

Giving Christ First Place In Everything

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of putting Christ first in every aspect of our lives. It highlights the need to prioritize Jesus above all relationships, possessions, and self-desires. The speaker delves into the conditions of discipleship, focusing on making Jesus the primary authority in our lives, carrying our cross daily by denying self, and placing Christ above all possessions. The message encourages a life of obedience, self-denial, and unwavering devotion to Christ, drawing examples from biblical figures like Job, Abraham, and Paul.

Scripture: Luke 14:26, Luke 14:27, Luke 14:33, Job 1:1, Acts 20:24

Topics: "Prioritizing Christ", "Discipleship and Self-Denial"

Description

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Transcript

I want to continue on what we began this meeting with. Colossians chapter 1. It's a very important verse. Colossians chapter 1 and verse 18.

We say Christ is the head of the church and we are the body of Christ. It's easy to say that but we need to ask ourselves what is the implication if Christ is the head of the body. It says in verse 18 he's the head of the body and he's the first one who rose from the dead, verse 18.

And the purpose of it is not just that we have a good fellowship. If you really want to function as his body, all of us, there is a part that every one of us has to play to make Christ the head of the body and that is that Jesus himself will have first place in everything in our lives. And anybody here who determines that in every area of my life Jesus Christ is going to have first place, he will be a very effective member of the body of Christ, the worldwide body of Christ and the local body of Christ that God places you in.

But if you don't give Jesus Christ the first place in everything, then in some way you will, let me say this kindly, you'll be a hindrance to the body of Christ because something is coming in between which prevents you from giving Christ first place. You know the first four words in the Bible are, in the beginning God.

That's a law.

It's not just the way the Bible begins, it's the way in which all of us must begin every day and in every area of our life. And like I've often said, that's why God made Adam and Eve separately. He could have made two lumps of clay together and breathed on them and introduced them to each other and said, here you are husband and wife, but he didn't do that.

He made Adam alone so that when Adam opened his eyes, the first person he would see was God. In the beginning, God. There was no Eve, nothing for Adam, only God.

And that's why God put Adam to sleep and got a rib and when Adam was fast asleep in some other corner of the garden, he made Eve another lump of clay and breathed on her. And when her eyes were open, she did not see Adam. She did not even know the existence of Adam.

She saw God. So what was the lesson God was teaching Adam and Eve? You enjoy each other as husband and wife. As the population increases, you'll enjoy children, you'll enjoy brothers and sisters, but never forget that I must have first place in your life.

When you open your eyes, you must see me first in everything in life. Then you have fulfilled the purpose with which God made you. And when Eve, whose eyes were open in the Garden of Eden, instead of seeing the tree of knowledge of good and evil, if she had seen God, there would be no sin.

It would have been a different story for the human race. And all the problems that have arisen in the world and arisen in churches are because people open their eyes and they don't see Christ as having first place. All the problems between husband and wife are because Christ does not have first place.

I remember when I was a very young man, before I even left my job in the Navy and I was serving the Lord in the ships, this is the verse the Lord spoke to me and said, if you give Jesus Christ the first place in everything in your life, my power will back you throughout your life. Wherever you go, nothing will be able to overpower you. Not the devil, not circumstances, not people, not enemies, nothing.

If you will only determine that Christ will have first place in everything in your life and you're willing to offend family members, you're willing to offend everybody on the earth and even property and possessions will have no place on you. Christ will have first place. My power will back you continuously.

And I have to say, I've experienced that particularly in the last 43 years that we have built churches. All the opposition of men has been able to accomplish nothing. Because it all depends, my dear brother, sister, on only one thing, not even your knowledge of the Bible.

A lot of people who know so much of the Bible, who go through Bible school, they don't give Christ the first place in everything. I met a lot of these Bible scholars. The Bible is first, not Christ.

Their knowledge of the Bible is first. I know the Bible pretty well, but that's not first for me. I don't argue with people to prove some doctrine in the Bible.

I even tell people you can disagree with me on some minor doctrines of the Bible. It doesn't make a difference. Do you give Christ first place in everything in your life? My goal in life is to preach and bring people to the place where Christ is first place in everything in their life.

If I haven't done that, I failed in my ministry. See, Paul says later on in the same chapter, towards the end of the chapter, he says, there is a mystery, verse 26, that's been hidden from past ages. And this is what God wants to make known in this mystery, verse 27, which is Christ in you having first place, the hope of glory.

And this is the one we proclaim as Paul proclaimed this. And in order to bring Christ having to first place in every man, we admonish every man that means we rebuke. Admonish means, how do you admonish your children? Rebuke them, correct them.

And the purpose of all rebuke and correction in the church and when a man of God corrects you individually because he loves you so much, I'll tell you this, if he's a real man of God, the purpose is that you might give Christ the first place in some area of your life where you're not giving him first place right now. And if you accept that admonishment and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that one day we can present every one of these believers perfect, complete in Christ, that was Paul's burden. And he says, I can't do this on my own, I labor working according to his power, which mightily works within me.

So I'm sure the Lord said something like that to Paul as well. You give Christ first place in everything, my power will back you throughout your life. And you can see how Paul's entire ministry, it never sagged or went down.

