiled it it was wearing out and gradually it got spoiled I've had that experience numerous times what do I do I say well Lord that's yours I'm not going to get disturbed I'm not going to lose one night sleep over that no if it's stolen it's stolen if it's gone it's gone I want to be more careful I want to exhort others to be

more careful that's fine but I'm not going to be disturbed if you possess it oh boy you will be disturbed and that's one way we can find out whether we possess things or we have things supposing somebody else's tape recorder or something else was spoiled by somebody you won't get so disturbed will you as if somebody spoiled your tape recorder right now

the thing is my tape recorder is somebody else's tape recorder already it's not mine that's why I don't get disturbed it belongs to the Lord it's a wonderful life to live where you don't possess anything and I'll tell you something you can never listen to me you can never live a life of perfect Sabbath rest like I said the other morning if you haven't forsaken all your possessions one day the devil will drop one of those things through one of your dear brothers or sisters and ruin it and all your rest will go you will not be in a Sabbath rest anymore but if you have forsaken your possessions your rest will not be disturbed in fact my prayer has always been Lord I don't even want to flutter in my heart I mean you know like a feather or a little flutter slight wind I don't even want that in

my heart when something goes wrong or something is broken or something is spoiled whether my children or another brother I'm not please don't misunderstand me we must teach our children to take care of property we are not millionaires to just throw it away and buy another one no we may not have money to buy another one ok then we do without it so we teach our children to be very careful with material things if a child comes and urinates on my sofa that's fine I'll teach that father or mother of the child not to do that in future but I'm not going to get disturbed we just wash it put it out in the sun there will be a permanent stain on that sofa inside we can put another cover on it it's ok are these things big things for you and you want to build the church of Jesus Christ brother, sister

forget it you can't be a disciple if you possess things be careful with things but don't love them don't get attached to them everything that God has given on earth is to be used not loved the only people are to be loved God gave us people to love and possessions to use but in the world they love possessions and use people what do you mean by using people when you meet somebody who is a rich person or an influential person in society or in India particularly if you meet a white skinned person ah that's a good contact to make, right a useful person someone I can use one day for my benefit in some way that's what I mean by using people a lot of people are not disciples they use people God never gave us people to use He gave us people to love and when you are a disciple you will never

never seek to use people for your benefit never whether they are red or yellow black or white I will not use them for my benefit because God gave them to me to love God gave you the poor brothers to love just because they can't be of any benefit to you just because they are not so cultured they are not so rich you don't value them you don't talk to them are you a disciple ask yourself have you learned to value the poor the illiterate the uneducated the non-influential the lame and the weak those who can be absolutely no use to you who as soon as you look at them you know this person is zero benefit to me do you seek fellowship with such people where do you find yourself gravitating towards you discover pretty soon whether you are a disciple we use people and we love things and Jesus came

into the world to teach us to use things and love people that's the way God made man things are going to pass away God gives me things to bless other people he's given me only one life and he's given me that one life not to accumulate possessions see what the book of Ecclesiastes says in chapter 2 Ecclesiastes chapter 2 in Ecclesiastes chapter 2 in verse 26 it says to a person who is good in God's sight God has given he's given him this task during his lifetime to accumulate wisdom to accumulate the knowledge of God and to have a tremendous supply of joy in his life but to the one who is the sinner God has given the

task of gathering and collecting a whole lot of things in his life what are you? these are two categories of people which category are you?

