

Follow Jesus' Example in Studying the Bible

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of truly believing that the Bible is God's inspired word and the foundation for our faith. It challenges believers to read and meditate on the Bible consistently, highlighting the need to understand and apply its teachings in daily life. The speaker shares personal experiences of how studying God's word transformed his life and urges listeners to prioritize the study of Scripture to grow spiritually and walk as Jesus walked.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:16, Psalm 119:105, Romans 12:1, John 4:23

Topics: "The Authority of Scripture", "Spiritual Growth through the Word"

Description

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Transcript

I want to start with something very basic. Whenever we study or hear God's, hear a message, we base it always on the Bible and people take God's word and the Bible and read it and we automatically assume this is God's word. I have a doubt in my mind whether all of you really believe this book, which we call the Bible, is God's inspired word.

And I have a doubt about that about many, many believers, whether they really believe deep down in their heart that from cover to cover, these 66 books are the word of God. And I'll tell you why I say that, because if you really believed that this book was the word of God, first of all, you would read it from cover to cover. If you believe there's only one book on earth written by the Lord, by God, you'd read it from cover to cover.

It's like if there was some very important document concerning your property or your finances or something like that, where you could lose a lot of your money, you would read it carefully from cover to cover, anything that concerned you intensely. But among all the believers I've met, there are not many who have read the whole Bible from cover to cover or who continue to read and meditate on it. I'm thankful that when I was born again, which is in 1959, 65 years ago nearly, I believed God's word.

I believe the Bible is God's word. I was taught to believe it. And I assumed it at that stage.

I couldn't prove it. But I decided to, first of all, to read it from cover to cover, even if I didn't understand most of it. And in about six or seven months, I finished the whole book.

And after that, I began to study it in depth. And in about six months, an in-depth study, way back when I was 26 years old, I really came to know the scriptures. I want you to be honest with yourself and ask yourself today, do you really believe this book, the Bible, is God's word? And if it is, you respect it as God's word.

And I believe the fundamental problem with many Christians lies right here. And if you don't believe that deep down in your heart, you're not convinced about it, you're sort of brainwashed by some preacher to tell you, this is God's word, go and try and claim some promise in it. But you won't have the certainty that this is God and that God can speak to you through it.

I can think of numerous instances in my life where I had specific guidance from God's word, but it all began with knowing that this book is God's word. I believe the only way you can say that you believe it is God's word is that you've read through it. I mean, if you've been a believer for two years, if you were born again, at least two years ago, you should have read through the Bible by now, even if you didn't understand most of it.

And if you have not read through it, I want to say to you in Jesus name, that to me is the proof that you do not believe this book is God's word from cover to cover. Maybe some portions you say yes, but don't really believe it. And if you take that seriously and go to the Lord and say, Lord, I've just been taking this matter lightly, but I want you to show me, is this really your word? Prove it to me in some way.

And if it is, let me take it seriously to study this book more than any other book in the world. People can't say they don't have time. Because there are many other things that you have time for many, many other things.

And all it requires is a little cutting down of some other things in order to find time for God's word. That's all I can say is the reason why many people don't read God's word. They have not made it a priority in their life.

If you look at the life of Jesus, we teach in the church that we must follow Jesus. And the verse I always quote to Christians and say, one big difference between what we teach in CFC churches and all the other churches is based on one verse, 1 John chapter 2, verse 6. 1 John, the first letter of John chapter 2, verse 6 says, anyone who says he abides in Christ. In other words, anyone who claims to be a born again Christian who says he's in Christ or Christ is in him should walk in the same way as Jesus walked.

He should live like Christ on this earth. Seek to order his life by the principles by which Jesus ordered his life. Anyone who says that he isn't in Christ, that means anyone who says I'm a born again Christian.

And I want to ask you, dear brothers and sisters, is this true of you? Are you seeking? Because most of Christendom, I'll tell you honestly, does not believe it's possible. You read a verse like that, must walk as Jesus walked, you say that's impossible. I've given it serious thought and I say it is possible.

That is different from 1 John 3, 2. We must distinguish between the things that differ. 1 John 3, 2 says we will be like him only when we see him when he comes. We're not asked to be like him.

That will only happen when Christ comes again. But until he comes right now, we don't have to be like him, but we had to walk as he walked. What is the difference? Walking is a conscious action.

