

Gods Commands Are for Our Good

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes that God's commands are designed for our well-being and happiness, urging us to make Him the center of our lives.

Duration: 1:11:34

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:29, Isaiah 50:4-10, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 11:29

Topics: "Humility And Obedience", "Trusting God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of humbling ourselves before God, listening to His voice daily, and following Jesus' example of being contrite and lowly in spirit. It highlights the need to prioritize character over appearance, to seek wisdom from God in all situations, and to trust in God's vindication even in the face of challenges and opposition.

Transcript

Okay, I want to read a verse first in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy. It's very rarely that you find God using the word, oh, oh that my people would do this. Whenever anybody uses that expression, it's like a longing.

You know, parents, oh, I wish my children would listen to me because what I'm telling them is for their good. That's what we read in Deuteronomy 5 and verse 29. The Lord says, oh that my people had such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always, so that it may be well with them and with their sons forever.

Just read that slowly, God says, oh that my people had such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always. What benefit does God get out of it if we keep His commandments? No, it's we, that we, it may go well with us and with our children. But very few Christians understand that.

If you understood it, the proof of it would be that we would obey every single thing that Jesus has commanded. And we would be eager to study the scriptures, not to share in the meetings, no. But to find out what God has commanded us to do.

A lot of people study the scriptures because they want to preach something or share something. It's for seeking honour. The right way to study the scriptures is to find out what is it God wants me to obey.

Now, if you look at our nature, we always seek what is good for us. If you look at the decisions you have made in your past life, whether it's finding a job or a house or moving anywhere. At the back of your mind is, what's good for me? What's good for my children? I want to select something that will be, I want to make a choice that will be good for me and good for my children.

And the Lord says, do you know what's really good for you and your children? Is to obey my commandments in everything. If only we would understand that. God's not going to get anything out of our obedience.

He's got millions of angels obeying Him instantly. What does He want some petty few human beings obeying Him? He says it for our good. Why does He tell us to worship Him? Not because He wants worship, there are millions worshipping Him.

It's for our good. Because when we worship God, we turn our attention away from ourselves to Him. We don't realize that the thing that's destroying us is our self-centeredness.

And when we, it's a root of sin. When we seek ourselves, like I said yesterday, when we make ourselves like God, centered in ourselves. And why does God tell us to be centered in Him? Because then we come to real life.

You know, for so many years, people thought that the sun was going around the earth. Thousands of years. But it looks like that, if you look in the sky, it looks like the sun is going around the earth.

People thought the stars were going around the earth every 24 hours. And it looks like that too, it looks as if the earth is a sort of a stationary center of the whole universe. And the sun and the moon and the stars are all going around the earth.

And people wondered why all their calculations in physics were all wrong. Till somebody discovered that the earth is not the center of the universe. It's not even the center of the solar system.

The sun is the center of the solar system. And the earth goes around it. And you know, when they discovered that, they found all their calculations coming out right.

Oh, that's why we got it all wrong. Because we hadn't found the proper center. And the reason why there are so many problems in the lives of Christians, in their life, in their family life, why their children go astray, why they are discouraged and gloomy.

Do you think God wants his children to be discouraged and gloomy and depressed? I'll ask you, do you want your children to be gloomy and depressed and discouraged? No, a million times more than that. God doesn't want his children to be gloomy and depressed and discouraged. Why is it most Christians I have met in my life, believers, are full of anxiety, fears, depression, anger, sometimes an unforgiving spirit.

Why is it? God doesn't want it like that. They haven't found the true center. It's like those ancient days when people thought the earth was the center and all their calculations were wrong.

As long as we think we are the center, we are going to get everything wrong. You know, when we are unconverted, we are the center of our lives. We want everybody to serve us and we are happy with those who serve us and we are unhappy with those who do not respect us or do not serve us.

And we are very friendly with those who respect us and give us gifts and are nice to us. It just means that we are the center. And if somebody disrespects us and couldn't care for us, we get upset because he doesn't give us respect as the center of the universe.

And when such a person becomes a Christian, he asks Jesus to come into his heart. It just means that I've got one more person to revolve around me, that's Jesus Christ. And He is there at my beck and call to do whatever I ask Him.

I've got sickness, He will heal me. I don't have a job, He will come and... I don't know whether you've read that children's story about Aladdin and his lamp. It's a story of a person who had this magic lamp.

Every time you rub it, one genie will appear like a ghost and says, yes master, what do you want? I want money. I want a palace. And to many people, Jesus is like that.

