

First Step for Young People (Tamil)

by Zac Poonen

The first step for young people is to be absolutely sure that their sins are forgiven and that Christ lives inside them.

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Scripture: Psalm 25:7, Psalm 103:2, Ecclesiastes 12:1, Matthew 1:20, John 6:37, John 17:23, John 20:29, Acts 2:38, 1 Corinthians 14:5, Colossians 1:27

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Spirit"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's forgiveness, assurance of salvation, and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It shares personal testimonies of overcoming trials, learning from mistakes, and experiencing God's love and guidance. The speakers highlight the need to prioritize spiritual growth, trust in God's plan for marriage, and seek the power of the Holy Spirit for a victorious Christian life.

Transcript

So, the reason why we are sitting is because we want to talk like parents talking to children. Actually, all of you are much younger than our children. But as parents, we had a great longing that all of our children should follow the Lord.

See, we have been married for more than 41 years and we have been very happy in serving the Lord. Because we serve the Lord, we have gone through many trials. And because we stood for the whole counsel of God, the devil has attacked us and our family in many ways.

But God has mightily helped us in every situation and the devil has never been able to win a victory. He has tripped us up many times, but we have always got up and we have learned from our mistakes. So, we all make many mistakes when we are young.

So, I don't want to give you the impression that I never made any mistakes in my life. But all I can say is, I decided every time I fall, I will get up. If I fall one thousand times, I will get up one thousand times.

And so, we learn something. So, you must never get discouraged because you fail. That is the first lesson I would like to share with you.

You will make many mistakes when you are young. David was a man after God's own heart. But do you know what he says? Let me read to you in Psalm 25 and verse 7. Psalm 25 verse 7, David says, Don't

remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions.

He doesn't tell us what his sins of youth were. But we know that he was anointed probably when he was 18 or 19 years old. That's the age when he killed Goliath.

And after that he was wandering in the caves. But even before he was 19, he had committed sins. And he calls them the sins of my youth.

There are special sins the Bible calls the sins of our youth. When we are young, we are tempted in ways, in a special way. It's an encouragement to know that even a man after God's own heart, he had sins in his youth.

But he was forgiven. The same David says in Psalm 103. Bless the Lord O my soul and don't forget all his benefits, verse 2. And the first of those benefits is he pardons all your iniquities.

So this is the assurance that he had. So all of us must begin with that assurance. That God has forgiven all our sins.

I got that assurance 50 years ago. When I was about 19 and a half. I had asked Jesus to come into my heart many many times.

Maybe even when I was 13, 14 years old. But I never had assurance that I was saved. Till I was 19.

So for maybe 5-6 years, I must have asked Jesus to come into my heart. More than 500 times or 1000 times. But as long as I was not sure, I was backsliding.

So when I look at my experience. And afterwards I will ask my wife to give her experience, how she came to assurance of salvation. In my life, my progress came only after I was sure that I was saved.

So what I want to say is, all of you must be absolutely sure that your sins are forgiven. And you must say with confidence that Christ lives inside me. See there is a phrase in Colossians 1. In verse 27.

In verse 26 it says about a mystery that has been hidden from ages and generations. And what is this mystery that has been hidden for so many centuries? That the anointed one of God, Jesus Christ could actually live inside somebody. See in the old testament the Jewish people looked forward to someone they called the Messiah, the anointed one.

But they never knew that he would come and live inside a man. God was with Moses, he was with Elijah, he was with John the Baptist. God was with Moses, he was with Elijah, he was with John the Baptist.

But that almighty God who runs this universe could actually come and live inside a person. I mean the first great mystery is that God almighty could come in a human body in Jesus Christ. I mean that is amazing that almighty God who created this universe came as a little baby into this world.

What humility. And then the second great mystery is that how this almighty God can now come and live inside us. That is a greater mystery.

I mean for him to come into a body, at least that is a pure body that came out of Mary's womb. Our body is not a pure body. Even after being a believer for 50 years, I say Lord my body is not a pure body.