It just went from glory to glory to glory to glory. All the years that he served, it was because Christ was number one to him. Nobody was more important to him.

He was ready even to rebuke Peter, a senior apostle, if he saw Peter doing something wrong. He said, Peter, why are you sitting with the Jews now? You were sitting with the Gentiles. You know, those days, Jews and Gentiles, it was a big problem.

The Jewish kind of thing, teaching was you don't go to the Gentiles. And after they became Christians, the Lord had already shown Peter with a vision from heaven, don't call anything unclean, which God has made clean, go to the house of Cornelius. I've accepted him also to make Jews and Gentiles one.

But in one meeting in Jerusalem, Peter followed that and he sat with the Gentiles having his meals and the Jews were there and they were all same to him. Still, the senior leader in Jerusalem, James, was a very strict man. Some of his colleagues came into that hall and as soon as Peter saw them, he got a little disturbed.

These fellows will report me to James saying that I'm sitting with the Gentiles and he quickly got up and went and sat with the Jews. I can imagine Peter doing that. Don't despise him.

We've done that in different ways at different times. And Paul got up there publicly and said to Peter, you read about it in Galatians and chapter 2. He said, Peter, why are you doing this? Or why are you being a hypocrite? You were sitting here till now and you moved over there just because these people came from the leader in Jerusalem and you thought they would report him to James, report you to James. I'm just saying that even a great man like Peter, it's the fear of man and the fear that what will somebody say about me if they see me here can make us compromise.

But if you're determined in your life, I don't want the honor of any human being. I just want to please God. And if I please God, I know that God will stand by me through thick and thin.

And one man with God is always a majority. It doesn't matter if the whole world is against him. So please remember this, brothers and sisters.

And there was not such a strict demand on this, on all of Israel in the Old Testament, that you must put me first in everything. It was God's will for everybody, but very few people reached that. You see, just like you don't give a very tough examination to a child who doesn't want to be more than a child.

But those who are willing to go on with God, think of a man like Abraham, how God tested him. Give up everything, give up your relatives, give up your home, give up your retired life and come away to a land that I will show you. And the interesting thing there is God never told his wife, God never gave a separate vision to his wife to make it easier for Abraham.

Sarah never saw anything. One day Abraham says, Sarah, we are packing up and we are going. And Sarah says, where are you going? He says, I don't know.

God's told me. And there you see the wonderful submission of Sarah, that she went along with him and till today she never regrets it. You ask Sarah in heaven, do you regret that decision you made? Oh, no.

I'm glad I submitted to my husband and went because I knew he was a man of God. 50 years later, again God is testing Abraham. Now take your son and go and kill him on top of the mountain I'm going to show you.

You know, it says in Hebrews 11 that he had faith that if he killed Isaac, God would raise him up from the dead because God had said the promise is going to come through him. So if I kill him, God has to raise him from the dead. Amazing faith that man had of resurrection when up to his time there was no resurrection in the history of humanity.

And it says in Hebrews 11, Abraham had faith that if I kill this boy, how will God fulfill his promise? He'll raise him from the dead. That's why he could tell Sarah, it's not written in scripture, but if Sarah said, where are you going? He says, I'm just going for a trip, three-day trip with my son. But don't worry, I'll bring him back.

How could he say that? He knew that my God will raise him up because the promise is through him. But that was what was God testing in Abraham. Am I first in your life? More important than the opinion of your wife? More important than what Sarah says? More important than your son who is the most precious thing in your life? Am I first in your life? And you read there in Genesis 22, when Abraham did that, God's heart was so happy that he says to Abraham in Genesis 22, because you have done this, I will bless you so immensely that the entire population of the earth will be blessed through you.

Can God make a man such a blessing? Sure. It all depends on whether a man decides that God is going to be first in my life. Every man of God has been like that, whether it's Elijah or John the Baptist in the Old Testament or Paul or anyone.

They determined one thing that Jesus Christ would have number one place in my life and nothing would take that place. No person, no position, no job, no nothing. And I want to say to you that those are the people who have accomplished the most for God on the earth, whether they are full-time workers or secular workers, it doesn't make a difference.

Turn with me to James in chapter 4. In James chapter 4, we read a verse which says, speaking about those who have a little friendship with the world and friendship with God, and it says here that verse 4, James 4.4, it's a very strong word. It's one of the only places in scripture where believers, where somebody writes to a believer and says, you adulteresses. This is how, you see, Babylon is called the great adulteress, the great harlot.

And Babylon comprises of these small, small adulteresses who claim to be Christians. And you see, he's not writing to unbelievers. He's writing to believers.

He says, you adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity towards God? You know, earlier on he writes the letter, he says, my beloved brethren, so that you know he's writing to believers in James 2 verse 1, my brethren, my brethren. That's he's writing to believers, my brethren, don't you know that if you're friendly with the world, you are an adulteress. If something in the world means more to you than Jesus Christ, you're an adulteress.

It's like a married man who promised to love his wife or a married woman, let's say we are the bride, a married woman who promised to love her husband and have nobody but him and then has her eyes on somebody else. That man is richer or more handsome or kinder or something like that and has her eyes on somebody else, even though she doesn't go and sleep with him. She's an adulteress and then immediately she's an adulteress.

