

# Family Life in the New Covenant

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the new covenant and its implications on various aspects of our lives, particularly focusing on the seriousness of sin, the assurance of God's forgiveness, the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing God as our Father, and the empowerment to do God's will. It also delves into the significance of loving Jesus supremely, bearing the dying of Jesus, detaching from the love of possessions, and being kept in the presence of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, it highlights the vital role of family life in the new covenant, stressing the need for godly relationships, discipline, and instruction of children in the fear of the Lord.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 12:7, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Timothy 3:4, Luke 14:26, Ephesians 6:4, 2 Timothy 3:1, 1 Corinthians 11:3, Titus 1:6, Proverbs 22:6

**Topics:** "New Covenant", "Family Life in Christ"

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## Description

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## Transcript

So we have been looking at the new covenant these past months and just to review what we've already done. And the first, this is a, we finished 10 sessions, the first one was we saw the seriousness of sin which they did not understand under the old covenant. So as we, as I go through this, you can see yourself, we can all see whether we've understood, even if we haven't experienced, whether we understand and long for this new covenant.

Number one is the seriousness of sin. And that's something that should increase in us as we walk with the Lord. And secondly, to be absolutely sure that God does not remember our past sins.

How do you know you're sure of that? I'll tell you that you will not remember the sins that other people have done against you. If you remember them, you don't believe God's blotted out your past sins because we pray forgive us as we forgive others. And thirdly, the Holy Spirit reveals God is our father.

Now, how do we know whether we know that or not? We are free from anxiety. If Almighty God who rules the universe is your father, you cannot be anxious. And number four is God who gives us the desire and ability to do God's will.

That means, how do we know that? I acknowledge I can't do it. I can't do God's will. I don't have the desire and I don't have the ability, but I believe with all my heart that God will fill me with the Holy Spirit.

And this is the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit. You have a tremendous desire to do God's will and you have the power to do it. And then number five, the new covenant leads us to love Jesus supremely.

And Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. It's not an emotional thing. And number six, we will bear the dying of Jesus constantly.

In other words, taking up the cross will not be a burdensome, heavy thing. We gladly die to self daily. And number seven, we'll be detached from the love of possessions and money.

Only the Holy Spirit can do that. All human beings love money from the beggar to the billionaire. Only the Holy Spirit can detach us from it.

But the measure in which we are attached to Christ is entirely dependent on the measure in which we are detached from the love of money. If you're not getting closer to Christ, you're going to be pretty sure you're getting attached to the love of money. It's one of two directions.

And the next one is the Holy Spirit keeps us in the presence of Christ. I've set the Lord always before me and that's how we keep from sin. And number nine, we know that Satan's been defeated and the Holy Spirit gives us light on Satan's tactics when complete freedom from the fear of the devil because we know he's been defeated on the cross.

And number 10, we learn to worship God, not praise God. Praise what many people call worship in a meeting. Worship meeting is not a worship meeting.

It's a praise meeting, praise and thanksgiving meeting. Worshiping is something you really can do only all by yourself when you're all alone with nobody around. That's the ideal place to worship God.

Okay, we go to number 11 now and that is the importance of family life. In the old covenant, there was no emphasis on family life. There is no command in the Old Testament on husbands to love their wives or wives to submit to their husbands because those things were not possible without the power of the Holy Spirit.

There was no command to, I mean, you go to the Proverbs and the Psalms. There are a few new covenant teachings in those two books. But apart from that, there is no command that you must bring up your children, for example, in the fear of God.

Two great prophets that the Lord often, when He spoke to Jeremiah, He said, even if Moses and Samuel plead for these people, I will not listen. So we recognize that God counted Moses and Samuel as two of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. But Moses was a man, what I read about him with his wife is he fought with his wife and he disobeyed God and didn't circumcise his son until God almost killed him.

You read that in Exodus 4. Here's a man who fought with his wife, who had not obeyed God in relation to his commandments, and yet he was the greatest leader in Israel. Samuel, you read about Samuel that he

had two sons and in an act of nepotism, which is doing favor to your own relatives, he appointed them as the next judges after him. Can you imagine doing such an evil thing? And those sons went around taking bribes till the Israelites came to Samuel and said, please remove these sons of yours.