It is a greater mystery that this pure holy God can come and live inside me. That really humbles me. I am surprised whenever I find a proud believer.

I say you have not seen the mystery, that is why. You so lightly say that Jesus Christ is living inside you. Who is this person living inside you? The pure holy God.

Who universe cannot hold him. He has decided to come and live inside your heart. And that does not humble you.

Then you have not understood Christianity at all. It really humbles me when I think of that. It says here this mystery verse 27, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It says here this mystery verse 27, Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in you. That is amazing.

So many millions of believers say that so lightly. They have not understood the wonder and mystery of it. When I got assurance of my salvation, I was 19 and a half years old.

And I got that assurance from only one verse. That was in John chapter 6. One day I was reading the Bible. Now what I want to do in this session is, I will share a little, then my wife will share a little, then I will share again.

We go back and forth. So first we speak about salvation, then I will talk about baptism in the Holy Spirit and many many things after that. All things that you young people need to know.

So I was reading John 6 and verse 37. One day I read, Jesus said, the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out. Jesus said, the one who comes to me, I will certainly not cast out.

I said Lord, I have come to you so many times. Hundreds of times. The Lord said, I will certainly not cast you out.

I never heard a voice from heaven. Let me tell you something to encourage you. I have been a believer for 50 years.

I have never heard God with these physical ears. I have never seen Jesus with these physical eyes. I have never got what some people say, something like an electric shock when the Holy Spirit filled me.

No, I have never had any feelings. I have never seen a light. I have never seen an angel.

But I am the happiest man in India today. Because Jesus Christ lives in me. I don't need these experiences.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think it is, would you like to actually physically see Jesus now? Tell me, which is a greater blessing, to actually physically see Jesus or never to see Jesus and believe in him? And then believe. Oh, wonderful.

You know, that is written in John chapter 20 and verse 29. The Apostle Thomas. By the way, he was the one who came to Tamil Nadu.

He came to Kerala and Tamil Nadu in about 25 years after the day of Pentecost. But he told Jesus, I mean he told the disciples, unless I see, I will not believe. So Jesus appeared to him.

Put your finger into my hand. Then Thomas fell down and said, my Lord and my God. So verse 29.

Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who did not see and yet believe. And let me say something further.

What Jesus in his mind said. Thomas, you are going to India. And there you are going to tell people to believe who have not seen.

And there will be many Christians in Tamil Nadu. Because of you, Thomas. Those Christians will remain.

And even after 2000 years. There will be young Christians meeting together in a conference in Karaikudi. And they are going to be more blessed than you, Thomas, because they have not seen.

Thomas, because you have seen and yet believed. And blessed are those who did not see and yet believe. I have not seen.

I have not heard. I am more blessed than the Apostle Thomas. Do you believe that? Today there are many preachers who say Jesus came to my room and I met him and all that.

And there people sit with their mouth open. What a great man of God. I am more blessed than them because I have not seen.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that you are more blessed because you have not seen? So, I believe God's word. And even though I have had ups and downs in my life. God's word has helped me study for 50 years.

It was July 1959 that I read this verse. I don't know the date. I don't think date is important.

But I know it was somewhere in July 1959 that I was sure that my sins were forgiven and Jesus was my savior. Then my life became steady. One thing about young people, speaking about myself when I was young.

One thing about young people, speaking about myself when I was young. We try to postpone our decisions for a later date. We think of your studies.

We think there is still some more time for the exams. We think of your studies. I will study that later.

And if some difficult portion is there, we will say I can't understand it now. Maybe later I will try and study that. That is characteristic of all of us, all who are young people.

I want to read one verse in Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 1. Here in the Living Bible in English, it says in a very interesting way. Don't let the excitement of being young cause you to forget about your creator. I have seen that lot of young people, very suddenly they become sick or they meet with an accident and they have to meet their creator.

