

# Elders ■ Follow Jesus' Example as Your Leader

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of looking at Jesus as the ultimate example and running the race with endurance, focusing on Hebrews 12 and the examples of enduring hostility and striving against sin. It highlights the need to resist the temptation to fight with flesh and blood, but to strive against sin and listen to God's voice daily. The speaker encourages starting each day with a few moments of prayer and listening to God, seeking to live by every word from God's mouth.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:3, Ephesians 6:12, Matthew 4:4, Isaiah 50:4

**Topics:** "Endurance in Faith", "Listening to God's Voice"

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## Description

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## Transcript

It's important for us as servants of the Lord to look at Jesus and run the race. So Hebrews chapter 12 is a very important passage. We have great examples of servants of the Lord in the Old Testament.

Elijah, people walked with God like Enoch, Joshua, Moses, and mighty servants of God in the Old Testament, Elijah. And many of them are listed in Hebrews 11. But when you read Hebrews 11, always remember the last verse.

God has provided something better for us. When you read through Hebrews 11, keep that verse in mind. Better than pulling down the walls of Jericho, better than splitting the Red Sea, better than shutting the mouths of lions, better than raising the dead.

Those are all mentioned here. God has provided something better for us. I want to ask you, because most Christians don't believe that.

Most Christians today, particularly in charismatics, they think the great thing is to raise the dead and heal the sick and do all types of miracles. Well, there are no miracles that anybody's ever done that can equal

some of the things mentioned here. The children of Israel, in their backslidden state for 40 years, experienced more miracles than any human being, any Christian has ever experienced in their whole life.

Imagine receiving bread from heaven every day for 40 years. I mean, if somebody got that for one day, we would think it's a miracle. They got it for 40 years, and they were the most backslidden of all people.

They displeased God. God was angry with them. So when God does a miracle for somebody, it does not mean he's happy with them.

The history of the children of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness is the proof of that, and we should not be excited when we see people talking about miracles, and we should not envy them. Oh, I wish I could do that and see something like that in our church. God has provided something better for us.

So if you keep that in mind, you will see what God wants us to do in our churches. It's not raise the dead or get bread from heaven, something better. What is that? That is described in chapter 12, verses 1 to 4. See, this chapter division, remember, is not made by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter division is made by men somewhere in the 16th century or something like that to help us to refer to the Bible. So very often we miss something if you don't read on to the next chapter. I've always told people who study the Bible, if you're reading, when you come to the end of the chapter, don't stop there.

Read on to the next chapter, especially in the New Testament. And when you, if you start studying from the beginning of a chapter, start with the last verses of the previous chapter. There are many things I've discovered like this in many parts of the New Testament particularly.

So what is this better thing that God has provided? And interestingly, that better thing is to run the race with endurance, laying aside verse chapter 12, verse 1, in the middle, laying aside every encumbrance. And that requires to, it's like a man coming to run in an Olympic race, say the 100 meters race, if he's got lead weights in his pocket and a chain on his leg. First it refers to the lead weights in his pocket, encumbrance, must throw it away.

And then things that entangle us, chains that are holding us back, get rid of the weights and the chains and run with endurance. And our example is Jesus. So what is this better thing? The better thing than raising the dead, better thing than pulling down the walls of Jericho, better thing than the greatest miracles that man has ever seen, is to follow Jesus along verse 12, middle, enduring the cross.

That is the better thing. I don't know whether all Christians understand that. I'm very thankful that God opened my eyes to be gripped by that when I was a very young man.

I was seeking the Lord at a very young age. I was baptized when I was 21. And then I began to seek for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, even though I was in a brethren assembly that did not teach that.

I said, Lord, how can I be baptized in the Holy Spirit? And God, I went to Pentecostal churches, and one Pentecostal pastor told me to keep on saying hallelujah till my tongue tripped. I said, I don't want all that rubbish. That's not what they did on the day of Pentecost.

I want a real... I'm not worried about tongues, whether I get it or not, but I want an anointing from God. And so I was disappointed with the Pentecostal churches I went to. I was a young man of 23, and I began to seek God.

And the Lord spoke to me, see how Jesus was anointed. When did the Holy Spirit come upon Jesus? It came upon Jesus when He allowed John the Baptist to... He submitted in humility, identified Himself. You know, I think of this sometimes, Jesus going for baptism, and all these well-known sinners are standing in line.

And Jesus doesn't stand in a separate line saying, I'm not a sinner. He wasn't a sinner. He lived 30 years in purity, but He stands in line with all these sinners, willing to be misunderstood.

And I say, Lord, I want to learn that. I don't want to stand apart as a holy man. My holiness is between me and God.

It's not to show other people. He stood in line, He humbled Himself, and then He goes and John the Baptist puts Him completely under the water and raises Him up. And you know what baptism is a picture of? Submitting ourselves to be put to death by other people, and believing that God will raise us up.

The man who is baptized does not make any effort to lift himself up. It's very symbolic. And as Jesus came up, He prayed, and the Holy Spirit came on Him.

And Jesus said, you will receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the same way. You have to be willing to let people put you down. And don't resist it.

It was quite a revelation to me. That's the day at the age of 23, I understood that the way of the cross is the way of life and the way of anointing. I didn't know all this about Hebrews 11, 40, and 12 that I'm speaking to you now.

But God opened my eyes that day, that if I am willing to let other people push me down, and Jesus did not resist. And you know, when we are baptized, we don't resist. We allow other persons to submerge us completely, till we have disappeared from sight.

And that is the way of the cross, to disappear from the sight of human beings. To be pushed down, misunderstood, whatever that means. And then to make no effort to lift oneself up.