In the name of Jesus, yeah, what do you want? I want prosperity. I want healing. They are the most miserable Christians in the whole world, even if they have money and health.

You think all the people with money and health in non-Christian religions are happy? No. If you really want to fulfill the purpose with which God sent you to this earth, why God allowed your mother to conceive you in her womb, why He allowed you to be born, if you really want to understand that, you have to make God the center of your life. And you must seek to find out what has He commanded and you must long with all your heart, whatever the cost, to obey that.

It will go well with you. He says, I wish, God says, my children would obey my commandments. That it may go well with them and their children.

See, I am a husband and if I see that God's commands are for my good, I will long with all my heart to love my wife as Christ loved the church. Not for her good, for my good. If I were a woman, I would long with all my heart to obey my husband as the church is obedient to Christ.

Not for his good, for my good. Why is it Christians don't do these things? Because they think they know better than God. If you buy a washing machine or an expensive gadget, you read those instructions and you follow it exactly.

Why? Because you know that the manufacturer knows better than you about that product. And when I read the Bible, I know that my manufacturer, God, knows better about this product than I. But most Christians don't think like that. They think, I know better than God.

And that's the reason for all the misery and unhappiness. So, I am so thankful that I discovered this pretty early in my life. That God has given us His word so that it might really go well with us.

And if I honor Him and seek to do exactly like His word says, it can only go well with me. And it says here, not only well with me, with my children. Don't you want it to go well with your children? I remember when my wife and I had children, I longed with all my heart that they would be gripped with the truths that gripped me, that changed my life.

I never longed that they would become rich or famous or anything. I said, Lord, those things are all temporary. Any amount of money they make or fame they get, how long will it last? I have seen a lot of famous rich people who are some of the most miserable, unhappy people.

Lord, if they obey your commandments, I know it will go well with them. And if only we can understand that. See, when God made Adam, you know, he had the same longing that those of you who are parents have when you have a little baby.

Can you imagine the joy that comes into the heart of parents when they have a little baby? They long that this child will grow up to really have a wonderful life. That's how God had a desire for Adam. And can you imagine the disappointment God had when Adam messed up his life within about a day after he was created? I have a feeling that Adam walked with God on the seventh day and on the eighth day he sinned.

I mean, he didn't even live one day. Immediately, he sinned. The disappointment that a parent has when you have tremendous hopes for your child and he grows up to do all types of things that mess up his life, that's exactly how God felt.

Because Adam and Eve were so stupid to think that if they listened to the devil, they'd be happier than if they listened to God. But there are Christians who are stupid like that. I've seen Christians who won't forgive somebody.

And if I retain a grudge against somebody, whom am I harming? Not that person. I'm harming myself. A person who doesn't forgive others.

And Jesus says, forgive them. It's for my good that he says, forgive them. If I don't forgive people, I can get sickness in my body.

There are so many Christians who are sick because they haven't forgiven somebody. They've got a bitterness against somebody who did harm to them long ago. I think of them like that demoniac in Gadara who used to take stones and cut himself.

You think that's stupid, cutting himself? There are Christians who do that. When they don't forgive somebody. When they've got a bitterness.

They're exactly like that madman cutting themselves. They're not harming the other person. So, every command of God, it's for our good.

When God says, humble yourself, you know it's for your good. It's the happiest people in the world are those who humble themselves. And the humblest man who walked on this earth was Jesus.

And he was the happiest. He had so much joy on the night before he was going to be crucified that he said, my joy is so full, I want to share some of it with you. It's like a man who knows he's going to sit in the electric chair tomorrow, he's going to be hanged tomorrow.

And he just wants to go around town encouraging everybody, say, fellas, I'm going to be hanged tomorrow. I thought I'd just encourage you before I get killed tomorrow morning. It's so contrary to human nature.

But when you're in the will of God, there's such a happiness even if people are against you, even if you're going to be killed tomorrow morning. And it makes no difference to Jesus. And it's when God made Adam, he had this wonderful plan the way Adam was supposed to live.

But he never lived that life. But then, for so many years, we never saw a man who lived the way God wanted man to live till Jesus came. You have to see it.

At last, after 4,000 years of millions of human beings born in the world, none of whom lived, not even Elijah or Moses, lived the way God wanted man to live. At last. And God sent His son as a man.

He lived on earth to demonstrate this is how God wanted Adam to live. This is how God created man to live. And if you are gripped by that, you will long with all of your heart to study the life of Jesus, to say, Lord, that's exactly how I want to live.