She's married to this man whom she said she'd be devoted to all her life and now she's looking at other men. This is exactly how very many born-again believers are. I've seen it.

They say they are devoted to Christ but look at the way they live. There are lots of other things in the world which are more important. We have to live in the world.

Jesus lived in the world. He earned his living as a carpenter for at least 12 years up to the age of 30 and he had to have the struggles. It wasn't easy.

He lived in a poor home. The town in which he lived didn't have a good reputation. In fact, Nathaniel says, can anything good come out of Nazareth? That's the type of reputation Nazareth had.

God allowed Jesus to grow up in such a place in a poor home and to earn his own living, struggle and perspire and earn his own living. So that's okay but the father was first in his always in the midst of his work. His work was not primary.

Never. Money was not primary for him. His aim was not to become the richest carpenter in Nazareth.

Rubbish. He didn't even have any such aim. How could he do that when he would give some gifts of some things to widows and help the poor people? You can never be the richest person in Nazareth if you go around doing such things.

No, his aim was to please his father. That was all. His ambition was to please his father whatever the cost and would not allow anything of the spirit of the world to come into his heart and that's our example to follow.

And so he says, brethren, if you are friendly with the world, it's actually an enmity towards God. In other words, he's telling a woman, listen, if you're going to be friendly with that man, actually you're going to

betray your husband. You shouldn't be interested in some other man.

You can talk to people but if you're interested in another person more than your husband, you're an adulteress. A first-rate adulteress. We understand that in the world but so many Christians have not understood that spiritually.

And he says, if you want to be a friend of the world, not only you're an adulteress, he uses an even stronger word. You are an enemy of God. That means you haven't given first place to Christ in everything.

You ask any man, any married man, any married man, do you want your wife to give you first place in her heart? Would you like a little corner of her heart to be given to somebody else? No man will say, oh sure, so long as I have 99%. If your wife says, listen, will you allow me one week in a year to go and stay with somebody, some other man? Not 51 weeks I'll be with you, will you agree? Or if she says, only one day, 364 days I'll be with you, one day with another man. We are so jealous.

That's a good type of jealousy. I want my wife for myself. Every husband here will say that.

Don't you think Jesus has the right to say that concerning his bride? That's the thing we need to ask ourselves all the time. Am I really the bride of Christ or just somebody who wants to go to heaven when I die? Like we sing, my sins are all forgiven. I'm on my way to heaven.

That's not my gospel. And I say, I remember years ago, I started preaching in India. I said, Lord, I don't want to go around this country inviting people to go to heaven.

I have no interest in that because I never met a man who doesn't want to go to heaven. I'm going to go around this country inviting people who want to take up the cross every day, put Jesus Christ first in their life and follow him on earth before going to heaven. And if that means very few will come, that's fine.

And we started with very, very few. And we are more now, but we haven't changed the standards. Some people may sit in our congregation who not really living up to the standards.

Well, I'm not responsible for them, but they hear the standard very clearly. Every Sunday in our church, they hear it clearly. And I'm not offended if some I'm not bothered if some of them get offended and go.

God bless you, brother. We still love you, but we're not going to lower the standard to keep you happy and keep you in our church. Never, never, never.

I will never permit that because I'll be unfaithful to my calling as a servant of God if I ever do that. And I don't care who he is. He may be the most influential person in town, the richest person in town, great Bible scholar.

I say, fine. I'm sorry. I'm not interested in your knowledge.

I'm not interested in your money. I'm not interested in any of your influence. In this church, Jesus Christ is going to be first.

And, you know, like, for example, if you're in a building and the people don't like you proclaiming that and they kick you out, that happens also in some of our village churches, you know, because some places we don't have a hall and almost everybody in the village is a non-Christian. So one of our brothers who's rented a home from a non-Christian opens up his home to have the church meeting. And a few people

start meeting.

And very soon the neighbors come and tell the landlord, you can't permit this guy to have meetings. Kick him out. And he loses his house.

Because I'm losing that rented house because he can't have a Christian meeting there. But he's just fine. Okay, if you throw me out, I'll throw you out.

But I'm not going to give any other person than Christ first in my life. You know, we think of sufferings that we have is nothing compared to what a lot of other Christians face. I personally know, even just before I came from Bangalore, there was this poor sister, only believer in a non-Christian home.

Young sister, maybe in her 20s or something. Kicked out of her house by the father one day. So you and I can't live in this house.

If Christ is head of your life, forget it. Get out. Get out onto the street.

Because she happened to come to our church, we could find some place for her to stay with some other sisters. You know, some people pay a tremendous price, I want to tell you, just because they put Jesus Christ first. I mean, that girl could have compromised a little and say, okay, dad, what do you want me to do? You want me to compromise something? She may have stayed, but she said no.

Christ is going to be first in our life. And some of us, little, little areas we compromise because we gain something in the world or get something for ourselves. I tell you, one day when you, if you ever get to heaven and you see such people over there and she gives her testimony and asks you, what is your testimony? And you tell about all the compromises you made.