When you're baptized, it's somebody else who lifts you up. And it is God who must lift you up. Now, I've said all this in a few sentences.

But dear brothers, the whole secret of the Christian life is there. If you can remember all your life to go this way. And the Lord opened my eyes at that time and said, if you, the day, as long as you go this way, the Lord said to me, I remember it so clearly.

You will have my anointing upon you. The day you think you don't need to go this way, my anointing will depart from you. And I have coveted the anointing of the Holy Spirit in my life more than anything else.

God is my witness. I said, Lord, I don't want honor. I don't want money.

I want the anointing of the Holy Spirit. And I tell you the reason why many Christians, many Christian leaders and other Christians do not have and do not live under the anointing of the Holy Spirit is because it is not the most valuable thing for them. Some other things are more valuable, maybe knowledge of the Bible or ability to preach or so many other things people seek for, like acceptance before others.

You don't have any acceptance when you're buried under the water in baptism. You are completely hidden from sight. I remember once when a brother was being baptized in Bangalore, he was a tall brother, and the one who was baptizing him, his head did not go in fully.

So I said, push it down again. I said, that's the most important part that must go under the water, that upper part of the head, our cleverness and our intelligence. If that's not submerged underwater, you will not be anointed.

I believe that's the biggest hindrance to the top part of our head, is the last part that goes underwater. I myself had to sometimes push a person's head down when, you know, sometimes tall people, the whole body doesn't go in. That has to go in.

It's more than symbolic. And I thank God for that. So Hebrews 12 says, we fix our eyes on Jesus.

And in some translations, it says, looking away from everything else unto Jesus. I'm very thankful that at that young age of 23, God showed me some of the great secrets of the Christian life. First was looking unto Jesus alone, as our example, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith.

I don't get faith by listening to testimonies of what other people did. That encourages me along the way. You know, but that's like little snacks that we get, that we eat.

It's not our main meal. It's somebody's testimony that some need God miraculously helped him. So it encourages us.

But faith comes by looking unto Jesus, fixing our eyes on Jesus. He's the author of my faith. And he's the finisher of my faith.

So I don't want to get faith by looking, listening to somebody else's testimony. It's good. That encourages me.

But I said, I said, that's like eating a little snack along the way. It's not my main meal. The author of my faith must be Jesus Christ.

And very often we say we lack faith because it's your faith. You got your faith from somebody else's testimony. Or you followed some man.

Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. So even if you look at a man who is a good example, you must always look beyond him to the Christ he's following. So looking unto Jesus, who is the author of my faith, I say, Lord, I don't want to have a faith which has come from human beings.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. So that's what it says in Romans 10 in Romans. The word of Christ is the New Testament as opposed to the word of God, which is the whole Bible.

So Romans 10 says faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of Christ. So that means when I read the scriptures, particularly the New Testament, I must hear the word of Christ in my heart. That's what produces faith.

And fixing my eyes on Jesus, the author of my faith and the one who will complete my faith as a growth in faith, author and perfecter means going all the way from kindergarten right to PhD or more. And the next thing I see about Jesus is who endured the cross. We must never forget this.

This is the better thing. Always link this verse with chapter 11, verse 40. God has provided something better.

Have we seen that taking up the cross is better than raising the dead? I mean, theoretically, we can say yes, because we read this verse. But every day of your life, are you gripped by the fact that, Lord, even if I cannot preach a powerful sermon that will impress everybody in my church, I want to take up the cross. That is more important to me than preaching a powerful sermon.

That is more important to me than people esteeming me in the church is more important to me than anything on earth. Enduring the cross. And in it, the thing that the reason why Jesus endured the cross, it says here, is because there was a joy set before him.

And I believe that joy set before him was fellowship with the Father. There was no greater joy for Jesus than fellowship with the Father. So I've seen this that I lose fellowship with God.

If there's some area where I'm not taking up the cross, some little thing, it could be at home. It could be in something that happened in my home and I refused to die, or something that happened in my office, or something that happened with my fellow workers, and I just refused to die. I did not act like a dead man.

I did not reckon myself dead. I was alive. Then the joy has disappeared from our life.

There's only one pure joy, and that is the joy of fellowship with the Father. Every other joy must flow from that. That's why it says in the Psalms, in his presence, you know Psalm 34, in his presence there is fullness of joy.

There is only one place in the universe where there's fullness of joy, and that is in the presence of God. So I see two things. Anytime there's no joy in my life, I don't, I mean fullness of joy, not just a little bit.

Anytime there is no fullness of joy in my life, I say to myself at this moment I'm not in the presence of God. What is uppermost in my mind is some complaint against somebody who treated me badly, or some criticism about someone, or some desire to exalt myself in the eyes of others, or a jealousy that somebody else is being esteemed more than me in the church, or some rubbish like that. Yeah, I'm not in the presence of God.

Something else is bothering me. I've often pictured the veil in the temple, which no Old Testament person could go through, and even the high priest going through once is only a picture of Jesus going through. But when Jesus died, that veil was wrecked.

And Hebrews chapter 10 verse 19 and 20 says that veil was the flesh of Jesus, not the physical flesh. In the New Testament, the word flesh is referred to as our body, but also self-will. Jesus had a self-will which he had to deny every day of his earthly life.

That was the cross in Jesus' life. He endured the cross because of the joy set before him. Now the reason I'm explaining this is because this is the better thing God has provided for us compared to all the great miracles of the Old Testaments.

So if you turn with me to John chapter 6, I often call this the autobiography that Jesus wrote of his life. You know the difference between a biography and an autobiography. A biography is a story of my life written by other people.