God has given a task to sinners you sinners spend your life gathering collecting things and God's called all good people say I give you a task also gather wisdom get to know me during the years you are on earth increase, let joy increase in your life as you grow older and older that's how it should be that's how Jesus lives God will give us many things to bless other people with use them let them be in your name but use them for his glory don't possess them and when you live like that your life will be such a tremendous blessing God can use you to build his church of disciples I want to show you an example from Jesus life you know we are learners how many of you know just like you know when a young man grows up and gets married he sets up his own house when Jesus became 30 years old he

shifted his residence from Nazareth 30 years he has been in Nazareth when he was 30 years old he left Nazareth and he I presume he rented a house or bought a house I don't know with his earnings as a carpenter in Capernaum Capernaum was some distance away from Nazareth that's where Jesus rented a home and when he travelled around with his disciples they always came finally to Capernaum where Jesus had a house there that was not the house of Joseph and Mary that was in Nazareth this was Jesus house and his disciples would come there and then they would go out again on their journeys and come back to Capernaum and we read one day in Mark chapter 2 after all his journeys Mark chapter 2 verse 1 after his journeys he came back to Capernaum and it was heard that he was at home he was at home

means he had come back to his house and many were gathered together there was no longer room there near the door and he was preaching the word in his own house and they came bringing to him a paralytic carried by 4 men and they couldn't get to him because of the crowd they went to the roof and they said this is Jesus he doesn't mind his roof being torn apart he loves people more than he loves roofs they knew that he had that testimony if it was somebody else's house boy they would have thought twice they would have asked somebody's permission that fellow would say nothing doing you wait till he finishes the meeting and then meet him but they said this is Jesus house he loves people so much he wouldn't care even if his roof is torn apart they said let's go up and they remember this is

Jesus house and Jesus standing here and suddenly he finds little holes coming up in the roof and the tiles being removed and he just continues preaching this hole is being made over there and he continues preaching what radical discipleship I say Lord make me like that that when somebody is breaking up my house and I continue with the meeting while this fellow is breaking up the house or the roof or something maybe he is trying to lower somebody and they lowered him into their midst and Jesus verse 5 it doesn't say seeing the roof he was not bothered about the roof seeing their faith that's the thing that gripped him he wasn't thinking boy how much is going to cost for me to repair that roof he he was so excited here is a person who has got faith he said my son your sins are forgiven and

then he healed him and he rose up and immediately and then what happened after that verse 13 he just went out by seashore and multitudes were coming there he must have he says Judas Iscariot please get somebody to fix that roof we got to go on and then what happened after that verse 13 he just went out by seashore and the multitude was coming there he must have he says Judas Iscariot please get somebody to fix that Roof, we've got to go on.

I said, Lord, as Jesus is, I want to be like that. But my passion is to build a church. My one passion in life is God and His work.

We are learners. I don't know whether you want to be followers. We have to pay a price to follow Jesus.

It's not easy. We're not talking about going to heaven when we die. We're talking about possessing nothing.

What shall I say? Put up your hand. Decide. No, no, no, no.

Take three days like Abraham. Walk. Decide.

Sit down and count the cost. A lot of evangelists say, raise your hand. Stand up.

I always say, sit down. Go home. Sit down for three days and count the cost and decide whether you want to be a disciple of Jesus or not.

Don't tell lies to God. If you mean it, go and tell him. Don't tell me.

I'm not going to take your name down in the decision card. You're ready to get your roof broken up. I'm not interested in that.

Go and tell the Lord that. Lord, I will not be attached to any of my possessions. They're in my name.

I use them. The house is in my name. I live there.

But it's your house. That scooter or car is in my name. But it's not mine.

It's yours. I remember many years ago, I sold my old scooter and got a new one. Not the one I have now.

The one I had before that was a brand new one. And boy, you know how it is when you get in something new. You don't want to scratch on it.

And every day you're polishing it. It's like when you get new shoes. And when we were children, we'd get new shoes.

We even used to clean the bottom of the shoes regularly. Sometimes the shoes get old and then you don't even worry too much about the top of it. Well, it's like that when you get a new scooter.

Oh, there shouldn't be a scratch on it. And every day you're polishing it and all that. And it was like that with me.

And I, within a few days, I was riding it one day and it was rattling. Something rattling. I said, Lord, what's this? Such a good scooter, brand new.

I paid so much for it. It's rattling already. And the Lord said to me, you haven't laid it on the altar yet.

Oh, it was not a mechanical problem. It was a spiritual problem. I hadn't laid it on the altar yet.

