

# God is a God of Encouragement

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of daily actions as instructed in the New Testament, focusing on taking up the cross daily and encouraging one another daily. It highlights the benefits of these practices in partaking of the life of Jesus and fostering a spirit of encouragement. The message challenges individuals to reflect on their worship of God, ensuring it aligns with the encouraging nature of the God revealed in the Bible, rather than a stern or demanding perception. By understanding God as a source of encouragement, believers are encouraged to bear fruit in their lives and ministries, influencing others positively towards Christ.*

**Scripture:** Luke 9:23, Hebrews 3:13, Psalms 115:4, Romans 15:5, Luke 19:12, Matthew 25:14, John 15:8, 2 Timothy 1:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:11

**Topics:** "Daily Discipleship", "Encouragement in Community"

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## Description

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## Transcript

There are two things that we're told in the New Testament to do daily. I think one of them we're all familiar with, Luke 9 23, that you must take up the cross daily. The other one, some of you may know, Hebrews 3 13.

Now when the Word of God says something we must do daily, we're not to condemn ourselves if we don't do it, but we should recognize this is something we should aim for. Anything in Scripture we are not doing, we should aim for. If you're not taking up the cross every day, aim for it.

Say, Lord, I want to come to the place where I take up the cross daily. In Hebrews 3 13 it says, encourage one another daily. Now we don't think so much about that because we're basically all self-centered.

Taking up the cross daily will bring some benefit in my life. I can partake of the life of Jesus. Encouraging another person daily, what benefit do I get? He gets a benefit, but I don't get anything.

So that doesn't come, we're not reminded of that frequently. I want to encourage all of you to meditate on that verse and say, Lord, how can I do that a little more? Okay, first of all, let's ask who are the ones you see daily? Not the people in the church, not even the people in your office, it's in the people in your home. So where do I begin? Encourage your husband, your wife, your children, and encouragement doesn't mean giving them some big exhortation.

You just smile something at them and encourage people. You know that? I remember reading Mother Teresa's words, husbands and wives smile at each other. Do you do that? Encouraging by a smile.

You know, there's a verse in Psalm 115. I'll tell you the reason why this doesn't come naturally to us. I'm not trying to say anything to condemn us.

I hope we'll never speak words of condemnation in this church. So I'm not saying this to condemn you, saying, hey, you guys are not encouraging people in your home. Far from it.

You've got to get to the root of this. What is the reason? I want to show you a verse in Psalm 115. It's talking about all the nations of the world.

The nations say, where is their God? In verse four, Psalm 115, four, the idols of the nations are all silver and gold. The work of man's hand. They've got mouths, but they cannot speak.

And it says here, verse eight, those who make them will become like them. That's a word that's come to my mind many times. They make idols and become like the idols.

And those, most of these idols, I tell you, you see a lot of them in India. If you see them outside temples, they're scary. You don't find a gentle, smiling idol anywhere in India.

Those who've been there have seen it. They're all scary idols. And those who worship them become like that.

That means that's the way they look at other people, too, in this stern, hard way. Now, we don't worship idols. But it's possible that the God you're worshiping is not the real God of the Bible.

And if it's not the real God of the Bible, it's an idol. The God of the Bible, the God of the one Jesus showed us, is not someone who's always looking at us in a stern, hard, condemning way. Romans chapter 15, Romans 15 says, God is a God who, verse 5, who gives encouragement.

The God you worship, is it a God who encourages you all the time? Then you will become like Him. Those who worship idols, an imaginary God, not the real one, will become like that. If you worship a God who's very hard and stern, and like these idols we see in front of temples, you'll become like that, unconsciously.

But if you worship a God who's always encouraging you and say, hey, you can do that better, you'll be like that. That doesn't mean we don't challenge people. When you tell your child, you can do better, you're telling him, you're not saying be satisfied with what you are, you're challenging him to do better, but you're encouraging him.

Hey, you can do better than that. So, we become like the God we worship. So, the question is, how much do you receive encouragement from God in your life? I know in the early part of my Christian life, when I heard about holiness and things like that, before I understood Jesus, I thought of God as one who's quick to jump on me if I made a mistake.