Autobiography is what I write about my own life. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is a biography of Jesus. The autobiography of Jesus, what he wrote about himself in one sentence, he described his entire life in John chapter 6 and verse 38.

I came from heaven to do one thing, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. That is the autobiography of 33 and a half years of Jesus' life. The immature Christian will say Jesus came from heaven to die for my sins.

True. That's one small part of God's will for his life. Jesus came from heaven to submit to Mary for 30 years.

People don't think of that. That's also part of his autobiography. I came from heaven never to do my own will.

You know all of us who are children, how it's so difficult to break the will of a child. They're so stubborn that nature of Adam is there in every child and you can see that. They don't automatically obey.

Their first reaction is to say no or refuse to obey or deceive us. Jesus didn't have Adam's nature because he was born of the Holy Spirit. There was no sin in him at all, but he had a will which he could choose.

In the garden of Gethsemane, right at the end of his life, he says, Father, I don't want to drink this cup. Thank God for that honesty, but not as I will, but as thou wilt. I take that down to the younger years of Jesus when his mother told him to do something.

As a child, he probably did not want to do it, but he said not my will. Otherwise, you'd have to say he was not tempted like us. One of the things that encouraged me, I'll tell you, for many years of my Christian life, at least 16 years of my Christian life, I was defeated.

I was the average Christian confessing my sin, being cleansed, confessing, being cleansed, confessing like in these children's merry-go-round. You go around and around and around for many hours, but ultimately you're in the same place. That's how many Christians live.

I sin, I ask God to forgive me, I'm cleansed, and I sin again, and I ask God to forgive me, and I'm cleansed. That is not God's will for my life. But I took 16 years after I was born again to discover that.

And the way I discovered it was when I discovered in Hebrews 4.15 that Jesus was tempted exactly like me in everything, but he never sinned. That means he never did his own will. So there must have been times in his life when he wanted to do something else, but he wouldn't do it.

Otherwise, he's not tempted. He was tempted. It was a real temptation.

Every temptation in the wilderness was a real temptation, but he said no. If it was easy for him to say no, I have to say he was not tempted, because it's not easy for us to say no to our own will. We know that very well.

When somebody hurts us or offended us, or your wife does not submit to you at home, what all temptations come to the own will. I'm not saying you should give up your headship. Never give up the headship in your home, but I have to keep my headship the way Jesus would do it, not the way some carnal man would do it.

We must be the head in our homes. I would never give up the headship in my home, but not in a stubborn way that some worldly person does it. If I give up the headship in my home, I'm unfit to be a Christian leader, because if I can't lead in my home, how can I lead in the church? So my wife gets offended, well just too bad, but I'm going to be the head in my home, because the Bible commands me, husbands be the head of your wife, and I disobey that just to please my wife, then I'm putting my wife above God.

She has become my God. Never allow that. Be kind, be gracious, and submit to any insult and all that.

Keep your mouth shut, and don't answer back. All that is right, but you're going to be the head in your home. You're not going to let her run the home.

If she rebels against you, she has to deal with God. We're not going to go physically fight. We don't fight with flesh and blood.

We don't fight with our wives, ever. If you are blessed enough to have a wife who submits to you, well praise the Lord, but people who have difficult wives sometimes live more saintly lives. One of the greatest men of God was John Wesley, who had an extremely difficult wife.

He really made a mistake in marrying this rich widow later on in his life, who made life really miserable for him in many ways, but he lived a godly life. He did not allow that wicked woman to influence his ministry or his life. So to say no to my own will, but yet to be the head in my home is the same in the church.

I have to lead the church, but not in such a way that I assert myself to impose myself on people, or to threaten them, or punish them in any way just because they don't listen to me. Authority in the church is very important, just like authority in the home, but it must be exercised the way Jesus did it. So I see there that he never did his own will.

That's the secret of the Christian life. So the better thing that God has provided, I want to link this up with Hebrews 11:40. This is the better thing that God has provided.

That is that I remain as the head in whatever position God has put me in my home or in a church as an elder, but I do it the way Jesus did it. I do not fight with flesh and blood. There will not be anything of the attitude of fighting in my mind or in my spirit.

I'll be calm. I'll be full of joy, full of peace, but I'll be the head in the church and in the home. Now that can only be possible as we follow Jesus.

So I was talking about this veil in the temple. The veil is called the flesh of Jesus, the self-will, which is the rending of the veil is the crucifixion of the will of Christ. And why did he do that? It says, we read in Hebrews 12, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, which means he read the veil on the other side of the veil, you know, in the temple was God dwelt in the most holy place.

He did not dwell in the holy place of the outer court. The fire of God was in the most holy place of the tabernacle. And the tabernacle had three parts, outer court and two parts that were hidden under the tent, exactly like us.

The outer court is our body visible to everybody. Inside our body are two parts hidden, like under the tent of the tabernacle, soul and spirit, corresponding to holy place and most holy place. And between the soul and the spirit, between the soul, holy place and the most holy place is this veil.

In my whole, in my personality, I have my mind and my emotions. They don't make me spiritual. I can be instructed in my mind, stirred in my emotions.

When I hear a message and be stirred, you can be instructed, but you don't become spiritual. A lot of people think they are. I got it.

You haven't got it. Till the veil is rent, the veil is my will. When I say not my will, then I follow Jesus.

See, this is where we can easily mistake that I've understood something. I've heard these truths. I'm good by it.

I don't need to hear that again, because I've heard it so many times. We probably need to hear it a thousand times. It's when our will is yielded that we enter the most holy place.

And how do you know your will is yielded all the time? In his presence, there is fullness of joy. In his presence, there is fullness of joy. Please remember that verse.