Samuel would not have been fit to be an elder in a church today because his children were where they were. But he was one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. And Moses, we don't know anything about how he brought up his sons.

So we see two of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. Their family life was completely crazy and wayward, and still they were prophets, but not so in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the rule is for leadership.

1 Timothy 3, it says when Paul is telling Timothy to select elders, he says it must be one, 1 Timothy 3, 4, who manages his own family well, keeps his children, all his children, under control with dignity, because if a man does not know how to manage his own family, he cannot take care of God's church. That is a law which is completely disobeyed by almost 90% of the preachers and pastors I've met in my life. Their children are wayward, but they continue to be leaders.

It's almost as though 1 Timothy 3 is not written in their Bible. They should resign. Do they do it? No.

They couldn't care less for the Word of God. That is the condition of Christendom. It's there.

They read it. I don't know what they do with it. And in Titus chapter 1, it says, for appointing elders, he says, make sure, Titus 1, verse 6, that their children are believers.

That's even a higher standard. Now, how can God ask for that unless he gives us the ability? And I'll tell you, God gives us the ability if we see our need and go to him. There's only one place in the Bible, in the New Testament, where we read, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's in Ephesians 5. It's very important to see what it says there immediately after being filled with the Holy Spirit. I see two results. Ephesians 5, verse 18, don't get drunk, but be filled with the Spirit.

Now, the contrast in these two things shows us that it's as important to not get drunk as it is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When you come to a church meeting, if you come drunk, everybody will see, well, look at this guy, disobedient to God's Word. We'd probably keep him outside.

But do you feel the same way that when you come to a church meeting, you must be filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, it doesn't matter. The two go together. Don't get drunk, but be filled with the Holy Spirit.

So to say, I'm not drunk, I go to the meeting, I'm not drunk, but are you filled with the Holy Spirit? It's the same verse. Christians have not valued it because the devil has produced so many counterfeits. So here it says, the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is a spirit of thanksgiving, speaking to one another in Psalms and always giving thanks.

Ephesians 5, Ephesians 5, 18 is be filled with the Spirit, and Ephesians 5, 20 is always giving thanks. I know in my life, I had a lot of discouragement, condemnation, grumbling, complaining, fighting, anger, so many things. But it was only when I was filled with the Holy Spirit that those things disappeared through the power of the Holy Spirit.

And don't be satisfied with any excuse. If these things are still in your life, say, I'm not filled with the Holy Spirit. Go to Him.

We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit every day. You can backslide, sure. The other mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit is family life.

It says always giving thanks, be subject to one another, verse 21, and then wives, be subject to your husbands. A Spirit-filled wife will always, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, be subject to her husband. Yeah.

It's a mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit. And at least we'll try to, we'll seek to with all our heart, and we'll repent when she does not. And then a Spirit-filled husband will seek with all his heart to love his wife, verse 25, as Christ loves the church.

And I don't think any husband reaches there, but there'll be a tremendous longing to love his wife just like Christ loved the church, to die to myself in my relationship to my wife. And when I don't do it successfully, I seek God again to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This was not there in the Old Testament.

Family life was not at all important in the Old Testament. Your children could be wayward. Your relationship with your wife could be all haywire.

You could still be a prophet, but not so. In the New Testament, you cannot even be a, leave alone a prophet, you cannot even be an elder or a preacher in a church if you're not having a good family life. So it's very, very important.

And then a Spirit-filled family, parents, fathers will bring up their children, Ephesians 6, 4, in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If you cannot bring up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, what you need is not a course on bringing up children. You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

God can teach you, and the Holy Spirit can teach you much better than others. Either you're too soft with your children, let them do what they like, or you're too hard with your children because of your anger and bitterness and because you lack self-control yourself and because you don't repent when you slip up. So there's a great need of repentance, and you can see today when I see the number of mails I get from believers almost every day of broken homes, husbands who are unfaithful to their wives, children who are wayward.