We don't walk in our sleep. These normal people don't. Walking every step you take is a conscious action.

And so to walk as Jesus walked refers to the conscious area of your life, the area of your life where you know what you're doing. To use an example from the school life, a child in the first grade will be examined only on the subjects he is studying in the first grade. When he goes to the second grade, he'll be examined on the subjects in the second grade.

That's the picture of spiritual growth. In the beginning, all a child learns is ABC and adding two plus two, et cetera. But as he goes higher with higher classes, he learns more.

The Christian life is like that as well. The conscious area of our life is that area where we know right from wrong. And if that area is not growing, then we are not growing spiritually.

We're stagnant. We're like a child stuck in the kindergarten for 20 years. So to walk as Jesus walked, there should be a growing understanding of how he walked, how he lived.

My understanding of how Christ lived this year should be far better than what it was a year ago and much, much better than what it was 20 years ago. How did Jesus live and walk on the earth, live his life on earth? And the only place where I can find that is in scripture. In 1 John 3, 2 says, when he comes, we'll be like him.

So what is the difference between walking as he walked and being like him? Being like him refers to our total personality, all our inner parts of our life, which we don't even know. We can say our unconscious being. So if we could divide our life into two parts, the unconscious part of us, where we don't know areas of our life where we have not got any light and the conscious area where we have light, we are asked to walk as Jesus walked only in the areas where you are conscious of right and wrong.

And that will be different for each one of us depends on how much we have walked with the Lord already. It's like children in different classes in the school. And if we are faithful in walking in the light in the area we have understanding that light will increase because it says in 1 John 1, 6, if we walk in the light as God is in the light, that means it basically means if you are honest, honesty is the number one requirement for walking with the Lord, honest with ourselves.

That means I face up to the truth that I presently know about myself. If I know something is wrong, I got to acknowledge, I know that's wrong. It's got nothing to do with other people.

I'm walking in the light with the light God has given me. And basically it means I would read it like this. If you're honest with yourself, you can have fellowship with God.

But if you know something is right and you're not walking in that light, you cannot have fellowship with God. That's the meaning of 1 John 1, 6, 1, 7 rather. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And only then, only then verse 7, does the blood of Jesus cleanse us from all sin. And many people don't know that. They think they can just confess their sin and ask the Lord to forgive them.

But there's a condition. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, the blood of Jesus will cleanse us. What if we don't walk in the light we have? Can you still say the blood of Jesus cleanses us? Then you're negating 1 John 1, 7. Then we are reading it like it doesn't matter whether you walk in the light or not.

If you ask the Lord to cleanse us, he'll cleanse us. That's not true. If we walk, there's a big IF there.

If, I want to emphasize this brothers and sisters, because I've been so disappointed when I see so many believers who don't seem to grow spiritually year after year. Even in our CFC churches, I see them year after year. I don't see much spiritual development in their life.

I don't see, you ask yourself, do you find a greater sensitivity to sin in your life? For example, have you discovered some things to be sin in your life today? Which I mean now, which you did not know was sin say three years ago. Or is your understanding of sin constant? It's been the same for the last 20 years. Certain things you know are wrong and you still know they're wrong.

There's nothing more. You're like a child who's stuck in first grade or something. He's never learned anything more.

He's learned that 2 plus 2 is 4 and that's about it. Simple addition. But just like we expect our children to grow every year in understanding, God wants us to walk in the light, not stand still in the light.

Stand still in the light means I don't grow. The very word walk itself indicates the progression. I can't be walking, say for even 15 minutes and be in the same place unless I'm just walking up and down.

So a person who says I've been walking with the Lord for two or three years, wow, he should have got to know the Lord so much better than he knew him three years ago. If you say you've been walking the Lord for 10 years, where should you be today compared to where you were? Think of a straight road where you've been walking for 10 years. Unless you've been going up and down and up and down backwards and backsliding and going forward, you should be way ahead.

Unless we take ourselves seriously in these matters, we're not going to progress in the Christian life and we're going to have a lot of disappointment when Christ comes again. I'm not talking about the reward or any such thing. I tell you honestly, I don't care for rewards.

I'm not working for reward. I'm not serving God for reward. I'm not living to get a reward from heaven.

I'm living only because I love Jesus Christ and I love him because he first loved me and gave himself for me. I owe my entire life to him and that's why I live. I don't care if I get to heaven and I get a zero reward.