Is it Psalm 16 or Psalm 34? 16. Yeah. Psalm 16.

I know I'm getting old when I can't get the exact verse. Thank you. Psalm 16 and verse 11.

In your presence is fullness of joy. That's the test I have used for myself for some years now. When I don't... Not joy.

Joy, everybody in the world has. You know, you get a promotion or something goes well with you or something. You get joy.

Fullness of joy is only in God's presence. And any time in my life, morning, noon, or night, or middle of the night, or any time, if I don't have fullness of joy, I say to myself, at this moment, I'm not in God's presence. I don't condemn myself because of that.

No, there is no condemnation. My dear brothers, please remember this. Never allow the devil to condemn you.

Never allow any preacher to condemn you by his preaching. Never allow me to condemn you by my preaching. I don't want to do it.

I don't intend to do it, but you can take it in a wrong way and take it as a condemnation. I refuse to condemn people because condemnation is from the devil. So I must live.

I believe the Lord wants us to... What does it say? Rejoice in the Lord always. Not rejoice in my circumstances. I cannot rejoice in my circumstances always because it can be painful.

If I'm sick or fell down and had an accident or something, I don't rejoice in that. I rejoice in the Lord in every situation. When it says always, it means 24-7.

And this is an important part of Hebrews chapter 12, looking unto Jesus. Looking unto Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross. And that joy is the fullness of joy we read in Psalm 16 verse 11.

In your presence there is fullness of joy. And as I said, when I don't have fullness of joy, it means I'm not in his presence, which means I've not rent the veil. Well, the veil has once and for all been rent by Christ.

Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 10, verse 19 and 20. Brethren, Hebrews 10, 19, we have confidence to enter the... Here is the most holy place, really, by the blood of Jesus, which takes care of all our sins. And this is the important verse, by a new and living way, which he inaugurated for us through the veil that is his flesh.

Read it as that is his self-will, which he denied, as you read in John 6, 38, never doing his own will all the way to Gethsemane. And thus the veil was rent. So we can say that Jesus lived with the rent veil all the time in the Father's presence.

Every time he denied his will, he was in the Father's presence. He denied his will. That's why he denied his will.

He says, that's the only way I can be in my Father's presence. That's why he said, I never do my own will, but do the will of my Father. Even when it meant that painful three hours of separation and experiencing hell on the cross for our sake.

It's amazing. He was willing to go all the way. And that is called... Now we would think of a veil as a door.

The door is open, I go in. The veil has already been rent. I don't have to rent the veil anymore.

Jesus rented. But it's called here a way, not a door. And there's a difference between a door and a way.

A door I enter immediately. A way is, you know, like Jesus said, the gate is narrow and the way is also narrow that leads to life. So you don't enter life by just a gate, narrow gate.

It's a narrow gate plus a narrow way that leads to life. And a lot of preaching makes people feel it's just a gate. You entered and you got into life.

No. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, the gate is narrow and the way is also narrow that leads to life. So that narrow way is not what has not been emphasized sufficiently in Christendom.

That's we emphasize in our churches. We do want to get people through the gate, be born again. But I say if you want to enter life and possess eternal life more and more, there's a way to be walked.

And that is called a new and living way. And that way is through the veil. And the only way I can walk that veil is by denying myself every moment.

That's the meaning of taking up the cross every day. Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. 2 Corinthians in chapter 4 we read in verse 10. Again we read the word always.

Always means 24-7. Carrying in our body the dying of Jesus. What is the dying of Jesus? It's the same thing.

Saying no to my will. Always saying no to my will. Because that's the only way it says here the life of Jesus will be manifested in my body.

If I say it's very simple. It's not by knowing the truth in my head. It's not by determination.

It's not by even the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. He was full of the Holy Spirit I believe from childhood.

But that wasn't enough. The fullness of the Holy Spirit was to enable him to say no to his own will. Why is God filling me with the Holy Spirit? Not to preach powerful messages.

That's part of the anointing. But the primary purpose of the fullness of the Holy Spirit in my life is so that I can say no to my own will every single moment. That's called the dying of Jesus.

Never forget this expression. It changed my life nearly 50 years ago. Understanding this expression.

The dying of Jesus. And not just understanding it intellectually but practical situations in daily life. When I deal with in our church, in our home, deal with your children at home when they are young and rebellious.

And when we deal with people in the church who speak to us in an insulting way or... I've experienced this in the years of Bangalore sometimes. Young people come to the church and they suddenly begin to... young children of members in the church who suddenly begin to think they're very important. And they speak to you in a rude way.

Don't get offended with them. Just they are children. Bear with them and say, okay.

Always bearing in our body the dying of Jesus. And I tell you this. If you really are serious about this.

You're really serious about it. I call this an education. If you're really serious, Lord, I want the life of Jesus in me.

Like it says in verse 10, 24-7. Is it possible to have the life of Jesus manifested in my body 24-7? It all depends on whether you believe 2 Corinthians 4-10 to be the word of God or not. That's all.

Always, 24-7, the life of Jesus manifested in our body. And we must come to the place where we don't repent for gross sins like other people do. That we finished with long ago.

We repent for gross sins, but repent when the life of Jesus was not manifested in some particular situation in my life. The way I spoke a word. Anywhere.

Or the attitude I had towards someone. I feel that a lot of believers in our churches have heard a lot about taking up the cross. Very often think of it only in the external.

I must behave in a gentle Christ-like way. I'll tell you, it does not begin there. It begins in attitudes.

Attitude to people in your church to begin with. Attitude to your family. Bear the dying of Jesus there.

