

God Is Our Father And Jesus Is Our Example

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of meeting with our Savior, Jesus Christ, when we gather together. It highlights the misconception of Matthew 18:20, urging a deeper understanding of God's presence. The speaker stresses the need to read the Bible regularly and humbly, warning against deception and the worship of money over God. The sermon encourages recognizing God's compassionate and loving nature as a Father, seeking to know Him intimately and praising Him sincerely.

Scripture: Matthew 18:20, Psalms 66:12, Hebrews 8:9, John 16:15, John 1:18, Acts 4:31, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Corinthians 14:2

Topics: "God's Presence in Community", "Intimacy with God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of meeting with our Savior, Jesus Christ, when we gather together. It highlights the misconception of Matthew 18:20, urging a deeper understanding of God's presence. The speaker stresses the need to read the Bible regularly and humbly, warning against deception and the worship of money over God. The sermon encourages recognizing God's compassionate and loving nature as a Father, seeking to know Him intimately and praising Him sincerely.

Transcript

Praise the Lord. It's our desire when we come together should be primarily, primarily not to hear a message, but to meet with our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, he said, where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst.

It's not two or three gathering together on their own. Please see that verse in Matthew chapter 18. Many people have misunderstood this verse.

I've often said that if you read the Bible carelessly, you will be deceived. And if you have a Bible, and you know the language in which the Bible is written, and you don't read it regularly, you deserve to be deceived. Do you hear that? If you have a Bible in your language, and you don't read it regularly in humility, you deserve to be deceived by the devil.

And one day when you discover in eternity that you were deceived, remember that you had a Bible, and you did not respect it. You did not read it regularly. You did not ask God to speak to you through it.

You had time for many, many other things, and you wake up in eternity, perhaps lost forever. We don't want anybody in this church to be deceived. That's why we speak strongly against deception.

Why we emphasize, read God's word. So Matthew 18, it says here, we must read every word carefully. Jesus sometimes would, in the Holy Spirit, in different parts of the scriptures, take sometimes one word, and say, see what it says there, one word.

It's not just one sentence. Matthew 18 verse 20, where two or three have gathered together in my name, or have been gathered together. That's the more accurate rendering.

I am in their midst. So it's not where two or three gather together on their own. If he had said, where two or three gather together in my name, I am in their midst, then any people who take the name of Jesus and come together, he's there.

But a lot of Christians who gather together in the name of Jesus Christ, he's not there. These are people who have been gathered together. Gathered together means somebody else did it, and that's the Holy Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit gathers together, even two or three, that's a church. The minimum size of a church is two or three gathered together by the Holy Spirit. But if people gather together, even if they are 30,000, it's not a church.

It's a question of who has gathered them together. We know that the Holy Spirit has gathered people together by the fact that in such a church, Jesus Christ alone will be exalted. That church will worship God and not the alternative to God.

There are people who worship the devil, they can't worship God. But Jesus said there are people who worship money, they can't worship God. He said there are only two masters in the world, God and money.

So where money is an important thing in any church, Christ cannot be there. They can sing in the name of Christ, that's okay. He's not there, because money is the most important thing in that church, not Jesus Christ.

I would advise you never, never to join a church where money is more important than holiness of life, where money is more important than the presence of Jesus Christ and obedience to God's Word. And I'll tell you, in Bangalore or anywhere else, more than 99% of churches, money is more important than God. To the pastor and to the people, I would not waste my time in such a church.

If I'm in a place where I can't go to a church where God is most important, I'll sit at home. I will not sit in a church where money is more important than God, because I don't believe that God can be there. In one sense, God is everywhere.

He's in the temple, He's in the gurdwara, He's in the mosque, and He's everywhere all over the world in that sense, but not in the sense in which Jesus said, I am in the midst of two or three gathered together in my name. So it's a very important verse, because I want to be in a church that has been gathered together, not in the name of money, not people have been attracted by some clever preacher, but to gather together in the name of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. And so we need to ask ourselves as we sang the songs today, were you singing them to Jesus? He is in our midst.

If some important personality in this country or in the world was here, had come to visit our church, a very important personality had come here, we would all be aware of his presence. Oh, this great man has come to our church, and we'd be aware of it, that man is there. I wonder if we come on Sunday recognizing that

the greatest person that ever lived, Jesus Christ, is in our midst.

I'm not saying this to condemn any of you, please. I'm saying this as one who was guilty myself of having failed to recognize the presence of Jesus when I sing a song. I've sometimes sung a song, because I know the word so well, I don't even need to look at the board, and it's a nice song.

I can swing my head and sing along, and then at the end of it all, I say, Lord, I didn't say that to you. I said, thou art worthy, but who was I talking to? Did I recognize you are here, and I'm saying to you, thou art worthy? No, I wasn't saying it to you. I was just singing a song.

Thou art worthy, O Lord. Ask yourself whether you haven't done that. It's not easy to be conscious of God's presence.

It's the most important thing in life I've come to see. It's the answer to many, many of our problems to recognize the presence of Jesus. Let me show you Psalm 16.

This is the verse that I read 64 years ago when I was converted, but it never became real to me until the last 40 years or so. Imagine reading the Bible for so many years and not seeing the strength and power in a verse. Psalm 16 verse 11, you make known to me the path of life in your presence is fullness of joy.