Hey, you slipped up there. And, you know, I'd slip up many times. And again, I was always, there was this God who was always jumping on me because I slipped up again, I slipped up again.

And I never knew Him as a God of encouragement. And my life was miserable. Every time I'd sin, I'd go to God and ask Him to forgive me, cleanse me in the blood.

I didn't lose my salvation, but it was a miserable life. I was defeated and frequently discouraged. But I thank God that all left me when God filled me with the Holy Spirit.

I remember what happened in my life 48 years ago when God filled me with the Holy Spirit. Something turned around completely. The Holy Spirit came and showed me that God is a God who encourages.

See this story that Jesus said, you know, there's a parable that Jesus spoke twice. It's not exactly the same, but similar. In Luke 19, you know the story, the parable of the servants who were given money to invest.

Luke 19 verse 12 onwards, a noble man went to get a kingdom and he called 10 of his slaves and gave them one mina each and said, go and do business with this. And one man, and when the noble man returned, the first man appeared in verse 16 and said, hey, Lord, I made 10 minas out of your one mina. Another fellow came and said, I made five.

But there was a third person who said in verse 20, Master, I did not invest your mina. I just kept it wrapped up in a handkerchief. Why? Because you are an exacting man.

You know why he didn't produce any fruit in his life? Because he thought his master is a very demanding man. He will take up what you did not lay down and reap where you did not sow. It was his wrong understanding of his master that made his life so fruitless.

There can be a lot more spiritual fruit in our life if we stop seeing God as a God who's demanding. Why did you slip up there? But a God who is encouraging. Hey, you can do better.

Don't worry about that slip up. Get up. Press on.

You'll become like that. You'll become like that to everybody. You'll become like that to your husband and your wife.

Because your worship is not an exacting God. Now, here's another parable. I don't want to go into the detail of the parable, because the message is slightly different in terms of, see, one is referring to the fruit of the spirit and the other referring to the gifts of the spirit.

I won't go into that. But Matthew 25 is the other parable. Very similar.

And here he's talking about this man who gave talents, not minas, was five. To one he gave five. Matthew 25, 15.

To another he gave two. Another gave one. And when he came back, the man who had got five went and got five more.

And the man who got two went and gained two more. But the man who got one, he said the same words as the one in Luke 19. What is that? Why did Jesus say the same words twice? Master, in verse 24, I

knew you were a hard man, reaping what you did not sow, gathering where you didn't scatter any seed.

And I was afraid of you, and I hid the talent. He produced nothing. Your life will be more fruitful in terms of God's kingdom if you stop seeing God as an exacting, demanding God, who's always jumping on you for some mistake you made.

The conviction of the Holy Spirit is never like jumping on us. No, it's very gentle. He's pictured like a dove.

The Holy Spirit's like a dove, gentle. And so a lot depends on whether we become the encouraging type of person. Fruit in our life, fruit in our ministry.

God wants to bring fruit from every one of us. He wants us to make disciples by our life and our words. How many people do you think have been influenced towards Christ in the last five years of your life? Now, I'm not condemning you.

I'm just asking, is it possible that it's because we thought of God as a hard, exacting man, and so we got our one talent, and we produced nothing with it? We got our one mina, and we still kept it, and we presented, Lord, I'm saved. I'm coming to heaven. But I never produced anything with it.

God wants us to produce something with our life. Now, again, don't take that as a word of condemnation. I'm telling you the source of how it can, the way in which can come.

It's by seeing God as a God of encouragement, who will not jump on us. A good father is one who encourages his children. A good mother is one who encourages her children.

Come on. Never mind. Get up.

Run, like we saw in that picture. So may God help us to see God as a God who is not always jumping on us to correct us and condemn us, but one who wants to encourage us, and gradually as we change the old view of God and get the correct view of God, we'll become more like him, and our lives will be more fruitful. You know, sometimes we say, I'm so timid, and that's why I can't witness to people.

It's not the reason. Or I don't have a gift to witness. It's all rubbish.

It's because you have not seen God as a God of encouragement. That's the reason. We try to find some other excuse for it.

No. May God help us.

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