As I said, it does not mean giving up your authority as an elder. It does not mean giving up your headship, the authority as the head of the home. No.

That's the delicate balance that we need to have and God will give us wisdom for it. How can I bear the dying of Jesus and be the head of my home? Not allow the children to do what they like. Not allow my wife to run the home.

No. How can I be an elder in a church and yet be a servant ready to wash their feet? I need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. The dying of Jesus.

It's not at all, I'll tell you this, if you have the slightest desire to get a reputation for humility, forget about it. You will not be able to follow Jesus. That's one of the big things that you have to die to.

The reputation for he's a humble brother. Garbage. I don't want that reputation.

I want it before God. I want God to say I'm a humble person, not human beings. That testimony is worthless.

It's one of the things I need to be gripped in my mind. The testimony of all the people in your church is worthless. They think you're a humble brother.

Throw it in the trash can, brother. It's worth nothing. Let God certify that you're a humble person before him.

Jesus did not go around looking up for a reputation before people. You know, he had such humility. I believe one of the greatest manifestations of Jesus' humility is this.

Believe it or not. Learn from me for I'm a humble man. Have you ever tried saying that to anybody? Have you ever tried saying to somebody, learn from me, I'm a humble man? Only a truly humble person like Jesus could say it.

And we got a long way to get there, I'll tell you. Don't try saying it tomorrow. I see his humility was there.

He was not at all proud when he said it. He was the humblest person that walked on the earth that he could point to himself and not at all feel proud of it. I say, Lord, I'm a long way from there, but I want to get there.

But I'm not bothered what people think about me, but I want to be in genuine humility because that is the opposite of Satan. Satan will have no power over me if I walk this way. There are two things I see the characteristic of Satan.

One is his my will and the other is pride. Yeah, my will and pride are the characteristic of Satan. That's what made the highest angel into a devil in a moment.

And that's what will turn any good man into an evil man. It's not adultery and theft and all primarily, it is my will, my will, my will and exalting myself above others. We've heard all these things for years.

I'm only reminding you of what you've heard many times, but I find we need to be here about it again and again and again, the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus will be manifested in our body. I cannot produce it. I can try and act like Jesus.

And many times I know we have tried to do that. I want to behave like Jesus here. Good desire.

I want to see what Jesus would do here. Good. It's a good question to ask ourselves, what would Jesus do in this situation? But remember, ultimately, the life of Jesus is not going to be manifested by individual choices.

What would Jesus do here and what would Jesus do there? It's by bearing in my body the dying of Jesus. The life of Jesus can be produced only by the Holy Spirit. I can try and act like Jesus in a particular situation by asking myself this question, what would Jesus do here? Let me do that.

But to produce the life of Jesus in me, that's impossible. That's the life of God. How can I produce it? The Holy Spirit has to give it to me.

And I have to say, Lord, I can't produce it. And the Lord says, I'll produce it in you if you willingly accept the dying of Jesus, which is saying no to your own will, which is the same as take up your cross every day and follow. Every moment of my life, I must say, Lord, am I walking the way of the cross or not? I'll tell you this, there are very few churches and preachers who are preaching the word of the cross regularly.

If you don't believe that, just go to YouTube and pick up any random message. There are so many thousands of messages on YouTube and see how many preach the word of the cross. Hardly anybody.

It's true. I've hardly heard it for all my life. I've heard so many preachers in India.

I never heard one person consistently preach the word of the cross. It's a missing message in Christendom and we must preach it in our churches because that is the only way the life of Jesus will be manifested in the people in our church. And that is what will bring unity.

There are many human methods by which we can bring unity, you know, get people to play games together and so many techniques, human techniques to bring unity, but ultimately it's only the Holy Spirit who can bring that unity. And that is if we teach everyone the way of the word of the cross. And I ask myself, when I look at all the CFT churches that I travel around, I wonder how many of the people sitting here have understood what it is to bear the dying of Jesus every moment of their life.

It's not a strain. It's not a strain. I believe that God is in Jesus' life wasn't a constant strain.

Oh, I've got to take up the cross. I've got to take up the cross. No, it was a way of life.

And I believe denying his will and doing the father's will was as easy for Jesus as breathing. The only time it became tough was when he came to Gethsemane. That's because he had to do something which we never have to do.

We cut off from the father. It's like go to hell. That's what Jesus experienced for three hours on the cross was hell.

That was the only time he had a struggle. The fire of hell didn't bother him, but bother to be cut off from you, with whom you and I had fellowship for eternity. I mean, I'd be cut off from you for three hours.

Yes. Otherwise, these people will go to hell. Zach will go to hell.

Say, thank you, Lord. Thank you. You were willing to accept that for me.

I'll never forget the way the day the Lord opened my eyes to see this. That he, I like to think of it as personal. I like to think of my relationship with Jesus as personal.

I know he died for the world, but he died for me. And therefore, in Gethsemane, he was thinking of me. If I don't choose this, Zach goes to hell.

So, Father, for Zach's sake, I'll choose it. Make it personal and make a tremendous difference in your life. I say, Lord, I want to go that way.

You chose it for me and you opened a way for me. I want to walk that new and living way. It's a life-giving way.

And it's transformed my life increasingly. It's not something you just see in a moment. It becomes more and more clear as you continue to walk this way.

I call it the way of the rent veil. Walk that way, brothers. I exhort you in every situation.

You'll find, don't assert yourself. Give up your rights. Don't fight with flesh and blood.

That's another thing, but I'll come to that in a moment. Let me finish it second Corinthians 4, 10. Always bear in my body.

There are two things. One is the life of Jesus becomes manifest in my body. And here's the second part.