It's got nothing to do with me. It's got nothing to do with you. God's presence brings fullness of joy to everyone whose conscience is clear.

All I have to do is have a clear conscience. You don't need anything else to dwell in the presence of God and you don't need to know the Bible. You don't need to have any gifts.

Of course, you have to have forgiven others because if you have not forgiven somebody, God won't forgive you. Then, of course, you can't experience the presence of the Lord. Just forget it.

If you haven't forgiven your husband, for example, for all the wrong things he did against you in your life so far, for all the ways in which he insulted your mother-in-law and your father-in-law, your mother and father, his mother-in-law and father-in-law, the way he insulted your father and mother, your husband insulted them, have you forgiven him? And you husbands, for all the ways in which your wife insulted and your parents, have you forgiven her? All the ways in which your husband and wife cheated your parents in something or treated them badly, bad, bad behavior, but have you forgiven him? There are people who say, I can never forgive. I'll tell you, my dear brother, as a servant of the Lord, I'll tell you this. Please listen to me.

If you say about what any human being has done to you, whether your husband or your wife or your neighbor or your boss or anybody, I can never forgive him. You know what God will say to you? I can never forgive you. You will not be forgiven on earth.

You will not be forgiven in eternity. And you will not experience the presence of the Lord on earth. And you will not experience the presence of the Lord in eternity.

But those who experience God's presence, it says here, in your presence is fullness of joy. And I'm telling you that for many years after I was born again, I did not have fullness of joy. Most of the time I had discouragement.

Most of the time I was defeated after being born again. Even after becoming a full-time Christian worker 57 years ago, I was defeated most of the time. Inwardly, outwardly my testimony was excellent.

I didn't steal anybody or anybody's stuff or do anything wrong like that. But my inner life was not acceptable to God. So I could not live in his presence.

I did not keep a clear conscience. And I did not have fullness of joy. I used to be discouraged, frequently gloomy even in my married life.

My wife will tell you. For many, many years of my early married life, I used to sit with my hand and my head discouraged. There were problems, real problems.

No problem that God could not solve. There's no problem in the world that God cannot solve. But I didn't have that faith because I was not in the presence of God.

I kept grudges and I didn't give them up. But I want to tell you my life has been very different for the last many, many decades. I don't know, is it 30 years or 40 years? I'm not discouraged even though I was a slave to that.

It's not because I have plenty of this world's goods. Those of you who know me when I was living here 45 years ago, you know how I lived here. I lived here very simply.

I've discovered that you don't need many things in the world to make you happy. You don't need a car to make you happy. In God's presence is fullness of joy.

Psalms 16:11. I took that as a challenge and I said, Lord, my big problem is discouragement and self-condemnation. I condemn myself.

Oh, I did this, I did this. I'm not come to the Lord. Of course, I would always come to the Lord and ask him to forgive me.

I said, Lord, I want this life, fullness of joy. That is the proof that I am in your presence. And I made a decision many years ago to say to myself that at any time I don't have fullness of joy, I am not in the presence of God.

I say that to myself many times. Sometimes it happens, it used to happen and I say, no, I'm not in your presence now. I don't know what is the reason, but I'm not in your presence because I don't have fullness of joy.

I'm disturbed by what somebody else did. I'm upset with him or I'm upset with her or something else has gone wrong and fullness of joy is gone from my life. Not because what that guy did or because of some financial loss, but because I'm not in the presence of God.

No financial loss can take away your joy. No harm or evil or threat or anything another person says to you or does to you can take away fullness of joy. They can, the whole world can do anything they like.

It cannot take away the fullness of joy from your life if you're in God's presence. In his presence, there is fullness of joy. I don't know how many of you will take that seriously, but I can tell you honestly that from the time I began to take it seriously and I asked God to fill me with the Holy Spirit because that's how we have fullness of joy.

Turn with me to Acts of the Apostles. We read of a couple of times where they were filled with the Holy Spirit and usually it is after some persecution and it says here in Acts chapter 4, they went to pray after they had been imprisoned. In verse 23, they were released and then they came into the presence of the Lord and they said, Lord we're trying to take note of your threats.

And when they prayed, Acts 4.31, the place was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak the word of God with boldness. And there's another place in Acts that says they were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. So that's one of the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit, fullness of joy.

The Holy Spirit brings to us the presence of God. It's very sad that unfortunately in the world, fullness of the Holy Spirit has always been linked with speaking in tongues. That is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

I want to mention that and clarify one thing to all of you because you'll hear it everywhere that people, if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you'll speak in tongues. But I want to show you a verse in 1 Corinthians 14 verse 2. God's word is a better guide on all these matters. Please remember this all your life.

It helped me in the matter of speaking in tongues. 1 Corinthians 14 verse 2. When a person speaks in a tongue, he does not speak to men but to God. No one understands him.

And one who speaks in a tongue, verse 4, edifies himself. So when you hear a whole lot of people speaking in tongues, they shouldn't be doing it because you're supposed to be speaking to God. Because you're speaking aloud in tongues where nobody can understand you.