I've tried to think, what are the type of thoughts that went through Jesus' mind when we're not doing anything? You know, there are times when maybe we're lying down in bed at night, or we're sitting on a sofa at home and we're not particularly doing anything. What are the type of thoughts that went through Jesus' mind? And I say, what are the type of thoughts that go through most people's mind when they're sitting doing nothing? Either they are thinking how to make a little more money, or, do you think Jesus was sitting and thinking how to make a little more money? Or they are thinking, this enemy of mine, if I see him tomorrow, what will I tell him? Those are the type of thoughts people are thinking. Do you think Jesus was thinking like that? It's a wonderful thing to try and the Holy Spirit will show us how Jesus lived and how I think of different situations that I face, you know, because Jesus was tempted like me.

If somebody comes to my house, some little child comes to my house and breaks something, which I think is very valuable. Why do I get upset? My problem is not with my anger. My problem is I love material things.

That's why. Anger is because I love material things. If I didn't love material things, I wouldn't be angry.

So, I used to think now, supposing Jesus had just made something in his carpenter shop and some little child came and broke it. What do you think he would say? I think he'd pick up that child and kiss him and say, that's okay, my boy. I can make it again.

And I say, Lord, make me like that. Make me like you. If I see Jesus first, I can be like him.

But if I never meditate on how he lived on this earth, if I don't allow the Holy Spirit to show me how he faced something, I'll never be like him. And I feel that Christians don't meditate enough on the life of Jesus. The Bible says that we've got to run the race looking unto Jesus.

What does it mean? Every step of that race, I have to look at Jesus and say, how did he do it? If I'm sitting watching a television, I say, can I imagine Jesus sitting with me and enjoying that program? If I can't, I say, I want to close that channel down immediately. I don't want to see something that Jesus cannot sit and enjoy. I don't want to be reading something that Jesus can't sit and enjoy reading with me.

If I make my accounts, my financial accounts, I want Jesus to approve of it. More than any auditor whom I can dupe, I want Jesus to look at those accounts and say, okay, you know, if we live our life like this, I guarantee you'll be the happiest person on the face of the earth. And then you won't be wasting your time judging other people.

Jesus said, I judge nobody. Have you read that verse, John chapter 8? He said, I don't judge anyone. You guys, that is after they tried to kill that woman caught in adultery.

He said, you judge according to the flesh, John 8, 15. I judge nobody. I say, Lord, I want to live like that.

I don't want to judge anyone. I want to have discernment. Sure, if I didn't have discernment, I may be a Hindu or a Muslim or an atheist.

Or I may follow after all these foolish prosperity gospel preachers. So, I have discernment. This is wrong.

This Christian preacher is wrong. But I don't judge. I mean, you need to distinguish between discernment and judgment.

I am not a judge. God is the judge. He is the one to condemn people or say, this guy is going to hell.

It's not my business. But I want to discern because I say, I don't want to go that path. This is the path I want to go.

So, when you look at the life of Jesus, you see that, for example, when Jesus said on the cross, it is finished. That was a principle that applied throughout his life. I see that.

As a carpenter, he wouldn't make a shaky table. With one leg even half a millimeter shorter than the other. The table rocks on the one leg.

He wouldn't make a chair like that. Even if it took more time, more pains, even if he was making it for some poor widow, he would make a good chair and a good table so that the principle would be, it is finished. It's a perfect job.

If his mother told him as a little boy to go and bring a bucket of water from the well, he would not bring a half a bucket or three quarter bucket of water. He would, the principle of it is finished. He would fill that bucket and bring it.

Even though it's more laborious, takes more time, more effort. And I see something there. That there was a principle in Jesus' life that he would never do a half job.

He would complete it. And I say, Lord, I want to be like that. I want to have that spirit of a sense of responsibility that if I am given a task, I do it.

Not to please men, but to please God. Our boss in our place of work, I remember when I was in the Navy, my senior officer was writing my annual report and he said, I can't find anything wrong with your work, but you are a very unsociable character. You don't come for the drinking parties and play cards.

I said, sir, I don't do those things. And I don't do my work to please you. Whether you are watching or not, I do my work to please God.

I am not bothered about what report you write about me. I want to please God. And you know, when you are a witness like that, your bosses will never forget you.

I remember one of my bosses, he was dying in a hospital once, and somebody went to visit him and he said, that guy was remembering you, Zak. Because I was the only one who reminded him of eternity. And when you get to die, you think of somebody who reminded you of eternity.