How will you feel that day? I don't want to be ashamed in heaven when somebody asks me to give my testimony and he tells me how some of those martyrs, how they laid down their life because they refused to even bow down to Caesar or any such thing. So it's quite something to give first place to Christ in everything. And I often think of the time when I will meet the martyrs of Christ in heaven.

And I believe a lot of time we will spend in eternity is giving our testimony to each other. How the Lord led us through the earth. I'll be excited to hear the testimonies of numerous believers.

I know that a major part of my eternity will be spent listening to the testimony, exciting testimonies of different people. And there's so many millions of people there to take a long time. People ask, what are you going to do in heaven? I say, I'm going to have a very interesting time in heaven, talking to all these people.

And then they'll ask me for my testimony. What will yours be? That in some situation where you could make a little more money, you compromised or some, you went and married a person because she was good looking and not, not finding out whether she was a wholehearted disciple of Jesus. All these types of things.

Okay. We made mistakes in the past. Are you going to make more mistakes in the future? Are you going to say, Lord, I've made blunders and mistakes in the past, but at least from now on, I'm going to give Jesus Christ the first place in everything.

It goes on here in James chapter four to say in relation to adulterous and enemies of God. I mean, I hope you know the answer to this question. Who is an enemy of God? The standard answer is Satan.

Yes. Another enemy of God, a believer who's a friend of the world. Have you ever thought of that answer? It's here.

James four, verse four. A believer who's a friend of the world is an enemy of God, just like the devil. Or who's an adulterous, one who's friendly with the world.

We got to take these verses seriously. I take scripture seriously. I don't just hold up the Bible and say, this is the word of God and ignore what's written inside.

To me, one of the clearest evidences in my life that I took the Bible as the word of God is the time I was converted, I started studying it because I believe with all my heart that almighty God, the creator of this universe, who sent Jesus Christ to die for my sins, wrote only one book for man. These 66 books called the Bible. A lot of people believe it, but if they believed it, they'd study it.

I believed it and I started studying it and it changed my life. I've never regretted it all these 59 years that I've known, being a Christian. When I was born again 59 years ago, I had not read the Bible at all.

I mean, I knew the stories which I went to, which I heard in Sunday school, but I hadn't read the Bible. But I decided if this is the book that God has given, I'm going to spend my life studying it. And boy, it changed my life.

It changed my family life. It changed everything around me. So I know it's God's book.

If you're not reading it, my brother, sister, ask yourself whether you've given Christ first place in your life. Ask yourself, no wonder the power of God is not being manifested. Many people pray and pray and pray and pray.

Oh Lord, fill me with the spirit, fill me with the spirit. In a hundred years, they won't be filled with the spirit because they're not willing to give Christ first place in everything. God will fill immediately with the Holy Spirit.

Anyone who decides to examine every area of his life and make sure that Christ is first place in every area. I searched my life like that. And that's how God filled me with the Holy Spirit and changed my life completely and gave me gifts to serve him.

He'll give you tremendous gifts to serve him. He'll stand by you through thick and thin. Nobody will be able to stand against you if you have God on your side.

And God will be on your side if you give Christ first place in everything. That's what the Lord said to me. You're determined to give Jesus Christ the first place in everything.

And my power will back you all through your life. He goes on to say in James 4, 5, in the same context, do you think the scripture speaks to no purpose? He jealously desires the spirit which he has made to dwell in us. I want to explain something to you here in the Greek language in which the Bible was originally written or the Hebrew.

There's no capital letter and small letter. Everything is capital letter. So the translators, when they translated into English, where there are capital letters and small letters, have to decide when they read the word spirit.

Should this be capital S or small s? Capital S refers to the Holy Spirit. Small s refers to our spirit. I believe this is one of those places where the translators made a mistake.

Not the original writer. It's referring to our spirit. God is not jealous about the Holy Spirit.

It's ridiculous to think that. But God jealously desires my spirit. You understand that? Just like I told you a husband jealously desires that his wife will have no interest in any man other than him.

It's in the same context of Christ being first in our life and not being an adulteress. In that connection, the divine husband jealously desires you, your spirit, that it'll be entirely his. Then your spirit, which is the deepest part of you, will be devoted to Jesus Christ.

There's a jealousy in God for that. It's a jealousy because he loves you. You know, a husband who loves his wife only will be jealous that she should belong only to me.

A husband who couldn't care less about his wife and say, okay, if you want to go around, fool around with other men, it's okay. Such a husband is not a good husband. He's probably fooling around with other men, women, or himself.

But a really faithful husband will be very jealous that I even teach in India, you know, one of the problems in India, I suppose, the problem in the Western countries too is, in most Indian couples, when they get married, they love one another over a period of time. But once the children come, the children become more important than the wife or husband. Everywhere I've seen it, they begin to love their children more than they love each other.

I say that's against the word of God. You're supposed to love your wife and husband first. They came before the children.

Children came later. Then second children. And that's why you find so many of these people, once they've grown old and their children are married, the husband and wife are bored with each other.

They don't know what to do because the children are not at home now. You've probably seen that in many Indian homes. The love for each other was never there.

It's disappeared over the period of years. It's all focused on the children. Now all they want to see is the children.

That's not the way it should be. Even if you live up to a hundred years of age, your wife, your husband must be number one in your affections. Children, I'm not preaching what I haven't practiced.