So if you go to a church, any church, call it by any name, Pentecostal or whatever, charismatic, whatever it is, and you hear everybody speaking in tongues, I'll tell you what I call it, what the Bible calls it. 1 Corinthians 14 verse 23. If you go to a church where the whole church, everybody's speaking in tongues, they'll say you're mad.

The Holy Spirit calls such a church a mad church. And I join with the Holy Spirit and say such a church is a mad church because they're all speaking in tongues. Don't get angry with me.

This is the Holy Spirit's word. He who speaks in a tongue speaks to God. When God gives a man a gift of the Holy Spirit in the gift of tongues, he will use it privately, entirely between him and God.

Having got that out of the way, let me urge you, my brothers and sisters, seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Where the presence of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will bring to you the presence of the Lord. Like I said, if we come to the meeting filled with the Holy Spirit, that's the way we should come.

Otherwise you're committing a sin. Turn with me to Ephesians in chapter 5. There are two things mentioned in Ephesians 5 18. One negative, one positive.

The Bible is always like that. What you should not do and what you should do. Ephesians 5 18, what you should not do, don't get drunk with wine.

What you should do, be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now, either of these, if you don't obey, you're committing sin. If you get drunk with wine, the first part of that verse, you're committing a sin.

You don't seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit, also you're committing a sin. When you come to a meeting, you must seek to come filled with the Holy Spirit. I'll be wasting your time and my time if I sit up here

without being filled with the Holy Spirit.

I'll tell you that. A lot of people waste people's time like that. Supposing a person comes into this meeting hall staggering, drowned, I like a drunken person.

You say, boy, that guy has no respect for the presence of God. He comes here drunk. He's disobeying Ephesians 5 18.

But if you come to this church without being filled with the Spirit, you're also disobeying Ephesians 5 18. Don't look down on that man staggering down drunk and saying he's disobeying God. You don't come to the meeting filled with the Holy Spirit, you're also disobeying God.

It's in the same verse. Don't get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. Every meeting we come to, we must come with a clean conscience and say, Lord, I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Every part of my life filled with the Holy Spirit. And I want to come to the meeting in that spirit, the fullness of joy. And the Holy Spirit will make me aware of Jesus in our midst.

Turn with me to John's Gospel, John chapter 16. When he, the spirit of truth, has come, and he came on the day of Pentecost, he will guide you into all the truth. I want to explain to you the meaning of the word truth in the New Testament.

The opposite of truth is falsehood, lying. But here he's speaking about being truthful in our life. A man who is false or who tells lies by his life is called a hypocrite.

A hypocrite is a liar. His life is a lie. That means he's giving you the impression he's a very holy man, but he's not a holy man.

That's a lie. That's a hypocrite. It's like you read in, sometimes in the paper of somebody who disguises himself like a police officer and goes and cheats people of money.

Or somebody disguises himself like an income tax officer and comes and cheats people of money. That is cheating. Pretending to be what you are not, that's hypocrisy.

When you come to the church and pretend to be holy when you are not, that's also hypocrisy. So when the Holy Spirit has come, he will lead you into all the truth. That means reality.

Truth is reality, the opposite of hypocrisy. That means I'm not acting. The word hypocrite, I've often said this, is not an English word.

You know there are words adopted into the English language from other languages. There are some Hindi words, dobi, in the English language, because after the English people came here, they adopted that word into the English language, or sahib. They use this Hindi word, but it has become English, and like that, hypocrite.

In those days, the main language was Greek when Jesus lived on earth. The main language in the important parts of the world, and in Greek there was a word called hypocrite. It's not an English word, and the meaning of hypocrite was actor.

So when Jesus said to his disciples, don't be hypocrites, what he said was don't act. Don't act spiritual when you're not spiritual. Don't act holy.

Be holy. But many Christians haven't taken this seriously. You know in Greece in the olden days, if you went and asked people, where are all the hypocrites? They'd say, go to the theater, where the dramas are conducted.

All the actors are there. All the actors or hypocrites are in the theater. Today if you ask where are all the hypocrites, they say, go to church.

They're all there. That's what's happened. The actors, people who act holy and speak holy language and holy words, and say thou art worthy, but who? Who's worthy? It's just a song.

I've been convicted of it. That's how I know. There are many songs I sing, and afterwards when I think, boy, Lord, was I singing that to you? Or just because I like that song? I've been emphasizing this more and more, and to use an illustration which I used before, when I'm speaking to you, when I look somewhere else, I look that side and I'm talking to you, I'm thinking of something else, and I'm talking to say, yeah, how are you? How are you getting on? I'm not really interested in you.

If you talk to anybody like that, if somebody comes to you, and you don't even look at him, you're thinking of something else, and say, yeah, how are you? Good to see you. That is exactly how many of us are singing to Jesus Christ. Even this morning, I've done it many times, and I felt guilty, and I say, Lord, help me to recognize your presence here, and that when I sing, I'm saying thou art worthy, and sing it straight to Jesus.

Thou art worthy, O Lord. He's here. The more your conscience is clear, the more you can recognize his presence here.

You don't have to be a great saint. You don't have to know the Bible thoroughly to recognize the presence of the Lord. You don't have to have been born again for many years.