I said, Lord, it's yours. This moment it's yours. I was at rest.

And when I took it to the mechanic, it was some, just some screw that's all fixed. It was okay. But the spiritual lesson I got out of it was much more.

And I decided that day that I will never in my life buy anything valuable which I'll not place on the altar immediately and say, Lord, it's yours. I will not possess it for one day. I will not lose discipleship for even one day.

You said, I cannot be your disciple if I don't forsake all my possessions. That scooter was with me for many years. I used it.

I sold it. And when I sold it, I got the money. It was in my name, but I never possessed it.

I have many things in my house. You come there, you'll see it. I think I can honestly say, I don't possess any of them.

I don't want to possess any of them. I earn money. I file an income tax return for many, many years now.

I give it to the auditor so that it's filled exactly according to the rules. I don't know all the rules. I give them all the information.

They follow, file it exactly according to the rules. So that any one cent, one paisa due to the government, I give it. It's not mine.

I'm not even tempted to cheat on my income tax. I ask the auditor, what are the rules? I say, sure. You know, especially when you do your own business.

It's not like being a salaried employee. When you're a salaried employee, they cut your tax at source itself. But when you do your own business, like I do, it's very easy, I discovered, to cheat on the tax.

Very easy. I hope you're not even tempted, if you're doing your own business, to cheat on your tax. You know how much you lose? A million times more spiritually.

Be honest. Money is such a tremendous temptation. Not for a disciple.

When you sign a statement, this is the way to find out. When you sign a statement, whether it's an income tax form or any other statement claiming leave travel concession or travel allowance or daily allowance in your offices, I don't know what the rules are, but when you sign that statement, just ask yourself, say, Lord, can you please come and sign as a witness to this? And if Jesus says, sure, I can sign as a witness to that, your statement is okay. If Jesus can't sign as a witness to that, you better go through that statement again.

Be a disciple. I have never suffered loss in my life by giving my possessions to God, by seeking to honor Him in the financial area, just like we honor Him in the area of purity of heart, to honor Him in the financial area, paying all our taxes. The Bible says, you know how much people can lose the anointing? I tell you, I value the anointing of God and the fellowship with my Father in heaven so much that I would not cheat one rupee from someone because I'd lose something much more valuable.

And there's another area, and that's the area of getting into debt. I'm sorry to say, think of that. As Jesus was in debt when He was on the earth, so are we on the earth.

Is that what it means? As Jesus kept on borrowing money when He was on earth, so are we on the earth. As Jesus kept on using His credit card and getting into massive debt with credit cards, so are we on the earth. We've got some wrong Jesus.

That is another Jesus. That is another Jesus. Oh, you can say, I'm baptized in the Holy Spirit.

I speak in tongues and all that. Oh, that's all okay. But are you in debt? Go and settle all that first.

Go and settle all that. Be radical. Sell the gold in your house and pay your debt.

You say, but the price of gold is increasing. Oh, you're waiting for that instead of seeking fellowship with the Father. The Bible says in Romans 13 and verse 8, Oh, no man anything.

My advice to you, my brothers and sisters, is as far as possible, do not borrow money. It's a trap. Borrowing money is a trap.

I heard something interesting the other day. I was really stuck in my mind because I checked it up in the Hebrew language in the concordance. You know the word for getting into debt in the Hebrew language is very similar to this word found in Ecclesiastes chapter 10 and verse 8. In Ecclesiastes chapter 10 verse 8, it speaks about one who breaks through a wall, a serpent will bite him.

And the Hebrew word for getting into debt is the bite of a serpent. Exactly the same word. I checked it up in the concordance myself.

The bite of a serpent. You want to get bitten by a serpent? Get into debt. It is.

I've seen people in so many places. Once they get into debt, it's a cycle. They have to pay back something this month because of the debt and then their monthly income goes down so they have to borrow something and then they have to pay back that next month and again they have to borrow something.

It is endless. And particularly this credit card deception. If you want to use a card, use a debit card, which means it can only be drawn from the money in your bank.