I believe I followed scripture in every area that I got light on. And this is one of those areas. I see that God himself, the divine husband, is very jealous for me.

And I say, Lord, I want to be yours. I want to be a faithful wife, a faithful bride in every area. I don't want ever to look at something just like you.

I mean, a woman who's looking at another man and admiring him, something like that. That's something wrong in that. And I don't want to be like that.

So the spirit, he jealously desires the spirit within us. And if I, I'll tell you this, you see, the Holy Spirit comes and fills our spirit. Please remember this.

He doesn't primarily fill our body or our mind or our emotions. I personally believe the main problem with Pentecostalism is they emphasize the emotions, emotions. And the main problem with anti-Pentecostal people is they emphasize the mind, intellect, intellect, intellect.

I say to me, intellect and emotions are not the primary thing. That's all soul. It makes you a soulish Christian.

It's a baptism of the soul. God desires the deepest part of us, which is our spirit, our heart. There, the Holy Spirit.

And if I make sure that my heart is devoted to Jesus Christ and that nobody and nothing will take any part of that attention away from him, everything is secondary to him. My job, secondary to Christ. My children, secondary to Christ.

Even my wife, secondary to Christ. I never wanted to marry a woman in whose life I would be first. I wanted to marry a woman in whose life Christ would be first.

The day we got married until the end of our life. And a woman who, to whom I could say, listen, you'll never be first in my life. You'll always be second.

Jesus Christ will be first in my life. That is the secret of a happy marriage. It's a secret of being able to bring up your children properly, where Christ is first in your life.

Because God jealously desires our spirit for himself. And watching, you know, you see your husband can't watch you all the time. But if he were watching you all the time, and he saw you once in a while, glancing at a good looking man and admiring him.

What would your husband think? And God is watching us all the time. And I say, Lord, is there any time in my life where you see me wishing I had something of the world which you didn't please to give me? Wishing I had that which somebody else had, or wishing I had this or that? Or why didn't you make me this like that? Some type of concern for something earthly. For example, something that you should be better looking or richer or anything.

But to be perfectly content with the way God made us, no complaints, absolutely none. Because I say, Lord, you determined what I should be. You determined, you determined even the number of hairs on my head.

It says the number of hairs in your head are numbered. You have no complaint about anything in life. Because I know you jealously watch over me.

I want to tell you from the little experience I've had through these years, it's a wonderful thing to walk with God like that. It's a wonderful thing. You'll have the most satisfying Christian life and your life will be like Abraham.

God told Abraham, I will bless you so much that you'll be a blessing to every family you meet. Think of that. If you put God first in your life, you put Christ first in everything.

I'll tell you in Jesus' name, every single family you meet in your life, you'll be a blessing to them. I'm not saying they'll all get converted. Even Jesus could not convert everybody.

Very few were converted through Jesus' ministry because his standard was so high. But he, everybody could say, those who received Christ, he was a blessing to them. And you'll be a blessing.

You know, like it says in Psalm 23. What does it say in Psalm 23? My cup overflows and goodness, you know the rest of that verse, and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. In other words, I go into a home and I go away and what do I leave behind there? Goodness and mercy.

It's behind me, following me all the days of my life. I go into a home and I go away and I left some goodness and mercy there. You go into some other home and you leave it, you're left some goodness and mercy there.

You meet with the person for five minutes somewhere and you're left some goodness and mercy with them. What a way to live. Can you live a better way than that? And you come to the end of your life and what a lot you've accomplished, even if you're not a preacher.

You just left goodness and mercy with a few words that you said. That's the way every one of us can live, brothers and sisters. God does not call everyone to have a preaching ministry.

That's reserved for some in His sovereignty. He makes somebody an apostle, somebody a prophet, somebody a teacher, somebody a shepherd, somebody an evangelist. I cannot covet that.

That's God's sovereign desire, who He wants to give that gift. For example, I prayed many times that God give me the gift of healing. And not for any fame.

I promised I would never make any money on it. I would never take any money from people I prayed for. And I would go to the poor people first who were sick, who couldn't afford to go to the hospitals.

I said, Lord, I promise I will not go to the rich. I'll go to the poor people, among your people who are suffering. But it did not please the Lord to give it to me.

And He gave me the reason also for it. He said that people will be so attracted to you that you won't be able to make disciples. I don't want to fill heaven with people who are healed of their sicknesses.

I want to fill heaven with people who become disciples of Jesus. And such crowds will come after you when they know you've got a genuine gift of healing, that you won't be able to make disciples. I said, Lord, fine.

I want to make disciples. I don't want to go around healing the sick because that's only temporary. They get healed and they get well and they go to hell.

I'm not interested in that. I want to work for eternity. Our life on earth is, let's say, five seconds.

Are you willing to be sick for five seconds? If the rest of eternity is going to be wonderful? Sure. All our sufferings are for five seconds. If you look into eternity, you'll find your entire, even if you live to a hundred

years, it's five seconds or less than five seconds.

I said, Lord, sure. Eternity is more important. So, what does it mean in practical terms? I want to come to something very practical of putting Christ first and everything.