This is the blessed part of it, verse 11 and 12. Second Corinthians 4, 11 and 12. If I go this way, the life of Jesus will be manifested in others.

It's amazing. I choose a way and life becomes manifested in others, not just in me. I look at it like this.

When I'm born again, John chapter 3, I have a cup of water. Jesus told Nicodemus, a man must be born of water. That's a cup of water.

The psalmist said, I lift up the cup of salvation. So my life is a cup of water. My sins are forgiven.

You move on to John chapter 4, it's a greater level of water, a well of water. That's what Jesus told the Samaritan woman. One who trusts in me, there'll be a well in him of life.

That's a greater degree of water where all my needs are continuously satisfied. Those who have wells in their houses in India, we've seen, it never dries up. Year after year, their father and grandfather use the same well.

They can draw water from it continuously. All our needs perpetually satisfied by the Holy Spirit. And the third water in John's gospel is John chapter 7. Chapter 3 is a cup of water.

Chapter 4 is a well of water. Then finally, that water flowing out like rivers of living water, that is God's ultimate goal. That the cup becomes a well and becomes not just one river, but rivers flowing in many directions that God makes your life to be a blessing, not just to your church, but to people in many directions.

You cannot do it, but God can do it. If you allow him to break you inwardly, rivers will flow from your life, I tell you, in many directions without even any effort on your part. And that's what it says here.

First of all, the life of Jesus Christ is manifested in me. And then God delivers me to death in different situations, so that this life will be manifested and that life, verse 12, springs up in others as death works in me. It's quite an amazing thing.

This is the rivers of living water, blessing others. When death works in me, some way or the other, life will work in other people in your church. So don't think you're going to produce life in others by preaching powerful messages or entertaining them with humorous stories.

This is God's way, and you choose this way. Death works in us so that, like coming back to Hebrews chapter 12, who now we see, the joy set before him was to endure the cross, despising the shame, and he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. In Revelation chapter 3, that's how he sat down at the

right hand of the throne of God.

There was only one way that Jesus went to the right hand of the throne of God. That is the way of the cross. And there is no other way that he's planned for us.

Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 3. Sorry, Revelation chapter 3, verse 21. He who overcomes, and I see overcoming as this. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I have overcome myself so that God's will is done in my life.

He who overcomes, one day I will grant him to sit with me on my throne just like I also overcame I was also tempted like you, Jesus says, and I overcame through the power of the Holy Spirit and then sat down with my father on his throne. That is the way Jesus went to the throne, and brothers, that is the way he's appointed for us to go to the throne. He wants us to sit on the throne.

Not now. I hope none of you as elders are sitting on thrones. Today our job is to wash people's feet.

That's our job as elders. We have to exercise authority, definitely, but it's just like we exercise authority at home. You know you are the head of your children, recognize you as their father, but you're not living for yourself.

Everything you do, almost you work slog away in the office every day for whom? For your children, for your wife, for your home. You're serving them. In a sense, you're washing their feet, working so hard to earn money for them, to feed them, clothe them, educate them, all that.

You're serving them, but you are the head of the home. You're making so many sacrifices, but you're the head of the home. That is eldership in the church as well.

Those children don't appreciate your sacrifices. They don't know how hard you're working in the office, your children. They don't know what all insults you face there and what all struggles you face in order to earn to feed them and clothe them and educate them.

They don't know it. It doesn't matter. You don't want them to know it.

Maybe your wife also doesn't know what all struggles you go through to earn your monthly income, but you do it. It doesn't matter if nobody knows it. You do it because you love your family.

You care for them. That is to be our attitude to a church. That is the type of authority that we must have in the home and in the church.

They don't need to know about our sacrifices. They don't need to know what all we struggle with or what all we go through. We want at home our children to grow up well, and we want the church to be established firmly on the rock.

For that, we had to go through many struggles. Think of your leadership in the church exactly like your headship at home, and see what all you're willing to endure as the head of the home in order to be able to take care of your family, to pay the rent, to provide the food, to provide education for your children. All of that so that one day your children grow up and can stand on their own feet.

That is eldership in the church, and when your children are able to stand on their own feet, you're glad to step back, and you're delighted to see how they don't need your financial support anymore. They're

earning on their own, standing on their own feet. That's the joy you should have when you see people in your church who don't need you anymore.

They're getting up and preaching, and they're doing the work which you spent your life sacrificing and doing everything for them to do. That is true eldership. Always compare your eldership to the way you're a head in your home, with your family, to your children.

Then you'll be a first-class elder. Do your children misunderstand you? Sure. They're kids.

They don't understand the sacrifices you make. They may act rebellious and all. You don't chuck them out of the house because they are rebellious.

You endure with it. Yeah, this is a kid of mine. He doesn't understand yet.

Let me be merciful and kind. One day that child who's rebellious will thank you if you're still alive, or he may regret later on. You're dead and gone.

He'll say, oh boy, I wish I had been different towards my dad. That is how all of you are fathers in your home. I know that.

That's how I sought to be a father. All of us are like that. Compare your position in the church exactly like that.

You don't wait for your children to come and greet you and thank you every day. No. When do they thank you? Some of them hardly ever.

Once in a while. But you continue. Your sacrifice has got nothing to do whether they appreciate it or it's just your fervent love for them.

You know that God has put you as the head of your family. And whether your wife appreciates it or not, whether your children appreciate it or not, you slog away in your place of work to earn money for some of them even if they are ungrateful. You care for them.

You love for them. Say, Lord, make me an elder like that. That's how all of us are supposed to be.

And if you're an elder like that, you'll be a first-class elder even if the people in your church are ungrateful. One day when the Lord's taken you away from that, they will thank God for a man of God that was in their midst. So be a man of God like that.