Brothers, sisters, we're in the last days. In fact, it says in 2 Timothy chapter 3 about some of the conditions that will be prevalent in the last days. In the last time, 2 Timothy 3.1, men will be lovers of self, lovers of money.

Verse 4, lovers of pleasure and not lovers of God. To love God, one needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Instead of that, verse 2, they'll be loving lovers of self and lovers of money.

And third, verse 4, they'll be lovers of pleasure, but they will not be lovers of God. And one of the things mentioned here is that children will be disobedient to parents, verse 2, in the last days. I mean, children have always been disobedient to parents.

Why is it specifically mentioned here? Difficult times will come, 1 Timothy 3.1, because these things, men will be lovers of self and children will be disobedient to parents. And you can see that all over the world.

There's a time when the spirit of rebellion is there in school.

Children pick up bad habits in school. What we need today in our churches is spirit-filled parents. It's not a course on bringing up children, but being filled with the Holy Spirit and respecting the Word of God and seeking to be towards our children like God is towards us.

God assures us of His love, and we must assure our children of our love. But it also says in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 7, it is for discipline that you endure. God then deals with you as with sons.

If God disciplines you, that shows you're His son. That's one of the proof. I mean, if you can do something wrong and God doesn't discipline you, I would question whether you're really born again.

I know times when I've slipped up in something so trivial and God's punished me in some way. Some fever, something or the other, and I say, why? And the Lord points out to some small little thing, which most people wouldn't even think is serious. That shows God's jealous care over us.

And it says here in that verse, there God disciplines you, and there He's dealing with you as sons, Hebrews 12, 7, because what son is there whom the father does not discipline? Today my answer to that is there are millions of sons who their fathers don't discipline. And because they are small, they have to obey. They can be at home.

The moment they leave home, you will see how wayward they are, because they were not disciplined at home. And there are so many of them, and I've seen so many of them all in every country I've gone to, among Christians, among Christians, among Christian leaders. What a work the devil has done.

And it's almost as though these verses are not in Scripture. But it doesn't matter. If you are without discipline, verse 8, you are illegitimate children, Hebrews 12, 8. If God doesn't discipline you when you do something wrong, you're not a real child of His.

If you can do something wrong and keep on doing it, you keep on getting angry at home, keep on getting yelling and quarreling and shouting, and God doesn't discipline you, brother, sister, you better check up whether you're born again. I really would say that. Let's imagine Almighty God allowing you to do so many things wrong, and He doesn't discipline you.

Anyway, I decided to take it very seriously in my life, and it's made the world of difference. You see, there are a lot of people in the world who do 101 evil things, and God doesn't do anything wrong. It doesn't do any harm to them.

Look at all the heathen. What terrible evil they do. They divorce and divorce and divorce and divorce, and they don't care for their children, and they let their children become wayward and don't even care to bring them up properly.

God doesn't punish them. They are not His children. We don't punish strangers' children.

We punish only our own children, and if you are a child of God, it says God will definitely discipline you. It's a mark of His love and care for you, and so family responsibilities of bringing up family is a very, very important part of family life, and that's why we need to safeguard the husband-wife relationship because it says the relationship between husband and wife is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church, and I want all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, to bear this in mind that you are seeking to

reflect in your relationship, you brothers, towards your wife, is I want to show how Christ deals with the church. Christ is merciful, but He's got certain standards, and we should not love our wives more than we love Jesus Christ.

That can also happen where your wife does something wrong, and for the sake of peace in the home, a false peace, you don't do anything about it. You allow it to go on even though you know that it's completely contrary to the Word of God. Then you love your wife more than Christ, and you can be pretty sure the Lord will not support that because the Lord says if you love your father or mother or brother or sister or wife or children more than me, you cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14, 26. So that is the balance in family life. We need to bring up our children well.

We need to love our husband and wife, but not more than Christ. He is still the head. See, when your sisters veil your heads, it is an indication.

My husband is my head. I don't know whether you know that. That's what you're doing because it says my husband is like covering over me to protect me.

Otherwise, it's an empty ritual if you do it without meaning, and when a husband, a man, does not cover his head, he's saying my head is Christ, must not be covered. The glory of Christ must never be covered in the church. That's why I don't cover my head.