You know, Jesus, when he said to his disciples as he left the earth, there are two things he said to them. Number one, Mark 16 and verse 15. Mark's gospel, chapter 16, verse 15.

He said, go into all the world. That's not for every single individual. No individual can go into all the world.

It's a command given to the whole church. I have a small part in it, but there are millions of other Christians who also join with me in going into all parts of the world. For example, I don't have to go to Russia and Tibet and all.

I have to go where God sends me. You have to go where God sends you. Go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Share the good news with everyone. The basic message of the gospel. And if anyone is believed and is baptized, he'll be saved.

Saved from eternal damnation and saved from the wrath of God. But if he disbelieves, he'll be condemned. And in this ministry, those who, particularly those who go into pioneer evangelism.

Pioneer evangelism means going to places where the gospel has never been preached. There are many places in India like this. And you know what happens in these places where the gospel has never been preached? There are more signs and wonders in such places because Jesus promised that.

Again and again and again, I've seen. There's healing, casting out demons, all these things, wherever pioneer evangelism is preached, where the gospel is preached. And that happens even today.

These signs will accompany those who believe. Many people ask, why aren't these signs accompanying my ministry? Brother, are you involved in pioneer evangelism? Are you going and preaching the gospel in some area of the world where the gospel has never been preached? No? Well, then that's not promise. It's not for you.

This is for those who go into those places where the gospel has never been preached. All of us have not done that. But I've seen in some places in villages where there was no Christian.

We got two churches in India where there were no Christians for 2,000 years. You go to such places like that, then God has to manifest his power in in amazing ways and miraculous ways. Otherwise, how will they believe? You know, you go into some remote village of India where they never even heard about Jesus and you go and talk to them about Jesus Christ.

You want to preach the gospel to them. And you want to tell them, you know, 2,000 years ago in the land of Israel, they don't even know where Israel is. They haven't read a Bible.

They don't. There's no Bible in their language. You go and tell them there was a little baby born and he was born without a human father.

Yeah, sure. You're gone off your head. When a moment you begin with that.

And, you know, he grew up and he did a lot of miracles. And then finally they killed him. That was for your sins.

How in the world is that guy going to believe that? You think you're crazy. Even 2,000 years ago, somebody died for my sins, which I'm committing today. And you tell me these stories that he was born without a father.

Go and tell somebody else. Don't tell me these fairy tales. And then he rose up from the dead.

Then he's convinced you're off your head. And he ascended up to heaven. And then you say, OK, he's coming back.

Now, bring your sick people here. Bring your demon possessed people who nobody could set free. And you'll see that Jesus is alive.

I'll prove it to you right now. Then they believe that is the need for this. These type of signs accompanying where the gospel goes for the first time, because the Lord knows.

How will they know that this person you're talking about is a living savior? But there's another part of the gospel that, you know, that's why he says about eating, drinking deadly poison and all that. In verse 18, I tell you, you go into these remote villages where there's no hygiene. You better believe that the Lord will protect you from what you eat and drink.

Otherwise, you can get sick. But that's why you need a promise like that over there. We who live with bottled water and all that, we don't need these promises.

But those who go into pioneer areas for evangelism need it. This Bible is absolutely true for today. And I've seen it happen.

But the second part of the commission is in Matthew 28. The second part of the commission is in Matthew 28, where it says, these two are together as two sides of a coin. You can't have one without the other.

I believe in both. The other side of the coin is, Jesus said in Matthew 28, verse 18, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me. Go and make disciples.

Don't just make them converts. Don't just tell them to believe that their sins are forgiven. They'll go to heaven when they die.

More than that, make them after that into disciples. That means after they are born again, make them disciples. Disciple is a follower.

He's got a master and the master says, you've got to follow me. And make them disciples of Jesus and baptize them. You know, people who think baptism is unimportant.

Jesus mentioned it in the last words almost in both places, Mark 16 and Matthew 28. Baptize them. Don't think of it as just a simple unimportant ritual.

It is not. Very important. But only after you told them, listen, we want to be a disciple of Jesus, I'll baptize you.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Jesus mentions the Trinity. There are people today who ignore the Trinity, but Jesus mentioned it even in the last words that he spoke. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You may not understand that, but accept it. And then once you have made them disciples, then you got to teach them, verse 20, every single thing I commanded you. That's why I made a series of our Bible studies saying all that Jesus taught.

That's from here. Because Jesus said, you must teach them all that I taught you. Everything.

And then I'll be with you always till the end of the age. Now, many people like to take that last part of the promise. Lord, you be with me always.

But to whom is that promised? If you go around wanting to make disciples in your life and you want to teach other people everything Jesus taught you, brother, sister, I assure you, Jesus will be with you till the end of your life. Always with you. I've experienced that.

Because I say, I'm not interested in making converts. I'm interested in making disciples. I'm going to make a disciple.

I'm going to tell them every single thing that Jesus taught. I'm going to teach them how to overcome anger. I'm going to teach them how to overcome sexual lust.

I'm going to teach them how to be free from anxiety and the love of money and stop complaining and grumbling and murmuring. Every single thing that Jesus taught. People say that's too high a standard.

Okay. That's why God has allowed 1000 other churches to exist. You can go and sit there and waste your life.