You were born again yesterday. You can have the presence of the Lord if the Holy Spirit has come into your heart. You only have to keep your conscience clear.

Have you forgiven everybody? Have you set all matters right, or at least have you decided, like Zacchaeus at the first opportunity, I will set all matters right, and you're living like that. Then you can have the presence of the Lord, and when you come here, I tell you, if every one of us comes like that to this meeting from next Sunday onwards, can you imagine what will happen here? There'll be such a sense of the presence of the Lord that people who come in will sense something. You know, it's like you go into a place where there's a fire burning.

Outside you are cold, icy cold, and you come into the room, and it's also warm. So happy to be in a room which is warm. That's how people will feel.

The world is a cold place. People who come to the church, they see the mighty presence of God. They'll feel that.

See that in 1 Corinthians chapter 14. The thinking of, you know, visitors come here, different people come back into this church. And it says here in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, in the middle of verse 24, 1 Corinthians

14, 24, an ungifted man enters.

You know, preaching is going on. Prophecy is going on. Ungifted means a man who does not have the Holy Spirit, not born again.

He comes, and he comes, and he falls on his face, verse 25, and he says, God is here. He doesn't say, oh, that was a wonderful message. Oh, I learned something new.

Oh, is that what that verse means? No, no, no, no, no. No, I met with God, and he worshiped God. He doesn't worship the preacher.

He says, I met with God. I tell you, my greatest longing when I preach is, Lord, let that happen. Not only I don't want any money, I don't want any honor.

I want people to say they met with God. They heard Almighty God who rules this universe speaking to them firmly but lovingly. God is always firm and loving like a good father, and those who have a desire will say, hey, I met with God.

It's like coming from the cold into a warm place. I want to say, brothers and sisters, that all of us have a responsibility in this matter, that we come to church, and we are living in the presence of God, and 400, 500 people come together who are living in God's presence into the church. Can you imagine what will happen in this place? And they're all singing.

When they're singing, it's not a question of whether... it doesn't matter if you sing out of tune. God doesn't bother if you're singing out of tune. He's more bothered whether you're speaking to Him.

See all these music videos and many, many music. There are many song leaders, famous song leaders who lead what they call worship. I don't believe it's worship at all.

My conviction is true worship can only be done when you're all alone, and nobody's with you, because you and God, that's worship. What we come together to do is praise. Praise is different from worship.

Most people don't even know what the difference is. Okay, forget about it. We'll talk about worship some other time.

But what people say this as a worship meeting, it's not a worship meeting. They're singing today. They're trying to praise God, but they don't even recognize Christ's presence there.

They're more interested in the tune, and the instruments, and the drums banging around, and all types of things. That's why we banned the drums from this church, because among all the musicians is the drummer who tries to show off the most. I've seen that everywhere, and so we'll never have that in CFC.

And we don't want people drawing attention away from God to the drummer, the way he waves his things and bangs everything. Because we don't want our attention to be deflected away from Jesus in our midst. We want everybody to come here to meet with God.

That's our desire, and all of us have a responsibility for that. So I was telling you from John chapter 16, it says here that the Holy Spirit in verse 15, John 16 verse 15, will take the middle of that verse, take of mine, and reveal it to you. That's been one of my prayers for nearly 50 years.

God met with me in a new way in January 1975, and filled me with the Holy Spirit again. And one of the things that I've desired from that time onwards is Holy Spirit of God reveal the private life of Jesus to me. Have you ever prayed that prayer? The public life of Jesus, anybody can read the Gospels, and even an unbeliever can read and understand.

He did miracles. He raised the dead. He healed the sick.

He preached the powerful sermons. But the private life of Jesus, things like when Jesus went alone into the wilderness to pray, what was he praying? It's not written in the Bible. It says he went there for hours.

What was he doing there? It says the Holy Spirit, listen to this, verse 15, will take of mine and disclose it. Disclose it means something that's hidden. He'll open it up and say, here it is.

I said, Lord, there are things hidden. Holy Spirit will reveal it to me. How did you live as a child, Lord Jesus? It's not written in the Bible.

Only one incident is written that he went into the temple. But the Holy Spirit showed me many other things, like I said to you before, that when he was seven years old, he would go to the synagogue and ask the rabbi. There were no Bibles in the home those days, only in the synagogue.

Say, Rabbi, could you please read something from the Bible? The Bible means 39 books of the Old Testament those days. The rabbi would be so excited. The seven-year-old boy is coming, and he would take and read something, maybe five or ten verses, and then the seven-year-old Jesus would say, stop.

Can you please read that, Rabbi, again? And Jesus would remember it. He wouldn't ask him to read three, four chapters. He was like you and me.

You can't remember too much. He would then go home and he would think about it. He'd come the next day and say, Rabbi, you remember we left yesterday? We left at this particular point.

There were no verses in those days. This particular thing you stopped. Can you read some more now? You read another ten verses.

Jesus would say, please stop, read it again, and see you tomorrow. And he'd go back and think about that. Let's say from the age of seven to the age of 12, or perhaps from the age of five to the age of 12, every day he would go, come back.

What is the result? At the age of 12, that is revealed, Luke 2. He could question the great priests and scholars. So what about this verse? What about that verse? They were amazed how this 12-year-old child is asking us questions. We don't know the answer, and then Jesus, I'll explain to you.