I have seen people, healthy young men playing basketball and suddenly they get a heart attack and die. Some months back, one of my second son's classmate, he was a doctor. And he was climbing a mountain.

That means he was so healthy. He was climbing in Himalayas. And suddenly he dropped dead.

Heart, heart, cardiac arrest. So, we should not think that, oh I am young. And I have my whole life.

I have to enjoy life. And forget about God. I was brought up in a very godly home.

And we were taught the scriptures. And many times I asked Jesus to come into my heart. But I didn't take my spiritual life seriously.

I just took it casually till one day I became very sick. It was not a prolonged sickness. I had a food poisoning and suddenly I became very sick.

And when the doctor was called, the doctor said, if I had delayed some more time, I would have died. So when I recovered from that, I started thinking about my spiritual life. I thought, I realized that if I had died at that time, I would have gone straight to hell.

Because like all young people, I used to back answer my mother. I didn't want to obey parents. And I knew that I didn't deserve to go to heaven.

So that night I decided, I am not going to postpone this decision anymore. Till now I was not sure. But tonight I am going to be sure about my salvation.

So that evening, night after everybody went to sleep, I knelt on my bed. And I prayed and asked God again and again to come into my heart. And give me the assurance of salvation.

Nothing happened. But this time I decided, I am not going to sleep till I am sure about salvation. I prayed, I sang some choruses in my mind.

I read the Bible, repeated Bible verses. And my younger siblings were sleeping in the same room. But I did not deserve anybody, but I kept praying.

At some time, between 2 or 3 o'clock, I felt that assurance of salvation. And my heart was filled with peace and joy. So this is my advice to young people.

The most important decisions which we have to take, don't postpone it. Today will be the day of salvation for you. Today will be the day of salvation.

The day of salvation. Today might be the day when Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. So, what she didn't tell you was that she was only about 14 years old when she was converted.

When she had assurance. She didn't tell anything. Because she was only 14 years old when she received the assurance of salvation.

52 years ago. When I was a food boy, I was the only person who was happy to be brought to the hospital at the right time. Otherwise, I would be sitting here alone.

So, little things you know how God cares about. God has got a plan for your life. All of us have had experiences where we could have died, but God saved us.

Those are little proofs how God has got a plan for your life. So, don't forget when you think back to incidents where you could have died, how God saved you. When I was 12 years old, I got an electric shock.

It was from a wire that I touched. I was thrown to the ground and the wire was still in my hand. If my mother had not switched off the mains, I would have died.

I don't know where I would have gone. I would not have given my life to Christ. I was a good boy.

But I did not come to Jesus and say, I am a sinner. All of you may be good children. But heaven is not for good children.

Heaven is for sinners who have come to Jesus and said, I am not good, I am a sinner. Jesus did not die for Christians. He died for sinners.

So, you have to first come to Jesus as a sinner. Say, Lord, I am a sinner. Forgive me.

I know you died for me on the cross. That's the only way I can be forgiven. You rose from the dead.

You are living today, so I can talk to you. So, if any of you don't have that assurance, you must have it today. Remember this verse.

Jesus says, if you come to me, I will not cast you out. So, I don't want any of you young people to get up from here and not be sure that Jesus has accepted you. That's number one.

You are forgiven. Christ lives in you. You don't need any feeling.

Even for 50 years like me, you may have no feeling, nothing you see or hear. You will be in that blessed category of those who believe without seeing. But little by little, you will come to know how real Christ is.

The next step I took was baptism in water. Now, some people think I must take baptism only after I become much better. No, as soon as you are born again, you must be baptized.

And baptism is only like a birth certificate. You know, when a baby is born, you can get a birth certificate from the corporation. What does that say? It's not saying this is a healthy child.

This is a very clever child. This is very mature. Very good looking.

Nothing. This child was born on so and so date. And in most Indian birth certificates, even the name is not there.

Because the parents have not given a name. They don't know whether it was going to be a boy or a girl. So, they only say child of so and so parents, born on so and so date.