I'm not interested in that. My only desire is to please the Lord and if I can get to heaven saying I pleased you, it satisfies me. I don't want any crown or any such thing in heaven.

But if we are stagnant, we need to ask ourselves why. So if we believe that this Bible is the word of God, as I am absolutely convinced that there may be passages and there are maybe parts of this scripture that you don't understand why in the world God has put it there. But I've come to find a reason for almost everything I found in the scripture.

In some places there's a long list of names, for example, in the Old Testament. Just a big list of names and names and names and names. You wonder why in the world has God put that over there.

I sought the Lord about that. I said, how is that blessing? And the answer I got was that God is interested, you know, the list of all the people who left Babylon, for example, and came to Jerusalem after the captivity in the book of Ezra. I think this goes to show that God is interested in each individual who today has left the spiritual Babylon and come out to a New Testament church.

Not just a group. He's interested in each individual and each of those names he mentioned. That's what I learned from there.

Or other lists like that in Chronicles, etc. So I find that there are some passages of scripture I still haven't understood fully the reason why it's there. I believe one day I'll understand as I grow.

But it should be your passion that you get more and more what I call revelation in the word of God as we grow. But that'll be possible only if you're deeply convinced in your heart that this is the word of God is the only book in the whole world which is inspired and dictated by God, not dictated, but inspired by God for the writers to write down. Now when we say walk as Jesus walked, I say we got to begin where he began.

So he began as a child. So let's turn to Luke chapter two. Luke's gospel chapter two.

We read that Jesus, you know the story that he went with Joseph and Mary, his parents, earthly parents, to the temple. And when they didn't find him, they came back after three days and discovered that he was in the temple. Luke chapter two was 46.

After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of teachers, listening and asking them questions. And all who heard him were first of all amazed at his understanding of God's word and his answers to their questions. First of all, they were amazed at his explanation of some Old Testament passages they only had the Old Testament.

And then they were amazed at the answers he gave when they asked some questions. It's quite a verse, Luke 2 47. And he was only 12 years old.

And he did not come to earth with all the knowledge of the scriptures crammed in his head. No, he was born just like any other baby with zero knowledge in his mind. Just like all babies are born with zero knowledge in their mind, they acquire knowledge from the day they are born by what they see and hear and respond to and then later on what they read.

And as they talk to people, exactly like any other baby grows up, Jesus grew up and he became familiar with God's word just like we become familiar. And we have a big advantage that he didn't have. We have the written Bible in our home, many translations even.

Whereas in those days, no home had a written copy of the Bible in their home. It was a luxury because the Bible in those days, I'm talking about 2000 years ago, was handwritten with pen and ink from parchment, expensive. There was no such thing as paper like this to write in the parchment.

And it is written because that would be long lasting. And that usually be one copy in a synagogue. And so there was a synagogue in Nazareth as there was, we know.

We read later on in Luke chapter four, how when he went to the synagogue, they opened the scroll and gave it to him. You read in Luke four, verse 16 and 17. That's the synagogue where they had a scroll.

So if you wanted to read the Bible, you had to go there to the synagogue and get the rabbi to read some passage to you. And I've asked myself, when I read the scripture, the Bible says we must meditate on what we read, not just read it. Meditate, that means think about what you're reading.

That's why if you want to absorb scripture, you must not read too much at one time for meditation. I used to read the scriptures in two ways when I started reading it 65 years ago. One was reading large sections so that I read through the whole Bible in about seven months.

And the same, along with that, I would also read, I have two Bible readings. The other was a small section of a few verses, which I would meditate on. The other was continuous reading.

And then a short passage, usually from the New Testament that I would meditate on. Maybe 10, 15 minutes on four or five verses or longer if I had time, sometimes one hour, but just a small section. So here, the only way I see that Jesus could have acquired the knowledge of scripture was that if he went from his home in his spare time, remember, he had to help in chores at home and he had four younger brothers and two younger sisters.

And so I'm sure he had to do a lot of work at home and go get water from the well and so many things that he had to do for his mother. And I don't know what age Joseph died, but even then he had to help in a lot in home. But during his spare time, he found some time every day.

Now this is my imagination, but I believe it's true. To go to the synagogue, walk there, ask the rabbi to please open the scriptures, the scroll, and to read something there from the 39 books of the Old Testament. And the rabbi would read a certain section, maybe they don't have verses those days, but say a certain paragraph or something like that.