But if you're a serious Christian, and you want to put Christ first in your life, this is the way. Teach them every single thing I have taught. So these two things, make disciples and teach them everything I taught.

If you really put Christ first in your life, that would be, these two things would be very important. And I want to tell you, when we started church, we planted in Bangalore 43 years ago, we started with these two statements, make disciples and teach them everything I taught. So to make disciples, we went to Luke 14.

Because that's, you know, when the early apostles heard make disciples, they didn't have to ask the Lord Jesus, Lord, what do you mean by make disciples? He had already told them. And Luke 14, there were three conditions of discipleship in Luke 14, 26, 27 and 33. And in a nutshell, the three conditions of disciples, discipleship are make Jesus Christ first in everything.

Number one, Luke 14, 26, put Christ first, above your relatives and friends, and others in your church, and every human being, your family members and wife and children, everybody, Christ must be first in all your relationships. If you love me, anyone who comes uses a strong word hate. And if you compare it with Luke Matthew chapter 10, similar passage, what he means is, in comparison to your love for me, your love for them must be pretty close to zero.

I mean, you love them, but it's almost like darkness. You hate your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and you can't be my disciple. Now, you know, there are other passages which says you must love your wife like Christ love the church, honor your father and mother, there's no contradiction.

And the picture I like to think of many verses in the Bible with an illustration, because Jesus used illustrations all the time. And the illustration that has come to me most frequently in this verse is this. Your love for your wife, father, mother, children, brothers and sisters in the church must all be like the light of the stars.

Do the stars have light at night? Yes. But when the sun rises in the daytime, that light of the stars is still there, it's not gone away. But the light of the sun is so bright that you can't even see the stars.

It's almost as though they've disappeared in the darkness. So that's the picture I get. My love for my father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and others in the church, it must be there.

But in comparison to the love of Jesus, it must be like the light of a star compared to the light of the sun. I don't see them. I don't hate them in that sense.

That's how I see hatred. I'll tell you another thing that I've discovered through my life. You love your wife a hundred times better if you love Jesus Christ supremely.

You love and honor your father and mother much better if you love Jesus Christ supremely. You love your children much better if you love Christ more than you love them. If you treat the love for your children like a starlight compared to the sunlight love of Jesus, you'll do a much better job as a parent.

I decided in my life I'll never love my children now or even when they were born more than Christ. Because the Lord told me, you put me first in your life, my power will back you in everything, in your home relationship with your children, and whatever your need is, your financial need, don't worry about it. Put me first in everything.

I want to say to you, my dear brothers and sisters, the problems that so many Christians have, you go down to the root of it, they don't put Christ first in everything. Well, then you're bound to have problems. Because God runs this universe according to certain principles.

And for a Christian, the number one principle is Christ must be first in everything more than father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children. Examine your life and see if Christ is first in this area and be ruthless in self-examination. It's like a MRI scan.

Get into that little thing they put you inside, scan your whole brain and see if whether there's any little bit of cancer there somewhere, some love for something else more than for Jesus Christ, some person. The second condition of discipleship, verse 27, is carry a cross. If you don't carry a cross, you cannot be my disciple.

The cross is that which puts myself, capital S-E-L-F, to death, so that Christ is first more than myself. First Christ must be first in relation to all others. And secondly, Christ must be first in always in relation to myself.

In practical terms, what that means is somebody shouts at me and gets angry and myself says, talk to him in the same way. And Jesus says, die. Put me first.

This is practical. And there could be many situations like this where you want something badly. The Lord says, put it to death.

Put me first. I'll give you exactly what you need at the right time. You don't have to covet anything.

You don't have to grab anything. You don't have to wish that you had what somebody else has. You'll be completely free from covetousness, greed, wanting what other people have, wishing that you could be like that or you could have that or you could have something which that person has.

No. Self is put to death. I will not allow self to have a say.

You know, this is how Jesus lived all his life. He had no sin in him, but he had a will of his own. If he didn't have a will of his own, it's not a sin to have a will of your own, by the way.

Adam had a will of his own, even before he sinned. That's not a sin. But Jesus had a will of his own.

But the danger is, when you have a will of your own, you can do it. See, the planets don't have a will of their own. And that's why for thousands of years, they've obeyed God without disobeying even a fraction of a second.

That's why we can keep, adjust our watch by the stars. They never disobeyed. But they don't have a will of their own.

So they can't be sons of God. They can't be sinners. But the moment you have a will of your own, you can be a sinner or one obedient to God.

Jesus had a will of his own. And he constantly said no to it. And the garden of Gethsemane was the last time he said, no, father, not my will, but thine be done.

But that's what he said from day one. Think, for example, have you ever thought of Jesus' life at home for 30 years? Perfect young boy, 12 years old, living under imperfect authority of Joseph and Mary. Do you think Jesus, the perfect young boy could see certain decisions of Joseph and Mary were wrong? Absolutely.

Do you think he could see that the way they spoke to each other was not a godly way? I'm sure he saw it. Do you think the way they wanted to punish some of the other children that Mary had was not right or some of the demands they made were not right? Absolutely. But he never judged them.

That was his holiness. He'd say, that is not my business to judge Joseph and Mary. They're not under my authority.