Don't wait for them to thank you. We're not here to receive thanks from anyone. I remember years ago, I've said this in more than one message, how we served a young brother in our church.

Frequently, he would stay in our home after the meetings and we helped him in so many ways. And he got a good job finally and went away to another town. And he never wrote us a note of thanksgiving for years.

And I said, what an ungrateful guy this is. He hasn't even written, even though we did so much for him when he was in Bangalore in our church. And the Lord spoke to me that in as much as you've done it to the least of these my brothers, you've done it unto me.

You know that verse from Matthew 25. And the Lord said, you should not have done it unto him. You've done it unto him, you've done it unto me.

The Lord said, if you've done it unto me, who should give you thanks? He or me? I said, I'm sorry Lord. I was sinning in expecting somebody to thank me. I never knew till that day that expecting somebody to be grateful to me was a sin.

You know how we get light on unconscious sins? That is one of those unconscious sins I got light on. That to expect somebody to be thankful to you for what you've done. I see it as a sin because I've not then done it unto the Lord.

I've done it unto that person. I mean, it's good for him to be thankful. That's for his own sake, but not for my sake.

I want to be thankful to people who've helped me in many ways, but I don't want to expect thanks from anybody. In as much as you've done it to the least of these my brothers, you've done it unto me. So don't ever feel sorry for yourself as an elder.

People are not grateful to me for all that I've done for them. Garbage. Throw that in the trash can.

Lord, I don't want I'm not doing this for people to come and thank me or celebrate my birthday one day. I'm not saying you should stop them from celebrating their birthday, your birthday. I remember when some folks wanted to celebrate my 80th birthday some years ago, I said, Lord, I don't want this.

It's just a whole lot of people getting up and saying, and the Lord said to me, I remember that many years ago. He said, if your four sons came and said, Dad, we want to have a celebration for your 80th birthday. What do you say? No, no, no.

I don't think I'd ever say that to my four sons. Sure. They want to express their gratitude to that.

And the Lord said to me, these hundreds of people in your churches are your children. Why are you saying no to them? Just like you would not say no to your four sons. Let them be happy.

They want to express their gratitude. So I said, okay. Not because I wanted to do something.

I hope it will bless them. So I learned that, but I don't live for that. I say, Lord, everything I do must be as unto you.

So don't go to the extreme that you won't let somebody come and say thank you to you. Accept it in humility, give the glory to God, but you don't do that for gratitude from them. That's what I'm trying to say.

It must be balanced here. So to endure the cross, looking at Jesus, let's turn back to Hebrews and chapter 12. So this is how he sat down on the right hand of the throne of God all through his life.

He said no to his own will. And he says, and we saw that in Revelation 321, you overcome in the same way, even as I overcame. What did he overcome? He overcame his own will.

And if we overcome our own will, we will overcome Satan also. And he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. So Ephesians chapter six, this is another passage the Lord opened my eyes to soon after he filled me with the Holy Spirit afresh before CFC started 50 years ago, nearly 50.

And that was just this phrase, Ephesians 6, 12. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, powers, world forces of darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. So take

up the armor of God that you can stand against the devil and the evil day.

So what I learned from that was if I want to overcome Satan, then I must never fight with flesh and blood. That came crystal clear to me many years ago. If they push me under the water, I will submit, let them push me under the water.

That is baptism. Let me go right down. Let them kill me.

God will raise me up. That's why Jesus submitted to the cross. He knew that his father would raise him up.

He had absolutely no doubt about it. And when somebody puts me to death, I'm absolutely sure God will raise me up. I don't have to struggle to lift myself up from that baptismal tank.

Somebody else will lift me up. And if I can trust a man to lift me up out of the baptism tank, I can definitely trust Almighty God, my father, to lift me up when somebody pushes me into death. Do you believe that? Do you believe that when somebody, your enemy, or even somebody in your church tries to put you down to death, that your heavenly father will lift you up? Or do you try to lift yourself up and assert yourself and say, hey, I'm the elder around here.

How dare you talk to me like that? Garbage. I never want to do that. I will not struggle with flesh and blood, even though those flesh and blood are believers or unbelievers.

Makes no difference. I will not struggle with flesh and blood. I will not fight with flesh and blood.

And the Lord told me, if you refuse to fight in flesh and blood, you'll always have authority over Satan. And I tell you, you know the time when the disciples tried to cast out a demon. They tried and tried and tried and nothing happened.

Jesus came in with one word, the demon left. And I said, Lord, I want to walk as you walked. In India, we come across demon possessed people because there's a lot of worship in the temples and people go to the temples and all types of things.

There are demons there all over the place. And you go into the villages of India, if you don't know how to cast out a demon, well, counseling won't help. And I've seen this in every single case where I've encountered a demon since then, since I understood that I must never fight with human beings.

I must not fight with people in the church. I must not fight with people outside the church. If people take advantage of me, let them take advantage.

God will take care of it. There's a lot of opportunity to fight with people, to haggle in the marketplace. And you know, there are people, even if you get an auto rickshaw or a taxi cab in India, that they'll argue with you over the price and things like that.

I'm not going to fight. I refuse to fight. I remember riding my scooter.

I mean, I rode a scooter for 42 years in India. And sometimes people are careless. They come and hit you.

And the rule in India in a road accident is whoever shouts the loudest is right. So they know that law. So as soon as they hit you, they'll stand up and say, why you come like that? Even though it is his fault completely.

I understood this pretty early. And so when the guy is completely in the wrong and I go and hit him, no, he comes and hits me. I immediately say, I'm sorry, sir.