And then Jesus would say, I'm imagining now as a young boy, five, seven years old, perhaps saying, rabbi, please stop. And I want to think about that. Can you read those seven verses again? They've been there versus what's going to read that paragraph again.

He'd read it and he said, thank you, rabbi, I'll come back tomorrow. He goes home and meditates on what he read, what he heard. And he comes back, the rabbi was delighted that a seven, eight year old kid is so interested in the Bible.

And that's how Jesus would have gone every day and heard a little more, meditated on it, heard a little more, meditated on it. And that's how he acquired knowledge of scripture, just like we read the scriptures today. If he hadn't done that, it was not put into his head by God automatically.

But when I say I want to walk as Jesus walked, I say, this is where I begin. I don't want to begin from where Jesus was when he's 30 years old. That's after a long, long time.

I can't suddenly jump to what he was in 30. When you read the gospels and you see how Jesus spoke and did so many things, that's when he was 30. So don't jump into that.

I mean, you can't jump into the 10th grade as soon as you join school. You got to go to the kindergarten. And so when I think of the following Jesus in the kindergarten, I see here to go and read today.

Of course, we don't have to go to rabbi. We've got it at home so much easier to read something, meditate on it, think about it, and ask God to speak to him. That's how Jesus did every single day.

And the result was, I don't know at what age he started, when he was six, perhaps, or five, I don't know, maybe. But if it is from five to the age of 12 and seven years, he really got to know the scriptures. Imagine a five-year-old boy going and asking the rabbi to read something to him.

That should put all of us to shame. And then going again, going again, because he was so eager to know. That to me is a clear proof of how Jesus respected the word of God.

So when we talk about following Jesus, we can talk about it so glibly. Yeah, I want to follow Jesus. I want to walk like he walked and all that.

But this is where he began. He didn't begin by preaching. He didn't begin by doing miracles.

He began by studying God's word, studying the Bible, and he believed it was the word of God. He had no doubt about it, because he would always refer to it as what the word of God says, the word of God says. He was sure of it.

And how did he have that? Did he have some study of various research done by different people, whether this is God's word or not, like people discuss today? No. There were no research papers on those days on the Old Testament. No such thing.

Initially, they accepted it by blind faith. Yeah, when I started reading the Bible, I couldn't prove it to anybody this is God's word. I accepted it by blind faith, because my parents taught me that.

But as I read it, through the years, I can look back now on the last years of my life, in the early years of my life, I met a few really godly men, very few, and not necessarily in the same church, sometimes from some other church, really godly people, one or two from another country as well. And there were two things I would find with common about all the brothers whom I met, godly older brothers whom I met, whom I appreciated highly. There were two things common about all of it.

One was, they all believed that the Bible was the word of God. Second, they all had a genuine experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. These two things were common about all the men of God I met in my younger days.

And I said, Lord, I want to go that way. I want to be convinced that this is God's word and accept it as God's word, even if I don't understand it in the beginning. I accepted blind faith as God's word and continue on that.

And I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. These are the two things I wanted because these are the two things I found in the men whom I admired and respected the most as a young man. And today, I don't need someone else to tell me, now I know myself, this is the word of God.

So, I can imagine Jesus meditating when he came back home every day and thinking, even probably when he's lying down in bed at night, you know, we have this one time we are free from everything and everything's quiet around us. And he could meditate on what he heard. And he did that again and again and again.

And that's how at the age of 12, he could explain to these great 60-year-old scholars sitting in the temple what the word of God meant. He knew more than them. Not because he's a son of God, but because he disciplined himself from that very young age to study the scriptures.

And that formed the foundation of his whole life. That's why very often when the Pharisees came to him and asked him, why do you do this or why do you do that? He'd always had an answer from scripture, beginning with the very first time when Satan came and said, turn the stones into bread. And he said, no, it is written.

Always his answer was, it is written. Have you noticed that in Matthew 4, the very first part of Jesus' life, we see he was tempted at the age of 30. And his answer was always, it is written, Matthew 4, 4. Food is not the main thing.

Turn the stones into bread. You've been fasting for 40 days, the devil says. You're hungry and you've got power.

You can easily turn these stones into bread. True, he's not stealing the bread. And there are plenty of rocks there.

And there's not going to be any shortage of bread for other people if he turns these stones into bread. He could have done it and he was hungry. And he said, no.