That's all baptism. Baptism is like that. Or, you know, that is the meaning of being born again.

It's like a new birth into another kingdom. I'm testifying in baptism. Or, I can use another picture.

Being born again is like getting married to Jesus Christ. Where Jesus becomes your husband. Then you get a wedding certificate.

What does that say? This married couple is very very happy. No. They were married on so and so date.

So, remember, baptism is not some certificate that I become very spiritual. If you are sure that you are born again, you must be baptized. And my spiritual life began after that.

And the next thing. I started reading the Bible. But I found a lack of power in my life.

I was always defeated. So, I began to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. I knew that in the Old Testament, this is only for certain special prophets and all.

You can't ask for it. God decides, I'll give it to one person in a generation. Nobody could ask for it.

God will sovereignly decide. I will anoint David. Or I will anoint Elijah.

No, you can't go to God and say, you anoint Elijah, God please anoint me also. But it's so wonderful now in the New Testament. On the day of Pentecost, 120 people were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

And Peter said, this is what God promised in the New Covenant. All your sons and daughters will be, I'll pour out my spirit on them. And he went on to tell them in Acts chapter 2, the promise is for you and for all whom God will call.

Everybody. But through the years, Christianity has neglected it. So, I see that this is something I needed.

So, I began to pray for that. Now, everybody's experience is not the same. But we all need the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to have a closer relationship with God. And we need the power of the Holy Spirit to serve God.

So, I said Lord, I don't have boldness to share the word of God. So, I want this power. So, I began to pray for it.

I went to a Pentecostal church. And I was not very happy with what I saw there. One pastor told me to say hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

I said no, I won't say that. I said the apostles on the day of Pentecost were not keeping on saying that. There's a lot of counterfeit baptism in the Holy Spirit nowadays.

So, I decided to pray in my room. And again, I cannot say a date. But I found God gave me some type of power in my life.

This is in 1963. And I found more desire to study the word. Ability to speak the word.

And even boldness to stand in the streets and speak the word. Now, that's because that was my calling. But over a period of time, because I didn't have much fellowship, there was no church, I began to backslide.

Even though I had great gifts to preach, and I was writing books, but I began to backslide. And about 35 years ago, I came very low in my inner life. And I said, Lord, you have to fill me with the Holy Spirit.

I've learned from my experience that it's not enough to be filled with the Spirit once. I've been filled with the Spirit again and again and again and again. Otherwise, you will backslide.

So, I was really, when you backslide, you become worse than what you were when you were first converted. But outwardly, you still go to church, sing songs, everything, you look okay. I knew that I needed a fresh baptism in the Holy Spirit.

See, some people, when they backslide, they don't pray like that. And I said, Lord, I don't want to continue like this. And I used to pray with another brother.

And one day, God met with me again. And I just believe, Lord, I believe you have met with me. I thank you.

You know, again, an assurance came in my heart, just like the assurance of salvation many years earlier. Similarly, I have an assurance now. God has filled me with the Spirit.

No feeling, no light, no light or no shaking of the body. Just simple faith. I was thanking the Lord.

I began to speak in tongues. I didn't know what it was. When I say I spoke in tongues, I spoke in two or three syllables.

You know, like a baby talking. Two or three syllables. And I was speaking, praying in English, thanking the Lord.

Again, two or three syllables. And I was surprised. And I was not sure, what is this? So, the next day, I was reading the Bible again, New Testament again.

I said, Lord, if this is really the Holy Spirit, then the New Testament will become a new book to me. So, as I was reading Matthew 1, with all this doubt going on in my mind, is this from God, or is it my self? I read what the angel Gabriel told Joseph. Matthew 1, 20.

Don't be afraid. This is from the Holy Spirit. Oh, it was like a word to my heart.