And if in some emergency or some situation you have to use a credit card, make sure you pay it off without having to pay all the massive interest these fellows make you pay paid off every month. My brothers and sisters, we're living in days when, if you're interested in the anointing, if you're just interested in being a good church member and following along and listening to other messages and teaching things and being a teacher, you can do what you like. But if you want to be a disciple, where fellowship with the Father, anointing of God, means so much to you, as Jesus is, so are we in this world.

We want to learn from him. We say, but Jesus didn't live in the 20th century. He doesn't realize the pressures of life in the 20th century.

That's exactly what a lot of people say in the western world. Oh, women don't have to cover their head in the 20th century. That's all old stuff.

Getting into, not getting into debt, that's all first century stuff. We can't follow all that today. This taking up the cross and all, ah, brother, that's all first century stuff.

We can't practice all that today. No, we got to be reasonable, man. We can't follow all that today.

And this matter of no sex before marriage, ha, that's all first century stuff. We can't follow all those practices today. We need relaxation.

We have to watch some filthy movies once in a while. First century and all, they didn't have all that. Once you open the door to say something was only in the first century, and we can't practice that in the 20th century, you must give the freedom to 10,000 other Christians also to do, say something else which you preach is not in the, practicable in the 20th century.

Either the word of God is entirely applicable for all 20 centuries, or nothing is applicable today. When it says, oh, no man, anything, oh, no man, anything. Okay, maybe you're in debt.

I want to ask you, how much are you cutting down your monthly expenditure in order to repay that debt? You're not. You live in the same grand old style that you always lived in. You go for vacations and you go for holidays and you spend money and you travel here and travel there and live with the grand old chicken curry regularly, and you say you're in debt.

You could have paid that debt long ago if you had lowered your standard of living, if you hadn't bought so many clothes. And if you had told your children, I'm sorry, my boys, I can't buy any clothes for you because we've got some debt to clear, son. No new clothes this, no new clothes this year or next year for the next five years because we got to clear a debt.

But no, you want to buy clothes, you want to eat the food, you want to go here, you want to go there. In fact, I told somebody who couldn't come for a conference, who wanted to borrow money to come for a conference, I said, don't ever borrow money to come for a conference, never. You can't sin and come to a conference.

You might as well travel ticketless on the train saying, I'm going for a conference, right? Don't buy the ticket. What's the difference between traveling ticketless on the train and borrowing money to come for a conference? I don't see any difference. Maybe you do.

I don't. I see it's exactly the same thing if you travel without a ticket saying, I'm going for a holy conference and you borrow money saying, I'm going for a holy conference. No.

If God has not given you the means to go somewhere, don't go. Be radical in the area of money. I say this because I'm sick and tired of seeing the number of believers for whom debt has become a very casual thing.

I realize that a lot of people who do business and all that need to... I hope you're at least trying to clear it. I hope you're at least trying to lower your standard of living in order to clear your debt. Okay, your business requires advances from the bank and all that type of thing.

Fine. Okay, do it. But what are you doing to clear it quickly? Are you lowering your standard of living a little bit? Or you say, no, I've got to live in that same grand old style.

It's amazing. I'm absolutely amazed. And these are the people who will come and sit in the meeting and nod their heads and say, that's right, brother, we got to be disciples.

It's all a deception. And that's why you see these people 10 years later, they don't commit adultery. They don't steal.

They don't do anything like that. But they're the same level spiritually. They were in the lower kindergarten 10 years ago.

They're in the lower kindergarten today. They don't kill anybody. They don't steal.

They don't go robbing banks or anything. But they're in the lower kindergarten forever. There's no new revelation from God.

They never get the Holy Spirit saying anything to them from the Bible except what they hear in the meetings. Why? Because God sees you're not a disciple. Clear your debt.

Pay your taxes. Be upright. Give back money that you have taken wrongfully from anybody.

Don't owe anybody anything. If you're in doubt, better to pay it back. And if you're in doubt, pay a little more rather than less.