He said, I've not got a word from my father to do that. See, that's the other thing we see about his life. It's not just that he read and meditated on God's word, but he understood that the principle of walking with God is that you don't do something unless you're prompted by the Holy Spirit to do it.

I'm not talking about the normal things in life, but in our relationship with God, to be prompted by the Holy Spirit. So when the devil said, turn these stones into bread, he was hungry like anything after 40 days of not eating. His body was craving for food.

But always his question was, is that what the Father wants me to do? The Father has given me supernatural power. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the baptism. But the question is, can I use this power now to turn stones into bread? I'm not stealing.

I'm not borrowing. I'm not begging. I'm not harming anybody in the world.

And it is for my own personal need. Every legitimate reason he has. But he says, I've not heard from the Father.

And man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God's mouth, meaning that I've not had a word from the Father telling me to quench my hunger by turning these stones into bread. So I'm not going to listen to you, however logical it may sound. What I learned from that is that there are some certain things which sound okay to my reason.

If I have the power, why can't I do it? It's like a lot of believers say, I got the money. Why can't I buy it? Okay. See how much you grow spiritually if you live like that.

There are many people who live like that. I have the money. So why can't I buy this? I have the money.

Why can't I do that? Now, the disciple of Jesus doesn't live like that. He prays about what he purchases. Lord, do you want me to get this? Maybe a silent prayer, but he's very careful with his money.

Here Jesus had the equivalent of money, power, to turn the stones into bread, but he wouldn't use it, even though he was desperately hungry. I learned a tremendous lesson there of Jesus' attitude to God's word

that has developed over a period of 30 years. So when we think of the thing that we emphasize in CFC, the one who says he's a Christian must walk as Jesus walked.

Not just say, I'm justified by faith. My sins are all forgiven. I'm on my way to heaven.

I'm baptized in the Holy Spirit. I'm baptized in water. That's the level at which all the other denominations live.

Here in RLCF, we seek to live at a much higher level, to walk as Jesus walked, to live by the same principles by which Jesus lived. And I wish all of you who listen will be challenged by this to at least from now say, Lord, I want to understand the principles by which you live. That's what I'm trying to point out here.

Meditating on God's word, knowing it so well in a few years of study. See, one of the things I saw there was that by the age of 12, I assume that he must have started going to the synagogue, say at the age of five, let's say, pretty early at the age of five to go to the synagogue. But let's say he went at five.

But in seven years, by the time he was 12, he knew the scriptures because he was consistent. I don't believe he missed a single day. I'm sure he had to cut out certain other things which his other brothers and sisters and all didn't.

You know, I've got to go and read the Bible. And yet I find today, you know, the number of believers I've met, I asked them, do you read the Bible every day? Oh, brother, I've been so busy. And sometimes I just forget.

Yeah, you can't expect such a person to go far in his Christian life. I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, answer to yourself, do you read the Bible every day? Even though you don't have to go to a synagogue to get it, it's right there in front of you. In so many translations, you read and meditate on it every day? Or is your life so busy that you have no time for it? If so, there you see the reason why you lose your temper so frequently.

The reason why you are anxious and worried so often. The reason why you have many problems in your life that cannot be solved. The reason why you're so judgmental of other people and critical and find it very difficult to be merciful to people.

There you see the reason why you don't know how to handle money, or you love money, and you're not able to break free from it. Many, many things. You have no control over your lustful thoughts.

It all reason lies in the fact that either you don't believe deep down in your heart that the Bible is the only thing that you can do. If you did, you would definitely meditate on it. That I believe.

You believe that, right? You have in your home something that Almighty God wrote down for us to live by. Even if I don't understand it, I will read the portions I do understand and meditate and say, Lord, help me to understand more. This is fundamental.

So, every time the devil came up with something, Jesus' answer was always, it is written. And so, the devil took up on that. Oh, so you live on the basis of it is written.

So the devil quotes it is written. He said, why don't you jump off the roof of the temple down, take the shortcut down to the ground, because it is written the devil said that he will give his angels

charge to protect you. So that's something we learned right at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, that even the devil can quote the Word of God.

If he quoted it to Jesus, he will quote it to you and me. So when you find a scripture being quoted into your mind, that you can use to do what you want to do, you want to do something. And you find a scripture to back it up.