I'll tell you what that verse means. And they were amazed. That's not because he was born with that knowledge in his head.

No, he was born just like any other baby. Did not know ABC or 123, nothing. He worked hard and learned by the age of 12.

So I assume from the age of five to the age of 12, if you went regularly and meditated, meditated, meditated, meditated, learned such a lot in seven years. I remember when I got converted, I said, Lord, in seven years, I was converted in 1959. I did not know then that seven years later, 1966, the

Lord will tell me to leave my job and go into full-time ministry.

I did not know it, but I said, okay, in the next seven years, I must also know the Bible like this. Taking a little bit, meditating on it. I don't have a rabbi to go to, but my rabbi is the Holy Spirit.

And I used to say, Lord, just like you walked with those two disciples to Emmaus. It's a long journey, seven miles, it says there. So when I read in the Bible, seven miles or 10 kilometers or 12 kilometers, I begin to think, how long does it take to walk seven miles in a leisurely way? Three hours.

So that means Jesus walked with them for three hours from Jerusalem to Emmaus. This is a result of meditating on the Bible. If you don't meditate, you just read and go on.

When you meditate, you realize, oh, 12 kilometers, that would have taken about three hours. So that means Jesus had a Bible study with them for three hours. And it says at the end of it in Luke 24, their hearts were burning.

You see the result of meditating on the Bible, three hours, the heart is burning because Jesus explained the Old Testament to them. And I said, Lord, do that for me. You are the same today.

I remember sitting in my room in the naval base in Cochin in those years, 1962 and all, 63. And I said, Lord, open up the scriptures to me, just like you did it to the people in Emmaus. Show me things which the preachers in the church cannot explain to me.

You explain it to me. And my heart would burn as he explained to me so many wonderful things I discovered. And I had a concordance.

And concordance is a book which lists all the places where a particular verse occurs. So I would study it with that. And it was the concordance I used with a concordance called Young's Concordance.

It was a very good book. So I discovered some amazing things there. For example, you know, that concordance had the advantage of, it was in English, but if you looked up the words, you could go to the back of the concordance and that would explain, show the same word, what it is written in the Hebrew or the Greek, I mean, written in English letters.

So I was once looking at this word in Psalm 23, in the concordance. I'm giving you my testimony, where Psalm 23, I read my verse 5. It's a well known verse, the Lord is my shepherd. Psalm 23 verse 5, you have anointed my head with oil.

That is a picture of the Holy Spirit, anointed. Throughout the Old Testament, oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. And my cup overflows or runs over.

And I said, Lord, I want that life. You know, like Jesus said, the Holy Spirit would be like rivers flowing out. I said, Lord, I want that life.

So I looked up the concordance. And I saw, oh, my cup overflows. This is the Old Testament is written in Hebrew.

So I turned to the back of the concordance and looked up that word, overflows. And the Hebrew word is Revaya. It's written in English, R-E-V-A-Y-Y-A-H.

This is spelt out in English, Revaya. So I said, is that, does that word Revaya come anywhere else in the Old Testament? And I discovered it comes only in one other place in the Old Testament. Oh, I said, that's interesting.

Only two places in the Old Testament that verse comes. And that is in Psalm 66, verse 12. You brought me to a place of abundance.

Same word, Revaya. Same word as where cups are running over. You know, comparing scripture with scripture.

So I discovered there, Psalm 23, I want this life of cups running over. And here it says, how I can come to this place of cups running over, Psalm 66, verse 12, place of abundance, a place where my cups run over. So I looked up the previous verses.

How can I come to this place? Aha. Not just being filled with the Holy Spirit. More than that.

Verse 10. You have tested us, O God. You have refined us like silver is refined in a furnace.

Speaking of the trials, takes us through. You brought us into the net. Into a net means God brings me into difficult circumstances where I cannot escape, like a fish trapped in a net.

I cannot escape. I was a free person, but now I'm trapped. I cannot do certain things.

I'm limited because of my convictions. I'm limited because of my circumstances. And you allowed men to ride over our heads.

That means people suppressing us, abusing us, and making life difficult for us in the office. And maybe relatives riding over our heads and troubling us. And then in our circumstances, God puts us into the fire.

Boy, burning. And then he takes us out of the fire and puts us into icy cold water. And then back into the fire.

And back into the icy cold water. And I said, Lord, what are you doing all this for? He finally brings me to the place of Rabbiah. My cups run over.

Aha. So that is not written in Psalm 23. Psalm 23, it only says about Rabbiah.

But Psalm 66 tells me how I get to this Rabbiah. Then I understood why God was taking me through difficult circumstances in the Navy, and even subsequently through the years. I understood many reasons why God put me into the fire, different circumstances, took me out and put me in the icy cold water, and back into the fire.

And we don't talk about this much in public. It's all between me and God in secret. And how He allowed men to ride over our heads and push us down.

And imagine trampling on you and treating you like dirt and a burden upon us. In the end, cups running over. Cups of the rivers of life flowing in many, many directions.

That's what I wanted. Many of you would like a life of abundance, right? Where from your life, rivers can flow in many, many directions to bless many people. Not overnight, but over a period of time.