I think a lot of men don't know why they don't wear a cap in the church. It's because the head in 1 Corinthians 11, read that passage sometime. The head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God, and the head of the woman is the man.

So that is the order that we have to demonstrate in a spirit-filled family or a spirit-filled church. There are many husbands I have met, Christian believer husbands, who are so weak. They're not leaders in their home.

They allow the wife to do whatever they like and run the home and whatever they like and all types of things which go on which are not godly. It's a failure of the husband. A strong wife, then a husband must be stronger than that, not get into conflict, but to put your foot down and say I won't allow that.

Some time ago we distributed a little article written by an American pastor. I think it was given out here as well. I gave it out in all our Indian churches about modesty in a dress.

It's particularly about women dressing, and I really was impressed and challenged by something that the pastor wrote. I think he was a Baptist pastor, and he said one day when he saw his wife dressed in a way which is not immodest, but it wasn't really modest as he understood it, and he told her, darling, you're not going to leave this house in that dress to church. Words to that effect.

No wife of mine will ever go to church in that dress. Boy, I admire that man. He was really the head of his house to tell his wife you cannot go to church dressed like that in that immodest way, and I'm sure God honored him.

God honors those who honor. You know, he was risking a conflict with his wife. Who wants a conflict with his wife? The thing that I admired in that statement was here was a man who loved Jesus so much that he was willing to face a conflict with his wife by telling her, no, I put my foot down.

I will not allow you to go to church in that dress. Boy, I wonder how many CFC or NCCF husbands have that boldness to stand up for the truth of God. Yeah, we can say we're very bold, but when it comes to your wife, you could be an absolute coward, scared to offend.

He didn't do that to humiliate her. He did it because he loved Jesus more than he loved her. So family life is very, very important in bringing up children, and as I said, the secret of it all lies in Ephesians 5.18. Be filled with the Spirit.

Seek to bring up your children in fear of the Lord. I believe that's such an important thing that we must take it far more seriously than perhaps many of us have taken it, that in the days to come, remember what I've often said. The church is like a three-story building.

The foundation is the absolute assurance that God is my Father, that my sins are all forgiven. God is my Father. Jesus Christ, the Son, died for my sins, and the Holy Spirit has come to fill me.

That's the foundation, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And then on that, I build the first floor, or what we call the ground floor in India, is walking with the Lord in the absolutely clear conscience every single day. You need the power of the Holy Spirit for that.

Confessing immediately, as soon as you are aware of a sin in thought, word, anywhere, immediately confess it. We will not live on earth in such perfection that we never slip up. We'll slip up, but the God-fearing, Spirit-filled Christian will confess it immediately and be cleansed.

He won't wait until the next day, and if he's hurt somebody else, he'll ask forgiveness from that person immediately. And then the next floor, the middle floor, is our family life. Don't even try to preach in the church.

Don't even come here to preach for three minutes, like some of you do, if you're not building the second floor, which is the middle floor. Then you come to the church and ministry in the church. So the middle floor is our family life.

If you're a husband, to be a godly husband. If you're a father, to be a strict father, who loves and disciplines his children. And to be a godly wife, and to make sure that you run your home finances in a way that glorifies God.

So many men I've found among Christians and believers, they allow their wife to just randomly go and spend lavishly on things which they never pray about. It doesn't matter. I've got a lot of money.

I can spend it all. It's not the way Jesus would do it. You've got to live according to your own standard of living, and there are different standards of living.

And I come from a country where the standards of living are way more than here. Here the difference in standard is not much. Almost everybody has a car.

In India, people walk or go by bus, or have a cycle, or a scooter, or a car. There are many, many levels in India. And so in our own churches, and I say at your own level, you live at your own level.

You don't have to raise your standard of living, but make sure you never get into debt, and make sure your home, that your wife doesn't run the finances in your home, that you take care of that, and make sure you know where the money is going, and that it is being spent in a God-fearing way, and in a way that Jesus

would approve. Very important. And so if we do those things, and bring up our children in a proper way, we can also build a new covenant church, which is the top floor.

Amen.

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