So, you never know the impact you have on someone. If they find that you live for certain other values, you are not here to butter them to get a promotion. You are not disturbed if they don't give you a hike in your salary.

You live for something much higher than that. Because you see that the best life you can ever live, is where you live to please God alone. So, in Jesus' life, it was like that.

He wanted to see what is it that pleased the Father. However much sacrifice it involves, He would please the Father. Do you think it was easy for Jesus to obey His parents? His earthly parents, I mean.

No, it was difficult. But He did it because it would please the Father. Jesus' life was not an easy life.

He was ridiculed and mocked. You know, everybody in Nazareth knew. You know how it is in a little village.

Even in the villages in India we know that. It's not like a town. Here if you do something in one corner of Brisbane, nobody knows it.

Even the next door neighbor may not know the sin being committed in one house. But in a village, everybody knows everything about everybody. In a small village.

If a woman gets pregnant without getting married, the whole village knows about it. You can be pretty sure the whole village of Nazareth knew that Mary was not married and she was pregnant. And till today the story goes around among the Jews that some Roman soldier made her pregnant.

How much more 2,000 years ago? An absolute lie. And when Jesus was born, He faced a stigma. That's the child of some unknown Roman soldier.

And I can imagine Him walking with other boys to school and people pointing at Him. That boy, you know the boy standing in the middle? They don't know who his father is. Mother is Mary.

He faced that from childhood. Can you imagine you have a little child who goes to school and faces a stigma? All the time. And you know how many children are not able to face such things easily? We don't know what Jesus went through.

But He accepted it. He said, if my father has allowed me to face the stigma of being an illegitimate child, that's fine. Because I have to be an example to all the illegitimate children that are born in the universe, in the world, in the years to come.

Think of the number of illegitimate children who are born in the world, the stigma they face. Jesus is an example for them. I found it so wonderful in different experiences I go through which are sometimes painful and not easy.

I say, Lord, there must be a purpose in this. You're taking me through something because I have to be an example to somebody else in the days to come. And that's what brings me comfort.

I say, okay, that's alright. If my father has allowed it. So, we see that we are never discouraged.

We never have a complaint. We say, everything is planned by my father for my good. That it may go well with me and that it may go well with my children.

Because if my children can grow up in my home and see that in trying circumstances, I don't complain. I say, let's trust God. He'll take us through this.

That's the greatest inheritance we can give our children. It's not money. Money will not solve all their problems.

Even if you leave them a million dollars, it will not solve all their problems. Because there are lots of problems that a million dollars cannot solve. But if you can give them a faith in God, which they've seen in you, in the trying circumstances they've seen you face in your home, that's worth more than a billion dollars.

Because that can take them through anything. They can lead them to a really good life and make them a blessing to other people. So, then we look at the life of Jesus.

And I say, that was the most perfect life that anybody ever lived on this earth. And the most perfect life that somebody lived on this earth was a man without much money and a man who was misunderstood and rejected and despised and falsely accused. And the secret of it all was that he only cared for his father's opinion.

You know, if somebody calls you a bad name, a really bad name, if you get offended with that or you get upset with that person for calling you a devil or calling you an illegitimate child, the fact that you get upset proves that you care for man's opinion. That's one of the clearest proofs that you care for people's opinion. If you didn't care for people's opinion, you only cared for God's opinion, you wouldn't be not at all disturbed by what somebody said.

You'd smile at them and say, OK, you're forgiven, brother. I've got nothing against you. I want to ask you, do you have something in your heart today against somebody? Anybody? Do you have a grudge against your parents because they didn't do something they should have done for you? Because you're a big king or a queen who's supposed to be treated properly and your parents didn't treat you properly or some relative didn't treat you properly? All this is because we have such high thoughts about ourselves.

And that's why we're so gloomy. That's why we have bad moods. One of the things that I was gripped by years ago was the fact that Jesus never had a bad mood.

He was never in a bad mood. He never woke up one morning in a bad mood. There was never anything that happened which put him in a bad mood.

And I said, Lord, your word says that I must walk as Jesus walked. And I decided, I don't care what it costs, I'm going to come to a life where I'll never be in a bad mood at any time. And you know, you seek that life, you come to it.

By the grace of God. There's nothing impossible for the grace of God. He can make you walk like Jesus walked.

If you believe that the Holy Spirit who lived in Jesus enabled him as a man. You know, this is why it's so important to understand that Jesus lived on earth as a man. It's the secret of a godly life.