I want to tell you, my brother and sister, it is possible for you. Even for you sisters who may not have a public ministry. You can be a blessing to a person who speaks to you on the telephone for three minutes.

And something that you said to that sister on the phone was like a glass of cold water to her in her time of need. You did not know the need. And God prompted you to say something that helped her.

Something for you who write emails. Maybe you added a sentence in that email which blessed somebody. It was like a refreshing draft of water.

This is how God wants every one of His children to live. This is how Jesus lived. Wherever He went, rivers flowed out from Him.

But that's because He had 30 years of preparation. And that is why I asked the Holy Spirit to show me how did Jesus live in private. And I told you how He would have done it as a child.

Then I said, Lord, can you tell me how Jesus worked as a carpenter or whatever work He was doing? Let's assume it was a carpentry. The principles of working in that type of jobs are same. And He'd be making something.

He has to get business. And He was the one honest carpenter in Nazareth. So other people will cheat.

He will not cheat. He will not make something of wood. And if it's a crack, sort of cover it up with some putty or something, make it look okay.

He would tell the person, I'm sorry, there's a little crack here. So you can either not take it or give me a lower price. I was never an honest carpenter in Nazareth like Jesus.

These are the things the Lord showed me. And I believe sometimes Jesus would hammer a nail into it to hit his thumb. He was like us, and it would pain.

But like other people, He wouldn't curse. I said, I've got to be more careful. And sometimes a child would come into the carpenter shop because they all love Jesus.

Jesus loved children. And some delicate thing Jesus had just made and kept that in the carpenter shop, and the child comes and breaks it. He would not get upset with that child.

He would pick up that child and say, never mind, my darling. It's okay. I can make another one.

I said, Lord Jesus, make me like that. Make me like that. Make me like you.

The Holy Spirit has come to show us the hidden life of Jesus, how he would help his mother, even as a grown-up son. You remember even when he was hanging on the cross, in the midst of all that pain of hanging on three nails, two on the hands and one on the feet, hanging there on three nails. And I've heard that when people are crucified, every breath is difficult.

It's not like a normal breathing. You have to lift yourself up on your feet because you're hanging down, no? To breathe, you have to lift yourself up and breathe out. And push himself up on one nail that's going through his four feet and breathe out.

In the midst of all that pain, he's thinking, my mother, I've got to care for her. But he's got four brothers and two sisters. We read that in Mark chapter 6. Won't they care for her? No.

Jesus says, I'm the eldest son. I have to take care of my mother. And those four sons, it says in John chapter 7, his sons and his brothers and his sisters did not believe in him.

So they would not have taken, he felt they may not take care of my mother, Mary. So he's got a cousin, his mother's sister's son, John, the disciple. He says, John, you please take care of my mother.

See, this is a man who's dying. He's dying. And he's thinking of how to care for my mother because Joseph had died and there's nobody to care for my old mother.

You know, if you are Christ-like, you'll care for your old parents. I'll tell you that. Especially if there's nobody else to care for them.

He had one old mother. His mother, Joseph, has died. And he says, I'm the eldest son.

I have to take care of her. And he says, John, from now on, this is your mother. And he tells Mary, that's your son.

Think what all he has to think while he's hanging on the cross. I said, Lord, make me like that. Make me like that, that in the midst of my suffering, whatever, I don't suffer like on the cross, but whatever other suffering I may go through, my thought is always of, how can I help those other people there? Somebody's in need there.

Not to concentrate on, see, oh, fellas, see how much I'm suffering and all I'm suffering this for you fellas. None of all that. And then he hears this one thief.

First of all, both thieves were cursing him. Two thieves on either side. You're a deceiver.

Fooling everybody, you're the son of God and all that. And Jesus never says anything. They heard him say, Father, forgive these people who crucified me.

Because they don't know what a serious sin they have committed. And these thieves are crooks. And they hear Jesus saying this.

They're also suffering and they are cursing all the people who crucified them. And they see this man, they have never heard anything like it. And one thief is convicted.

He says, this must be somebody different. And he believes he's a son of God. And he says, Lord, I know they are killing you.

But I believe one day you will come in your kingdom. Can you imagine saying that to a man crucified on a cross? One day you're going to come in your kingdom. How did he get that idea? Because he saw Jesus' attitude towards those who crucified him.

Not one of bitterness or complaining like all the other people who are crucified, but forgiveness. And I tell you, my brothers and sisters, we had to learn something from that. When people see in you a spirit of forgiveness towards others and a graciousness and a goodness towards people who are evil to you, they will sit up and ask, how can I be saved? How can I have the life you have? That's what that thief asked.

When you come in your kingdom, please remember me, Lord. And Jesus takes time to tell him, not after I come in my kingdom after 2,000 years, today. Today you and I are going to be in paradise.

And the angels see Jesus and the thief after that death walking together in paradise. Amazing. So there are many things we can learn when you ask the Holy Spirit to show you.

It says the Holy Spirit will take of the things of Christ and show it to you. This is how you must study the Bible. That's why the four Gospels are very precious to me.

I read the four Gospels more than any other part of the Bible. I study the whole Bible, but especially those four because I say I want to understand the life of Jesus, how he played games with others. Do you believe Jesus played games? I believe with all my heart he played games.