Zacchaeus said, I don't remember all the old accounts. Better to give four times what I took so that nobody will turn around to me and say that I gave less. If they got more, they'll be happy.

That's why he decided to give four times. The interest for so many years and all that. Jesus said salvation has come to this house.

And for this, we require one very important quality of a disciple in relation to possessions. Be content with such things as you have. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

A major part of discipleship is to, in our attitude to our possessions, is to say, I am happy with the circle that God has drawn around me. I want to be there. God has drawn a bigger circle around that fellow who gets 30,000 rupees a month.

That's fine. God bless him, brother. I'm so happy you're getting 30,000 rupees a month.

And God's giving me only 5,000. I can't buy the things you buy. I don't envy you.

I'm so happy that you've got so many things in your home. But sorry, I don't want it. I'm perfectly happy with this little amount or a little less even perhaps.

Be content with what you have. I find it's very easy for a spirit of competition to come in the church. Somebody else has something in their home, you must have it in your home.

Even if you have to get into debt. He's got a computer, I must get a computer. And then the children follow the father.

They say, Dad, that boy's got this type of shoes. I must have this type of shoes. And sure enough, you've got to borrow some more money to get that type of shoes.

And the shoes are so fantastic. You used to get a hundred pairs of shoes in the old days for one pair of shoes you get nowadays. That's how it was.

It's amazing. I'm amazed at the price of shoes and all nowadays. And this competition.

And people very often come to the church and they're looking at the shoes and the dress. And that's in their mind. They hardly pay attention to the message.

And they go back and that's what they tell their parents. I want that. I want that.

And I want that musical instrument which that person has. And that person is going for musical lessons. So I must go for musical.

I must send my son for musical lesson. They must become this. That's all fine.

If it lies within your circle. But if it doesn't lie within your circle, be content. You can be a very godly person without all those things.

In fact, you'll be a more godly person. Have you got a spirit of competition with somebody? Are you trying to get your children to compete with somebody else's children? I have seen a lot of it in the last 27 years. My children grew up here.

They went to Clarence School and I saw plenty of it. Competition. The spirit of competition.

And music and marks and position and this and that and in the church this and that and the other. What happens? You lose the anointing. That's all.

You lose fellowship with the Father. You lose fellowship with your fellow believers. Godliness with contentment.

It's a great game. Don't fix your eyes on other people. Lord, you've drawn a little circle around me.

I want to stay within that circle all my life. I want to provide for my family. I want to make restitution.

I want to be content with what I have. And I also want to give to you and to help the poor. I want my life to count for God.

I want my time and my money. I want to possess nothing. I'm not in a competition.

I'm not here to show that my children are better dressed than somebody else's children. Or my children get better marks than somebody else's. Or my children are better musicians than somebody else's.

I'm not in that competition. I have no interest in that. I have no interest in showing that my children are better than anybody else's in any area.

You may be. You can go ahead. I hope your children will be 10 times better than mine in every area.

Certainly, I really mean that. I'm not in that competition. I don't even think about it.

It doesn't even cross my mind. It's not even a temptation. It is not even a temptation.

I honestly say God is my witness. It has never been a temptation for me in 27 years to compare my children with anybody else's children in the whole wide world. Because I decided I'd be a disciple.

I know that many of my children had to wear the same clothes that the older brother wore because we couldn't afford to buy any clothes for them when they were young. Many of them had to use the same shoes when they went to school that their older brother used. So what? What does it matter? I wouldn't get into debt.

I would not get into debt to get them better shoes or better clothes. Sorry. I'm a disciple.

I value the anointing. I value fellowship with the Father. And I don't regret it.

Today, 28 years later, I can say to you, I don't regret it. And I don't regret it that my children grew up like that. So that they don't have the spirit of competition either.

They were not in competition with anybody in the world. If you have the spirit of competition, you will impart it to your children. It's like the genes in your blood.

And there's a lot of it. I can sense it in the air among the young brothers and sisters in CFC today. The spirit of competition.