They're under God's. I've gone, my heavenly father has placed me here as a son. I'm not saying he wouldn't make any suggestions.

You're welcome to make suggestions to your parents, of course, but he would not judge them. There's a lot of difference in making a suggestion to your parents and judging them. To judge is to sin.

He wouldn't do that. If he had sinned, he could not be our sacrifice. And he lived like that for 30 years in perfect obedience to an imperfect authority.

Do you know the number of believers whom I've heard complaining, saying, oh, my elders have got this mistake and that mistake. Boy, you should have lived under Joseph and Mary and discovered how many mistakes they had. You say you want to follow Jesus? Start following him here.

Many people want to follow Jesus and walking on the water and turning water into wine and healing the sick. Forget that. He started with a very simple thing like obedience to imperfect authority.

Now, you know, most people who complain about their parents, they have no wives who complain that my husband is an imperfect authority. They never complain when it comes to working in a job under an imperfect boss. Maybe a boss who is sexually evil or cheats and tells lies.

Why don't they complain there? Because money, they lose money if they complain there. Why do they complain at home? Because there's no money to be earned by being obedient to your parents or respecting them. There's such a lot of hypocrisy in people who call themselves Christians.

They appear to be very righteous, but they're not. But when self is crucified, the will of self is put to death. You're proving that Christ is first in my life.

And the third condition of discipleship is Christ above possessions. Christ above all my loved ones. Christ above my self-life.

And verse 33, Christ is first in relation to my possessions. That means nothing that I possess, house, land, car, property, money, will ever be more to me than Jesus Christ. They are all given to me as a gift to use.

God has given more to some people and less to some people. That's his business. There were poor godly people like Paul and Peter.

There were extremely wealthy billionaires who were godly people like Job and Abraham. They were pretty wealthy. They were also godly.

And they were righteous. In fact, in Ezekiel 14, 14, God says the three most righteous people he named were, I don't know whether you've seen that verse, Noah, Daniel, and Job. Yeah.

Some people think Job is a fairy tale. It's not. More than once he's mentioned in Ezekiel 14, verse 14 downwards.

The three most righteous people, Noah, Daniel, and Job. Yeah. And James also writes about Job.

But he was an extremely wealthy man. In fact, it says he was the wealthiest man on earth. If I understand that word right in Job 1. But he was the most godly man on earth too.

So you can be extremely poor like Paul or Peter and be godly or extremely wealthy and be like Job. But the main thing that made them godly was that when Job lost everything, he worshipped God. The devil said, no, no, no.

He worships his possessions. And God said, rubbish. He does not.

He worships his sons. No, Satan, you don't know. Take away his sons.

Take away his property. He'll still worship me. And Job proved it.

And then the devil was defeated in those areas. He said, I'll tell you what. He loves his health.

You take away his health and let me see if he worships you. And he gets the terrible sickness. I believe it was leprosy because it says he had to sit outside the camp and scratch himself.

Leprosy. Imagine getting leprosy and he bowed his head and said, God, I worship you. And that man had no Bible, knew nothing about Jesus Christ, did not have the Holy Spirit, did not have fellowship.

I tell you, he puts us to shame. If he had a few up and down experiences in the book of Job, that's because he didn't have the Holy Spirit dwelling within. We don't have that.

We don't have to have that. We can be like Paul who can say, I'm content in all circumstances. But the principle with all these men was God was first, not their children, whether it was Job or Abraham, not their children, not their property, not even their wife or anyone, not even their health.

It's fine. And what a life they lived. These are the examples given to us in the Bible.

I always believe that the book of Job is the first book because there are many evidences of that in the book itself that was written long before Moses wrote Genesis. Moses wrote Genesis 500 years after Job. And so I look at it like this.

When God wanted to write a book for man, he did not begin with the creation of heaven and earth. He said that can wait. I want to write a book about a man who loved me more than his children, who loved me more than his property, who loved me more than his health, for whom I was number one.

That's the first book God wanted to write. That's what God wants us to hear. Number one.

I want to tell human beings about a man who was number one, who would not even listen to his wife if she tried to drag him away from God. No. And whom I could hold up to the devil as an example, saying, have you seen a man like this? My dear brothers and sisters, will you take that challenge today? Lord, I want you to hold me up as an example to the devil, not as a clever man, not even as a man who knows so much of the Bible, not as a gifted preacher or any such thing, but as a man with all my limitations to whom Christ is first.

More than my job, more than my family members, more than my self-life, more than my possessions, whether you give me or take away makes no difference. Christ is first. I prophesy and guarantee you will have the most satisfying life that you can ever live on this earth.

And I have 59 years behind me to prove it for myself. You can never choose a better way of life. You young people, if you can start early and decide this is the way you want to go, I guarantee if the Lord doesn't come and you come to my age, you'll really be grateful that you heard this message and stuck to it.

God bless you all. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we want to honor you in everything we do in our life.

We want you to be number one first in every area. And we want to listen to all that you have taught and seek for the power of the Holy Spirit to live by that light. Please help us, we pray.

Everyone here, Lord, I believe there are a number of sincere people sitting here, otherwise they wouldn't be here this afternoon. Please remind them of what they have heard. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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