As long as you imagine like most Christians imagine, Oh, he was God, he could do so many things. I'll tell you, you'll never be able to follow him. It's like looking at the birds and say, Boy, I wish I could fly like that.

But I can't. That's exactly how a lot of people look at Jesus. Oh, what a wonderful life he lived.

But of course, I can never live like that. You know, I tell people, if that is your... In other words, you don't look at Jesus as someone you can follow. But you can look at Jesus as someone you can admire.

Most Christians admire Jesus. Everybody admires Jesus. But the true disciple is one who follows him.

And I say, if you admire Jesus, then when we have the communion and you pass the bread around, you know what you should do? Boy, what beautiful bread. And pass it on. Don't take part in it.

Because when you take part in it, you're saying, I'm going to follow that life. No, no, no. Oh, beautiful brother.

Just look at this and admire it. And everybody admire it and pass it around and bring it back untouched. When you pass the cup around, boy, what lovely... That's honesty.

I cannot follow Jesus. I can only admire him. And I say Christians are the biggest hypocrites when they take part in that bread and cup and then admire Jesus instead of following him.

They're liars. I know God opened my eyes to see that. If you take part in that bread and cup, you're saying, I want to die like he died.

To my own will. I want to live like he lived. That's the meaning of taking part in it.

I want to take part in that life. I want to live the way he lived at home. I want to be free from being irritated and upset with people in the home like he lived without being irritated and upset in his home.

I want to live like that every single day, morning till night, no matter what happens or what doesn't happen. Because I see in Jesus, God demonstrating to us, this is the way I wanted Adam to live. That's why at the end of 30 years, you know a lot of Christians think the great thing is ministry.

I'm sorry to say, to me this is the mark of a carnal Christian. He looks at somebody's ministry and says, boy, I wish I could preach like him. It's a mark of a carnal Christian.

I wish I could heal the sick like him. I wish I could be a famous Christian like him. It's a mark of a carnal Christian.

That's not what pleases God. By the time Jesus reached the age of 30, how famous was he? Nobody knew him outside Nazareth. And even in Nazareth, they knew him as an illegitimate child.

And he had never done a miracle, never healed a sick person, never preached a sermon. And the father says, this is my beloved son, I'm well pleased in him. Can God be well pleased with a person who never preaches, never heals a sick person? Maybe some of you are like that, no gift.

But I'll tell you, the Bible says that Jesus went around doing good. That's something that all of us can do, to do good to others. And I'm sure he did a lot of good in Nazareth.

I can imagine that if he made a table or something for some widow and took it and delivered it as a carpenter, and the widow says, how much does that cost? She says, oh, it's okay. We give it to you as a gift. Do you think a man like that will become the richest carpenter in Nazareth? It wasn't his goal.

His goal was to do good and he knew his father would make up for it in some other way. It's not that you can keep on doing your business like that and earn nothing. That's not what I mean.

But I've seen in my life that when you do good to others, God makes up for it in some other way, that you never lack anything in your life. I've seen that for years in my life. And that's how Jesus trusted the father.

That if I do good to the poor and the needy and the widows and the orphans, God will make up for it in some way for me. But he never preached. He never did what we call ministry and the father was very happy with him.

And that teaches me something. That it's not ministry that makes God happy with me. I remember years ago the Lord saying, don't evaluate yourself by how much you preach or what you've written.

These things mean nothing. Have you lived with a clear conscience before me? That's the thing that has value finally. Have you always humbled yourself in every situation? These are the things that make us all equal.

When it comes to ministry and gift, maybe I can do more than you. But when it comes to humbling yourself and keeping a good conscience, we are all equal. That's the thing that finally matters with God.

And when you realize that, you will not be envying somebody who's got ministry. I remember even as a young Christian, I never wanted to preach like others. But whenever I saw a really Godly, humble man, I said, boy, I want to live like that.

You know, I remember once, I'll never forget it. I think I was about 30 years old. I met a brother.

I met him only once in my life. I don't even remember his name. But he happened to be visiting the town where I was staying.

And he somehow, we had some common friends and he came to meet me. And I think he spent just about half an hour with me. But there was such a radiance of Christ about that man.

Today, after 40 years, I haven't forgotten it. There was something of Jesus in that man. And I said, Lord, that's what I want.

He wasn't a preacher. He was a Christ-like Christian. And I've forgotten the thousands of sermons I've heard and books I've read.

But I don't forget the influence of that one man. His humility and his graciousness. I say, I saw something of Christ.