Oh, then he smiles. He says this perfectly. He graciously forgives me.

And he goes on. And I'm at peace. It's not just that.

Because of that, next week when I confront a demon, that demon will listen to me. That's what I mean. So I'm not going to lose that authority just because I'm going to fight with this fellow on the road because he scratched my scooter.

I'm giving a practical example. I will not fight with flesh and blood in any situation. I will not fight with my wife at home under any situation.

Even if I know I'm 100% right and she is 100% wrong. That's not always the case. It's never the case, actually.

We are always somewhat in the wrong. Every husband is somewhat in the wrong all the time. But I refuse to fight because I want to have authority over demons.

We struggle, we wrestle not against flesh and blood. And I've seen this, brothers. Every single time I've encountered a demon, the demon has left the person, man or woman, with one sentence.

Every single time. Now I want to preserve myself that. I don't want to have authority over people.

I'm willing to be the servant of all people, but I want to have authority over Satan. And in my personal life as well. I remember in the early days when I was a defeated Christian, I would have dreams that were scary.

I even remember as an oppressive pressure on my body one night. But it's all gone. And the Lord said to me, as you were afraid of Satan, Satan will be afraid of you from now on.

I believe that and I live in that. I said, that's more important to me than being accepted in the church or respected or honored or any such thing. Dear brothers, our battle is not with flesh and blood.

Don't seek for honor in the church, please. Don't seek to be a respected elder in CFC churches. Garbage.

Lord, I want you to approve of my life. I want the devil to be scared. That's enough.

And then we shall build the church strong and powerful. Just a few more things in Hebrews chapter 12 again. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 3, consider him who has endured such tremendous hostility, verse 3, by sinners against himself, that you will never go weary and lose heart.

My brothers, take that word seriously. Never grow weary or lose heart, no matter what happens. Never grow weary, even if you bungled up and spoiled something.

Okay, Lord, I'm spied, messed it all up there. I'm sorry. Go before God and say, Lord, I'm really sorry I messed up that situation.

Or I behaved in such an ungodly way there. Please forgive me. Don't lose heart, get up.

Press on, you can still overcome. Verse 4, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. That means you have not yet come to the place where people have crucified you physically, killed you in your resisting against sin.

You have not yet come to that place. Say, Lord, I want to resist sin. I don't want to resist human beings.

No, I will not. Striving against sin, it's a little expression, striving against sin, in verse 4. Not against human beings, never against human beings, never against my fellow believers. I express myself.

And as you all know, I'm a person who expresses myself very strongly. When I speak in the pulpit, I express myself strongly. When I write a letter, I express myself strongly.

That's just my personality. I was born that way. I try to be free from sin.

Sometimes it's not perfect. But I see that Paul once wrote to the Galatians saying, you foolish Galatians. I never got that far.

He was more spiritual than me. He could say that. But I think he never felt convicted about it.

He was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes you have to use strong words to wake people up. The Corinthians, he said, shall I take a rod and come at you? He was very strong.

Jesus was even stronger. You vipers, you generation of vipers. Did he want them to be saved? Sure.

The people who he called generation of vipers were the people he came to die on the cross for. Those Pharisees whom he called generation of vipers were the ones he hung on the cross for. So he loved them enough to die for them, but yet then he spoke to them very strongly.

Yeah, people may misunderstand you, brothers. But if God can approve of you, and if you say, Lord, I want to strive against sin, and I want to strive against people. I want to be available to you.

I want to listen to your voice. Hear what you have to say to me all the time. In conclusion, I turn you to Matthew 4 for the first words of Jesus after he was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

He was anointed with the Holy Spirit in the last verses of Matthew 3. And the very next thing is temptation, where in his first spoken words of his ministry was spoken to the devil. Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Please remember that all your life when you wake up in the morning.

I have developed a habit since a long time now. Before I get out of bed, however busy my day is going to be, to spend a few moments talking to my father. I encourage you all to do it.

Once you get out of bed, life will be a rush. Before you get out of bed, if you can spend 10 minutes, wake up 10 minutes early if necessary, talk to your father. Very often I speak in tongues to my father at that time.

And I don't know what else to say. To worship him. That is how I begin my day.

Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. To say, Father, I want to hear you today. I want my ears to be open.

It says about Jesus in Isaiah chapter 15 and verse 4. The Lord wakes me up morning by morning. Isaiah 50 verse 4. This is what I mean by lying in bed early in the morning. Isaiah 50 verse 4, the last middle of that verse.

The Lord wakes me up morning by morning. And he wakes up my ear to listen as a disciple. And that does not mean I listen for 10 minutes and finish.

Now the rest of the time I'm on my own. No. It's the start of a process that must go throughout the day.

While I'm doing all my other work, I'm not consciously listening. But I say, Lord, my inner ear is open. Anytime in the day he may whisper a word to you.

Brothers, live like that. You will be changed. Your family life will be changed.

Your church will be changed. Because there's life in every word that proceeds from the Father. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

And that proceeds is present continuous tense. It's not just the Bible. Proceeds means what he's speaking now.

When I read the Bible, I want Jesus to speak to me through it now. What is your word to me now through this word? So if we live like that, I believe God will also give you the right word when you have to speak to your church whenever the opportunity arises. But develop this habit.

I know many of you, your lives are very busy in your place of work. But develop this habit and it'll be life transforming. So according to the program, we have to have a break now.

Then we'll have a time for questions and answers on to that. For the questions that you have sent already. So let us pray.

Father, please apply these fruits to our hearts. Whatever is appropriate to each person's need. Help us to honor you in our life.

The rest of this day, Lord, make it a blessed day for us. In Jesus name. Amen.

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