And I found from that day, how as I read the Bible, God began to teach me things from the Bible that nobody ever taught me. And since then, my gift of tongues has developed, just like a baby's language develops. Some people, when they speak in tongues, they just speak the same three or four syllables even after twenty years.

It's not to be like that. It has to develop. It becomes like a language.

Just like you can speak Tamil fluently, it can come if you exercise the gift before God. I don't use it in public. Only in private.

But it has helped me in my life to overcome discouragement. But for me, it's not just three syllables, it's a language. Like I speak English, between me and the Lord, I don't want anybody else to hear it.

So I want to encourage you, but I also know one more thing that I was not seeking for tongues. I was seeking for power. That is why I tell people, seek for power, don't seek for tongues.

If God gives you tongues, you take it. But don't get discouraged if you don't speak in tongues. There have been many godly men in the history of Christianity who never spoke in tongues.

But they were all baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. And I still pray that God will fill me with the Holy Spirit. Because my capacity increases more and more and more, I need to be filled again.

When I am born again, I can only be filled so much. Then it becomes like a bucket, I need to be filled again. If I pour this water into a bucket, it will be so little.

Then I need to be filled again. And when the bucket becomes like a tub, I say, Lord, fill me again. So we have to be filled with the Holy Spirit again and again and again as we grow.

But this is very important. All do not speak in tongues. One Corinthian says that.

So for some reason, God gives it to some people. I think Paul needed it. I needed it.

When we serve the Lord, there are so many discouragements. And I found it as a help for me. But I want to encourage all of you who are born again and baptized in water.

Pray to God alone in your room. And say, Lord, fill me with your Holy Spirit. You say, how will I know? Ask God to give you an assurance in your heart, God has filled me with the Holy Spirit.

And when you are alone, you find your heart so full of thanks to the Lord. If God gives you words in your mouth, just speak it. Even if you cannot understand.

Just speak it. You can see how wonderful gifts God has given you. For example, on your birthday, if somebody comes and gives you an envelope, you open it.

50 rupees. You say, thank you very much. Somebody else comes and gives you another envelope.

Oh, 100 rupees. Very kind of you. Thank you very much.

Another person comes and gives you an envelope. Oh, this is a sale deed for a 5 bedroom house in Chennai, free as a birthday gift? What do you say? Say, I don't have any words to thank you. When you say, what a great gift God gave us in Jesus Christ.

Thank you is not enough. Say, God, my father. I don't have any words to thank you.

God says, I'll give you the words. That's how we speak in Tamil. But if you are not thanking the Lord in Tamil, why should he give you another language then? You already know one language and you are not thanking me.

All the time you are complaining and grumbling about something. You don't need another language. No.

You learn to thank God. That's all you got to do. Thank the Lord.

Thank you, Jesus. I don't have words to thank you. Give me words to express the gratitude of my heart.

Whatever syllables come forth in your mouth, speak it out to God. Say, we are shy when we are in public. So, pray in your room alone.

But seek God for the power of the Holy Spirit. It's the secret of the Christian life. The power of the Holy Spirit makes the reality of God inside you, reality.

After that accident which I was telling you about, the Lord spoke to me also about baptism and I took baptism. For a very long time, I felt like a person who was snatched out of fire, who almost died but came back to life. So, for many years in my Christian life, I was amazed how God saved me from physical death and spiritual death.

So, I took my spiritual life more seriously from that time. I was in a state where I was in a state Most of my classmates knew that I took baptism and they started making fun of me. That was also good to help me to grow spiritually and not to care for the opinion of people.

And I started reading some Christian books, biographies. And I heard of so many missionaries who came to India to serve our country. Then I thought, if these foreigners should come and serve our people, how little I have done for the Lord, for my countrymen.

I want to live for Jesus and do something for others. So God helped me to study and I decided to work in a leprosy hospital. And in that place I was in so much need because I needed help from God.

I was the only doctor for so many hundreds of people there. And I said, Lord, give me wisdom, give me grace. And I felt it was during that time the Lord baptized me, the Holy Spirit, in a small measure.