It says in the book of Zechariah that in the kingdom of God is in Jerusalem one day, the children will be playing, not praying, but playing. I like that. God loves to see children play, just like he loves to see people pray also.

Not praying all the time and not playing all the time, but playing. And so I believe Jesus played games. And he never cheated.

I say, Lord, I've seen, you know, one thing I've seen, I've seen it also in the days we used to play football here in CFC and I've seen it in CFC churches in America also when they play games. You can really see the carnality of some believers you thought were very spiritual on the playing field. Ah, they get so worked up.

We got to win. So you know what I used to do in the games here when we used to play games here? We used to play football. I used to say, okay, half time we got to mix the teams now.

Half people from here come this side, half people go that side. And if you have another break, mix it up again. So nobody can say we won.

Because there was no one team. The teams were mixed up every 15 minutes. We mix up the teams.

Because the important thing I said is that you must have fun playing. But when that was not there, there was always, ah, we won. And even afterwards, they'd be talking about it, all the young people, you know, we scored this.

Jesus was not playing games like that. There are many things you can learn when you ask the Holy Spirit to show you how Jesus lived on earth as an ordinary man. I asked Jesus how he preached.

And the Holy Spirit shows me how Jesus preached. I tried to preach like that. Did Jesus ever say anything funny in this? Yeah, things like swallowing a camel.

Have you read that way? He talked about, can you picture this in your mind, man trying to swallow a camel. And the children would have really laughed at that. The same man is straining out a mosquito from his glass of milk, swallowing a camel.

Take out the log that is in your eye. How can you have a log in your eye? And you see that small speck in somebody else's eye. Jesus had some wonderful illustrations.

So I'll try to learn from Jesus how to preach. And you must try to learn from Jesus how he did his work in your office. You must work the way Jesus worked in his carpenter shop.

Honest, upright, and if something went wrong. And not trying to make money. If some poor man came and asked for something, he would try and help him and charge him minimal, not to try to make profit out of other people.

Yeah, we have to. If you're running a business, you have to make profit. Otherwise, you're not running a charity.

If you're running a shop, you must make profit there. Otherwise, how can you earn your living? Do you think Jesus made profit when he sold a table or a chair? I'm absolutely sure he did. Otherwise, how will he earn his living to take care of his four brothers, two sisters, and a mother? He has to make some profit from what he spent on that table or chair.

He's absolutely righteous. But as I said, if a child broke it, he would forgive him. And if a poor person asked for something, he'd give them without much overheads.

He'd give it to them. There are many, many things we can learn. The Holy Spirit has come to show us what Jesus is like.

But more than other things, one more thing in John chapter 1. It says here that Jesus came in verse 17, sorry, verse 18. Have you read this? No one has seen God at any time. We understand that.

The only begotten God who's in the bosom of the Father, that's Jesus Christ. Look what it says. He has explained to the Father.

Has Jesus explained the Father to you? Have you seen God as a loving Father who cares for your every need? He's not jumping on you. You know, sometimes we get this idea that God's just waiting to see me something wrong, and he jumps on my head. He is not like that.

That's the devil telling you that God is like that. You slip up somewhere, and he comes to hammer you down. I used to feel like that sometimes.

Oh, I don't know what he's seeing, whether I'm doing something wrong here. No, a loving Father is not like that, seeing what can I catch my child for today. A loving Father would say, how can I help my child today? My child is weak and helpless.

How can I help him? That's how a good Father is. Dear brothers and sisters, let me tell you, it took me a long time to believe that God is the best Father in the universe. There's no Father that's ever been like Him.

You see, probably I had a good Father, a very good Father, who denied himself and took care of me. And I've tried to be a good Father to my children. But it's possible that many of you sitting here, you probably never had a good Father.

If you had a good Father, be very, very thankful. Don't take that lightly. Because many people have not had a good Father, a Father who shouted them, punished them for all types of wrong things.

And so when you think of God as a Father, you think of your earthly Father and say, oh, my Father was so strict, and he would jump on me and catch me for this and catch me for that. And that's the picture you get, because that was your earthly Father. Get rid of that picture of your earthly Father.

God is not like that. God is the most loving Father in the universe. If you ask Him for fish, He will not give you a snake.

Jesus said that. If you ask Him for bread, He will not give you a stone. He'll give you bread.

And He'll not jump on you just because you made a mistake. Supposing you're teaching your little child in kindergarten, addition, 2 plus 2 is 4, or 25 plus 25 is 50, and he makes a mistake. Are you going to jump on him? No.

Such an evil Father like you and me, we will not jump on our child like that. Why do you feel that your heavenly Father is just waiting to catch you when you slip up somewhere? I feel that some of you are like that. How do I know? Because I was like that.

I think God is just waiting to catch me. If I slip up, He comes down heavily on me. He doesn't.

I thank God when I discover that He doesn't. So you mean, you say, well, Brother Zak, you mean to say He just allows you to do anything wrong? No, no, no, no, no, no. I don't allow my children to do wrong, but I don't jump on them every time they do something wrong.

For example, you know how children play with toys. They're building a house with some building blocks. And I go down and say, Son, can I help you? And say, No, no, no, Dad, I can do this on my own.