You can be pretty sure that's the devil. All right. He can give you a scripture.

If you could give it to Jesus, why wouldn't he give it to you? And when he knows you're going down the wrong path, and you're wanting to choose a particular path, the devil sees you want to do it, he'll give you a word, a word to support it. See, we have such a heart is so corrupt. The tendency of our heart is towards sin not towards holiness.

Remember this always called the flesh, the flesh is tendency is not towards holiness is towards sin. It's downward, not upward. So we can find scripture, and you can use it to justify yourself in some way.

And you can go scripture. I use an example sometimes when I'm speaking to young people to illustrate this. And I say, here's a, you know, in India, marriages are arranged by the parents very often.

And here a young man, a father tells him, you know, that girl grace in the church. I want you to marry him. He's a good girl.

He just doesn't like her. He doesn't like her face. He doesn't like something about her.

And so he goes to scripture and reads in second Corinthians 12, nine. God says, my grace is sufficient for you. So he goes to his dad and says, God's told me his grace is enough for me.

I don't want this. That's a clear word for me that I should not choose this girl and God's grace. That's, that's God's work to me.

And he got his, he's got a scripture to support it. I'll take another example. Here's another young man who's madly in love with a girl called grace, but his parents are objecting to it the opposite.

And he goes to his dad and says, God says, this grace is his grace. He's the great, this is the grace that he has for me. I got that from second Corinthians 12, nine, my grace is sufficient for you.

And he said, this girl called grace is enough for me. I'm just using that illustration to show how two people can use the same scripture and get completely opposite answers. It shows the perversion of our mind that I think it is God speaking.

It's not God speaking at all. It's just you going to scripture to find some support for what you want to do. Are you applying that to yourself? Have you done it in some situation? I'm sure you have.

There's something you want to do. You want to find some scriptural support for it. Ease your conscience.

Yeah, the God's word says that I can do it. There are all types of things you can support from scripture. Look at the number of people who do all types of things contrary to God's word and they find some scripture for it.

So I'm saying that from this example, that the devil says to Jesus, it is written. So just because it is written, don't assume that it is the Holy spirit speaking because Jesus responded to that by saying in Matthew four, it is also written. You shall not tempt the Lord your God.

So that teaches me that at the beginning of Jesus ministry itself, he teaches me that one scripture must be balanced by the other scripture. I must not just go by one. Now, how can I know? How did Jesus know which scripture to quote when Jesus, when the devil quoted another one, because he had studied it and meditated on it and stored it in his mind so that at the age of 30, the right time, the Holy spirit brought the verse to his mind.

See, that's the wonderful thing. So many times in my life, I have found in seeking for guidance in a particular area, the spirit of God brings some scripture in my mind, but he could not have brought it to my mind if I had not earlier meditated on it and stored it in my mind. We miss a lot by not storing God's word in our mind.

If you have not meditated on it and said, Lord, I want this, I want to store this up in my mind. I don't need it now, perhaps five years from now, I may need it, but I want to store up God's word in my mind. And imagine the devil finally even tempted him to worship him and the devil, Jesus again said, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only.

And even from there, I get something just from that one sentence. What did you get from that sentence? If I read it to you, Matthew 4:10, Jesus said to Satan, it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only. I'll tell you what I got from it.

You cannot serve God before you have first learned to worship him. Many people are serving God who are not worshiping him first. Learn to worship, then you can serve.

You shall worship and you shall serve. That is the order. There is an order.

You go to second grade after you do first grade. There is an order. You shall worship and you shall serve.

I get that from that one sentence. See, that's what you get by meditating on scripture. So then when it comes to what does it mean to worship God? I tell you, 99% of Christians do not know what it means to worship God.

They've seen so many videos of people shouting and praising and jumping on the platform and calling it worship and they think that is worship. They think they're having a worship meeting and they are singing and praising God in the meeting on Sunday mornings. In fact, that service is called a worship service in many churches.

The Anglican Church first used it long before there were any other churches. Worship service, Sunday morning. And what is it? Singing a lot of hymns to God.

That is worship. That is not worship. That is praise.

If you read scripture, you need to distinguish between thanksgiving, praise, worship. Three different things. Do you know the difference between giving thanks and praising God and worshipping? These are three completely different things.

And what is done in almost all churches when they have a time of singing on Sunday morning, it's not worship at all. There is zero worship there. Even though it's called a worship service.