I want to say to you, if you want to be a disciple, be content with what you are and what you have. Don't possess anything. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses.

Money can destroy you. Possessions can destroy you. God gives them to us for a short period.

Our talents. Competition is very often in the area of talents, abilities. Forsake those.

Don't possess your talents. Give them up to God. Be a disciple.

Take your talents to Mount Moriah. Lay it on the altar and say, Lord, it's yours. And I tell you, God will use those talents much better than if you try to use it with that competitive spirit.

Are you trying to show that you're better than anybody else? You mothers with this wretched spirit of competition, to show that your children are better than somebody else's children. Boy, you belong to some heathen religion, not Christianity. Really, I'm telling you, I wonder if you're even converted.

I seriously wonder whether some people are converted. What are you converted to? Are you converted to Jesus Christ? Or to some religion? Or converted to CFC? I hope not. I hope you're converted to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

That's the reason why the standard in the church comes down. The fathers and mothers have become backsliders, who were once upon a time radical disciples. They have not forsaken their possessions.

The early apostles were disciples. Jesus was a disciple. Let me show you a verse.

We are learning from Jesus. John chapter 13. John's gospel chapter 13.

You read here about Judas Iscariot sitting at the Last Supper. And Jesus told him, verse 27, after Satan entered into Judas, Jesus said to him, whatever you do, do quickly. And people sitting at the table did not know for what purpose Jesus had said this to him.

And they thought, listen to this, this is the verse I wanted you to see. They thought that Jesus was telling Judas two things. Notice these two things, because in that verse, you learn what Jesus used money for.

It's the only verse in the Bible that tells us what Jesus used his money for. How did they get that idea? Because for three and a half years, they had seen that Jesus used money only for two things. We want to learn and follow.

One, buy the things that you need. That's not a sin. Buy the things that you need.

Second, give something to the poor. Those are the only two reasons why Jesus, for which Jesus used money. Can we buy what we need? Of course, Jesus did it.

You say, but how to decide what we need in your house? That is, so long as you don't become a busy body in other people's matters, and don't judge why that fellow bought that. Just mind your own business. You decide what you need in your house.

And let that person decide what he needs in his house. And let that person decide what type of house he wants to rent or build. And you decide what type of house you want to rent or build.

And let that person decide what vehicle he needs, and you decide what vehicle you need. But anything you need, you can buy. That's between you and God, to decide what you need.

But it's perfectly right. But don't buy what you don't need. This is just for show.

Don't buy things just for show. Don't buy clothes just to show. Ah, see this latest model, latest style.

That's all for the film stars and the television models, not for the disciples of Jesus Christ. I'm not saying you should wear the 18th century fashions. That's not, don't misunderstand me.

I'm saying don't buy something just to show. You got me? You don't have to buy 18th century fashions. But don't buy things just to show.

Buy what you need and give something to the poor. Let's learn and let's follow. He who lived on earth as a businessman and never got into debt, let's learn and let's follow as far as possible.

If some area we find it's a little different today, okay, go before God and say, Lord, the situation is such, there's no way to do it unless I borrow some money from the bank. Okay. But make sure you pay it back as soon as possible.

Lower your standard of living in order to pay it back as soon as possible. Don't keep buying unnecessary things and lengthen the period of repayment of the debt. And make sure that there is enough of property that balances what you have borrowed so that you're not in debt.

You know, if you take a loan for a house, that's okay. That's not a debt because on one side of the balance is a house, on the other side is the money. It's like if you bought gold instead of money, that's not a debt because gold is there.

But if you take a loan for borrowed money to go on a holiday, then there's nothing on the other side. If you borrowed money to buy a scooter, that's okay because provided you insure the scooter, it's there. That's not a debt because money, scooter.

The test is like this. Supposing you die today, will your wife be in debt? That's the test. She can sell your house and pay the debt, then you're not in debt.

She can sell your scooter and pay the debt, you're not in debt. Your scooter was crashed, the insurance pays for it, you're not in debt. But if you borrowed money just to have a big wedding feast, there's nothing on the other side of balance.