But after my marriage and I had a little child, I came to more pressure in my life. I came to more need in my life and I backslid in my spiritual life. Then again I came back to the Lord and cried to him, Lord, at one time you were so close to me, now I have gone so far away from you.

Please let me come back to you again. And then the Lord showed me there were many things in my life which I had not set right. He showed me that I had not forgiven some people.

And like that he showed me many things. And I confessed them and the Lord again reached out to me and this time he gave me the gift of tongues. I too was surprised because I was not expecting that at all.

And it has been a blessed life ever since. Though there are many trials come, but the joy that the Lord gives us is much more than that. We must believe that God is a good God.

He loves us all equally. He is a father who has no partiality to any of his children. See, I have four sons, but as a father I have not shown partiality to any of them.

I must be equally good to all of them. You know, sometimes a father can be happier with one child than with the other child. But I would not give more to one than the other.

Same food, same clothes, same education. So, God is much better father than me. And he does not do one for one child that he will not do for another child.

The Bible says that Jesus Christ is our eldest brother. When he came to earth as a man, he lived on earth as a man. He showed us how the father treats his children.

If you want to know how God wants to treat his children, look at Jesus. How God protected him. Nobody could kill him before his time.

He could not drown in a lake with a storm. He could not get a disease or cancer or something and die like that. Everything there was a perfect plan.

And the father loves everybody equally. That is one of the great truths that I began to discover afterwards. God loves me as he loved Jesus.

And he can do for you what he did for Jesus, what he did for me. So, do not come to God and say, Well, Lord, I am not like brother Jack or sister Annie. You will not do so much for me.

You know, I do not even go to the father and say, Father, I am not like Jesus Christ, so you will not do that for me. I know I am not like Jesus Christ. But the Bible says in John 17, 23, that the father still loves me like he loves Jesus.

Why does he love me like he loved Jesus? Is it because I am as good as Jesus? No, but he still loves me. So you do not have to be like somebody else for the father to love you. Have you become a child of God? The father loves you as he loved Jesus.

And what he did for Jesus, he will do for you. As he cared for Jesus, he will care for you. And you young people can grow up to be wonderful, godly, anointed sons and daughters of God.

You must believe that. And when you are assured of that love, you will really want to live a life that pleases God. So that is one of the wonderful truths I discovered after I was baptized in the Holy Spirit.

There are many other truths I discovered, but this is one of the greatest. You know, we can discover truths like we can walk as Jesus walked. That also is because God enables us.

And I want to say just one more thing. You know, God is interested in our marriage and that is how he led us together. When a particular time comes, God can lead you to marry the right person.

And God used other godly men to bring us together. But it is a wonderful thing that God had prepared us for each other. You must believe that.

That God loves you and when the time comes for your marriage, he will arrange somebody for you. I found when I was studying in college, many of the girls who studied with me, and most of those girls were thinking of marriage. In my case, because I had younger brothers and sisters, I wanted to help my parents.

So I didn't think of marriage, I thought I must help my father. And looking back, I can say one advice to young girls. Don't make marriage your ideal or your goal in life.

Make Jesus your God. And let him occupy your thoughts all the time. And one day in the right time, God will bring the right person for you.

So when your mind wanders and thinks about your future and about marriage, turn that thought into a prayer. And say, Lord, you care about my future. You have somebody in mind for me.

You are my loving father. And I trust in you to lead me to the right person. And don't spend your time reading such novels or seeing movies which will stimulate our passions.

Or those magazines which tell such stories. When you all have that temptation, when you are tempted, try to read little good books, missionary books like that. And spend your time helping somebody in need.

Your parents or somebody else in the church whom you can help. Then your mind will be focused on Jesus. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray you will help all these young people to find your perfect will in their life. Give them assurance of salvation. Fill them with the Holy Spirit.

Give them a great hunger after God. Bless everyone here. In Jesus name.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you.

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