Look at the words in your hymns. It's giving thanks or praising God. That's all.

Sometimes there's a prayer or sometimes it's prayer. Do this for me, Lord. You look carefully at the words.

The thing is a lot of Christians when they sing, they don't read the words carefully as they are singing. They're more taken up with the tune. Next time you go to church on a Sunday morning and sing, try and pay attention to the words you're singing.

And you'll be amazed to see the number of times you've sung some song without even meaning it. There is prayer. A lot of singing is prayer.

A higher level than that is giving thanks for what God has done. That is also there. And then higher than that is praise.

Praise is not the same as giving thanks. In giving thanks, I'm thinking of what God has done for me. Praise is I'm praising God for who he is, not for what he's done, but for who he is.

That's about sums it all up. Every song we sing is either a prayer or thanksgiving or praise, period. Where does worship come in? It's not even there.

Worship, you need to read scripture. Let me show it to you. Romans chapter 12.

Jesus God is answer from scripture for everything. I get my answer from scripture for everything. And then I have to set aside my own thinking.

Romans 12 verse 1 says, I urge you brethren by the mercies of God. And that is what are the mercies of God? What is written in the previous 11 chapters? The message of salvation is described perfectly in Romans. In those 11 chapters, starting with sin in chapter 1 and 2, and justification chapter 3, 4, and 5, and sin not having dominion over us, chapter 6, and freedom from the law, chapter 7, and life in the spirit, chapter 8, and God's sovereignty and God's righteousness and faithfulness in chapter 9, 10, and 11.

And then you come to chapter 12. He says now, on the basis of all these mercies of God that I've been talking to you in these last 11 chapters, dear brothers and sisters, learn to worship. Learn to worship in the spirit.

Okay, here it is. How do you worship in the spirit? Present your body, a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. This is your spiritual worship.

Have you read that before in that way? It's got nothing to do with singing. It's got nothing to do with music. It's got to do with presenting your body as a sacrifice.

A sacrifice always means something costly, not a cheap offering. You put 25 cents in the offering box, you can't call it a sacrifice. It's giving you all right, but it's not a sacrifice.

Here it speaks about a sacrifice, which is acceptable to God. That's the only way I can respond to God when I think of all the wonderful things God has done for me in chapters 1 to 11. These are the mercies of God.

How should I respond? I should respond with worship. I'm just showing you how we can learn something by meditating on scripture and reading it slowly instead of rushing through. Then I think of the Old Testament examples of worship.

If you read the book of Leviticus, it's a boring book. I don't want to go there right now. Many people say it's a boring book, but it's the one book which speaks about holiness.

It's not a boring book. If you read it and understand it, you'll see this is telling you how to worship God. In the first chapter, it speaks about a burnt offering.

If you read there in Leviticus chapter 1 about the burnt offering, they bring a bullock and they had to burn up that bullock on the altar. But before they burn up that bullock on the altar, they had to cut that bullock into pieces. Cut the legs and the neck and the head and all the parts and the internal parts and all spread it out on the altar.

And then the fire of God would come upon it sometimes. Or the priest would light the fire and burn it up. That was worship in the Old Testament.

There were other offerings in Leviticus which have a sin offering. A man would bring a goat because he sinned. There was a thanksgiving offering.

There were different offerings like that. Sin offering, thanksgiving offering, but the burnt offering in chapter 1 was worship. And we learn something from that.

Why in the world do you say does God want the whole bullock to be cut up and then burned? What a labor that is. Might as well burn it as it is. Why waste time cutting it up if you're going to burn it up? There's a reason.

You come down to Romans 12, 1 and you understand it. That when we present our body to the Lord as an act of worship, I can't say, Lord, here's my body because I'm not really offering it up when I say that. When you become specific, cut it up.

Cut up your body. Then lay it on the altar. That would be worship.

In other words, say, Lord, here are my eyes. I'm putting it on the altar. That means I'm not going to use these eyes anymore to read what I like, to look at what I like, to see what I like.

No. These are your eyes from today onwards. Only to read and see what you want me to see.

Lord, here are my ears. Oh, before you go to ears, the other important part, our tongue. Lord, here's my tongue.

Let me cut that up like the burnt offering. Put it on the altar. Lord, I don't want to say anything with this tongue that will be dishonoring to you, that will be untrue, that will be unkind or something that you will not support.