Everybody ate it up. Only the old chicken bones are there and the money is gone. That's a debt.

So if you have something on the other side of the balance, that's not a debt. But if you have nothing on the other side of the balance, I wanted to go for a holiday. What's there now? A lot of hot air, that's all.

That's a debt. So there's a little explanation that lifts some burdens from you so that, I'm not saying you can't take a loan from a bank, but I hope there's something on the other side that covers that, so that if you die, your wife is not in debt, your children are not in debt. Do you know the number of people who commit suicide because they're in debt? In America there are people who get into credit card debt and commit suicide.

It's terrible. It's a scheme of the devil to destroy and God's people are being destroyed. Be a radical disciple.

I'm not preaching what I have not practiced. I have practiced this all the 44 years that I've been a Christian. I have never been in debt.

Even when I used to get a hundred and fifty rupees a month when we got married, I refused to get into debt. I lived with what I had. You know, when I got married, I was so poor.

When I left my naval job, my income dropped eighty percent. I was earning eight times that in the Navy. It dropped eighty percent.

I was so poor that I could not even rent a house. I could have if I borrowed. I wouldn't borrow.

So my wife and I had to stay in one room of my parents' home. It's not a good thing, but it's better than borrowing. The Bible doesn't say don't stay in your parents' home, but the Bible does say don't owe any man anything.

So I decided, okay, the Bible doesn't say don't stay in your parents' home, but the Bible does say don't owe any man anything. I will not borrow. And God tested me for three years.

I said, I will not borrow. And I did not go to the rich assemblies. I used to go in those days to the poor villages in Tamil Nadu, around Vellore.

I said, I will not go to the rich assemblies to get gifts. I used to go to Ambur and Gudiyatham and Walaja and all those assemblies over there. You haven't even heard those names.

Those are the places I used to go to. Poor people. And God tested me for three years to see whether I would get into debt just because I couldn't live.

And then He provided my need in amazing ways. What do you do when God tests you? You say, I have to have chicken curry. I have to have fish.

And even after we came to Bangalore, I remember we didn't earn very much. My wife will bear witness to this. There were some years when we used to buy fish once in a year.

It's too expensive for us. The Bible doesn't say you have to eat fish every day or twice a year. The Bible says, don't get into debt.

And I didn't want to get into debt to eat fish. No, it's too expensive. We won't buy fish.

Simple. My brothers and sisters, you could have a fantastic anointing upon your life if you took God's word more seriously. There's a pathetic poverty of spirituality in our midst.

The reason is we don't take God's word seriously. We want to eat fish. We don't fast.

We disobey God's word and we follow the ways of the world, the standards of the world. You say, oh God, anoint me with the Holy Spirit. Not in a thousand years.

God says, take my word seriously. Let's be disciples. And let's not just be disciples.

Let's make our churches full of disciples. There is a price to be paid for the anointing of God. There's a price to be paid for fellowship with the Father.

Let's pay it. And let's manifest to this generation that it's possible to obey the old fashioned commands of God's word, even in the 21st century. Let's pray.

God spoken to your heart. It's easy to be stirred emotionally. The test is whether like Zacchaeus, you will do something about it immediately.

Be a disciple. Be a disciple. Whatever the cost, be a disciple.

Heavenly Father, I see so many wonderful young people here who can be such a tremendous force for God in the land of India. And I can see how the devil is trying to rob them of the power and the anointing of God from their lives by little, little things. Not sinful things, but little, little disobediences to little, little commands in God's word.

You value your comfort more than God's word? How in the world can God give you a rich anointing? Determine today, my brother, sister, that I will never value my comfort or my appetite or anything more than obedience to your word. And you'll find a tremendous difference in your relationship with God in the coming year. A tremendous difference in your home.

A tremendous difference in your ministry. God, our Father, you love us. You want to detach us from the attachment to material things so that money will be our slave and not our master.

Help us each one to follow you. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

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