Children are like that. And he tries to do it on his own, and after half an hour of struggling, he can't do it. And he comes to you and says, Dad, I can't do it, Dad.

What will you tell him? There are two types of fathers, now I'll tell you. Which one are you? Two types of mothers. One type of father was, I told you half an hour ago to let me help you.

You wouldn't listen. Have you learned a lesson? That's one type of father. The other type of father is, never mind, Son, let's you and I do it together and see how we can do it.

That's the father who will build fellowship with his child, even as they grow up. And that child will want to follow his father's example. Be a father and mother like that.

I'm not talking as if I did it always like that. I've been a tremendous failure in many ways, but I've repented. My only prayer was, Lord, all my four sons must be disciples of Jesus.

That's all. Despite all the mistakes I made, Lord, please have mercy. I tried to teach them your word.

I tried to be strict. Sometimes I was too strict, but I tried my best, Lord, to the rest I did with prayer. My wife and I would pray, please, Lord, despite all our failures, please bring our children up that they'll follow you.

We don't want them to make money or become great in the world. We want them to be your disciples. What I'm trying to say is God is an extremely good father.

And because I was the type of person jumping on little, little things, I thought God is also like that till God showed me he's not like that. Are you a father who's always jumping on your children? A mother who's always catching your child for one little slip up, as if you never did anything imperfectly in your life? Well, I want to tell you, God is not like that. He's extremely merciful, kind, long-suffering.

That word long-suffering, L-O-O-O-O-N-G, is a big long-suffering. That's how God is. Jesus explained the Father.

In the Old Testament, they did not know him like that. They were scared. Oh, God, we better not go anywhere near him.

But Jesus showed that you can come. The Father loves you. He wants you to come into his presence.

He's eager to talk to you. As the devil says, God doesn't have time for a fellow like you. Have you heard the devil tell you that? God doesn't have any time for you.

You were just born again last week. Where does he have time for you? He has more time for you than for others. Remember that.

If your children are around and sitting around the table and they all want to talk to you, whom will you allow to talk first? The youngest, right? That's how God is. The Bible says, from the least to the greatest, they will know me as their Father. Have you read that verse? Hebrews chapter 8, verse 9 and 10.

Starting with the youngest to the oldest, they will know me as the Father. I feel that a lot of us, our problem is we don't know God as the Father. Jesus has come to explain, I'm learning more and more even now.

I'm sorry I learned it so late. But I'll tell you, I had a handicap, which you all don't have. I never had a spiritual father to guide me.

Every church I went to, there were preachers there. Nobody spoke to me as a young 23-year-old, 22-year-old believer, don't know much about God's ways. Nobody sort of explained to me, God is a loving Father.

They preach on sermon and go away. So I said, Lord, I know I missed a lot. A lot of my life was wandering and wandering, wandering because they didn't have a spiritual father to guide me.

But I decided that as far as is possible within me, as much as is possible, I will try to be a spiritual father to advise people who come to me for advice. And as much as I can do within the limitations of one human being. Dear brothers and sisters, God is an extremely loving Father.

He loves you far more than you realize. Let's praise Him. I want to sing a song now.

Can you put up those words of Thou Art Worthy, that song. And we're all going to stand with one difference. We're going to shut our eyes.

If you don't know the song, you can look at the words on the screen. But if you know it, shut your eyes. Forget about me.

Forget about who's sitting next to you. Remember, Jesus said, I am in your midst. Whether you know it or not, my brother, sister, I have sensed His presence as I've spoken.

My Lord is here. He's here. The Lord Jesus is here.

I want you to shut your eyes as we sing this and stand up and then sing it, not looking somewhere else when you're talking to somebody, looking at Jesus. And it's easier to do that if you shut your eyes. First of all, say, Lord, I'm sorry that so many times I've sung this song, I never sang it to you.

I was talking to you, but I was looking somewhere else. I was not interested. But today, for the first time, I'm going to sing it to you.

And I want to mean this from my heart. And I want to try in future, whenever I sing a song, to sing to you. It won't happen overnight.

You'll make mistakes for many years, but one day, reality will come. Let's start today. Please stand up and close your eyes and concentrate on the presence of the Lord who said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst.

Thou art worthy. Thou art worthy, O Lord. We are speaking to Jesus directly, and he is here.

Oh, next verse. Oh, let's have a moment of silence. Concentrate on it.

Oh, wasn't it a unique experience for you, seeing when you sang directly to him, when you talked to him and not just sang a song. Lord Jesus, thank you for being in our midst so often. We have not recognized you here.

Forgive us. Forgive me. Help us, Lord, always, always, always, when we speak to you, to look at you, not look elsewhere.

Forgive us for the thousands and thousands of times we have insulted you by looking somewhere else and talking to you. meaningless worship, meaningless praise. We know it's not going to change overnight, but we started on a new path, and gradually it will get better and better.

Even if our singing is not perfect, our relationship with you will be. Help us, everyone here. Change our life in your presence's fullness of joy.

Lord Jesus, we want to live in your presence all our days. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/C1ZIU7ula6c.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/god-is-our-father-and-jesus-is-our-example/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net