Something that I cannot say in the presence of Jesus. It may be a strong word of rebuke, maybe correction. It may be encouragement, but it must be something which the Lord can approve of.

Here's my tongue. Here are my legs, Lord. I never want to go to any place in the world where you don't want me to go to.

I'm cutting up my body, by the way. One by one by one by one. When I just say I present my body, it's very easy to say that.

When I cut it up, I realize, hey, have I really given my tongue? Have I really given my eyes? Have I really given my legs? Here are my hands, Lord. Let me never do anything with these hands that dishonor you. Let me never type a letter to somebody that's going to be something which is rude and unkind, which is not godly.

Let me never write a letter or type a letter with these hands, fingers, that will dishonor you. Please help me. Here are my hands.

You know, when we go piece by piece like that, here's my stomach, Lord. Don't let me become a glutton and just eat and eat and eat and eat and become spiritually physically unfit to be able to serve you and die too soon because of my gluttony. Here's my stomach.

That is the meaning of the burnt offering, piece by piece by piece by piece. Then I understood why the Lord told them to cut it up and then burn it up. Because it was a picture of what is to come in the future.

Romans 12.1, present your bodies a living sacrifice which is acceptable to God. This is worship. So worship is what? It's presenting my body and you have to do it in secret.

You can't do it in the church meeting. Church meeting you're doing prayer, praise, prayer, thanksgiving and praise. That's all.

There's only three things you can do when you sing in the church or pray in the church. Every prayer is a request, thanksgiving or praise. Praise is for who God is.

Worship you have to do on your own, alone in the most holy place, alone with God. Just like the high priest would go alone into the most holy place. Nobody else is there.

You cannot worship God except in the most holy place. All just between you and God. That's it.

It's wonderful. So when Jesus said to the devil, you shall worship, then you shall serve. I understand that a man who has not offered his body like that as a spiritual, as worship in the spirit.

I would translate Romans 12.1 like this. Present your body piece by piece by piece like that burnt offering sacrifice in the Old Testament. That is your real worship in the spirit.

What is the opposite of that? Worship in the soul. The soul is another part of our being. Soul is with my mind and my emotions.

And a lot of worship that goes on in many meetings is with the mind and the emotions. That's soulish worship. I'm not against it, but people have a good time.

I mean, people go to a sing song session and have some worldly function. They have a good time too, because the mind and emotion are all stirred up. And I tell you, that's exactly what happens in a lot of Sunday mornings.

The mind and emotion stirred up reading the same Christian songs, but it's not making them, bringing them closer to God very often. Worship in the spirit can only be done in secret, all by yourself, all alone with God. And you live like that.

You're supposed to live like that all the time. But my body is a living sacrifice to God 24 hours a day. And I believe the reason why many people's service for God is shallow, not anointed, is because they have not preceded it with worship.

You're trying to serve without worshiping. You can't do it. You want an anointed service for God.

You want God when you speak, even in ordinary conversation, when you're speaking to people, you want God to anoint your words, that it goes straight home to their heart. I tell you, begin with worship. And you don't have to go Sunday morning to the church to worship in your home.

When you get up in the morning in your bed, offer your body, say, Lord, I'm getting out of bed now. Here are my eyes. Here's my tongue.

You'll be a worshiper. And when you worship, whatever you do in service that day, the Lord will bless it. Worship comes before service.

These are little, little things that come as you meditate on God's word. You've got to see that this is God's word. The Bible is the word of God.

And what have I done today? I've just taken about three or four verses. That's about it. And here's a book with 32,000 verses or more.

What a wealth there is here. Don't lose heart on it, brothers, sisters. We have only one life in which to offer our service and our worship to God.

Make full use of the one life God gives you. That's great. Our Heavenly Father, please take the words that are spoken and apply it to all of our hearts.

Help us to have a great respect for your word. For we read that you have exalted your word above your name in Psalm 138. We want to exalt your word as well.

Please help us to give it the respect, your word, the respect that it is due because it is your word. Change our lives, Lord, from today onwards as we seek to get to know your word more and live by it and make us worshippers first. Thank you.

Because you read in John 4, God eagerly seeks for people to worship him. We want to satisfy the desire of your heart that you're eagerly seeking for worshippers. We want to be among in that number.

Let's everyone here who has heard, Lord, and pray that there'll be lasting fruit in everyone's life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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