And if that's what we long for, God will give it to us. And we'll have such an impact on people that they'll never forget us. And we have influenced them for eternity.

I'm sure that man is probably dead now. He's older than me. But he probably never knew the influence he had on me just by spending half an hour with me.

He probably never knew that I would remember him 40 years later. But I thought of that. The man who impressed me was not so much by his gift.

It was the aroma of Christ that came forth from him. And if you are gripped by that, and that comes by looking at Jesus and really seeking to follow Him and saying, Lord, I want to be like that. And when we look at his life, let me show you one example about his reactions.

You know, we can assess ourselves more by our reactions than by our actions. Actions, sometimes we plan and, you know, you plan ahead of time to go and do something to somebody and even something good, that's fine. Maybe you visit prisons and hospitals and all, excellent.

But the test of our life is our reactions. When unexpectedly somebody treats you in a certain way and you react, that shows what you really are. Not your planned actions to visit the sick or visit the prisons or do something.

You see, that all we carefully plan, but reactions are unplanned. There was a godly person who said that if you have a cup full of sweet water, no matter how heavily somebody shakes you, it will always be sweet water that spills out. Is that difficult to understand? No.

So if your heart is full of sweetness, even if somebody really irritates you, what will come out of your mouth? Bitterness. But if what came out of your mouth was anger and bitterness, that shows that that was what was in your heart, but you never knew it till now. You had to be deeply thankful to this guy who irritated you because he showed you what was inside.

I mean if somebody came to your house in an anger, pushed down one cupboard that was in your house and underneath that you saw a snake, are you thankful? Yes. That snake was living under there and you never discovered it till this guy came and pushed that cupboard down. Brother, thank you so much for your anger that pushed that cupboard down.

I saw that snake there. And have you seen something like that, that come out of your life because somebody irritated you? Disturbed you? Be thankful for them. Like I say, our enemies always tell us more truths about ourselves than our friends.

Our friends are hesitant to tell us when they see something wrong in us. Oh, he may get offended. I want to keep that friendship.

But enemies have no such qualms about them. They say, this is what I think about you. It's probably speaking the truth.

Let me show you one example. Matthew chapter 12. Now here is an amazing healing.

Matthew 12 and verse 22. They brought to Jesus a demon-possessed man who was blind and dumb. Now that's very rare.

I've almost never in my life seen a man who's both blind and dumb. I've seen blind people and I've seen dumb people. I've never seen a man who's both blind and dumb.

And demon-possessed. Blind, dumb and demon-possessed. Can you imagine? And they brought it to Jesus and Jesus healed him.

So the demon left him. And he began to speak. And he could also begin to see.

Now you would think that people are excited. This is amazing. It says all the multitudes were so amazed and said, this must be the son of David.

But the Pharisees who were jealous, they said, this is not the son of David. This guy is the ruler of demons. Where did they get that idea from? From their own jealous mind.

They could not do anything for this man. And I'll tell you this. This is how human nature is.

When you can't do something for somebody and somebody else can do it. Instead of being happy, you get upset. You get upset because you were not the ministry to do it.

Somebody else did it. And the Pharisees said, this is the ruler of demons. And you know what Jesus said? His reply to that.

Verse 32 Whoever speaks a word against the son of man, he'll be forgiven. I asked the Lord once. I said, Lord, what did you mean by always calling yourself the son of man? You always said, I'm the son of man, I'm the son of man, I'm the son of man.

He was the son of God, but he never called himself the son of God. He said, I'm the son of man, son of man. And the revelation I got was, he was just the son of a man.

He was an ordinary man. What he was saying is, I'm an ordinary man. Have you spoken against an ordinary man like me? It's forgiven.

I'm not a big man. He was this almighty God, walking on this earth, and he considered himself an ordinary man. I saw something of Jesus that day.

And I said, Lord, all my life, let me recognize myself as an ordinary man. And I want to say that to you. You won't get offended with people if you always recognize yourself as an ordinary man.

This is what I keep telling my children, my boys, I say, listen, however much God may bless you or use you, please remember you're an ordinary man all your life. And you'll be very, very happy. It's when you begin to think that you're somebody important, that you have a lot of problems.

Think of yourself as an ordinary person. It'll be very easy to forgive everybody. Have you spoken against an ordinary man like me? It's forgiven.

So, there are wonderful glimpses like this we have of Jesus' life in the Gospels, where he was never offended because he had such small thoughts about himself, even though he was almighty God. So different from the Lucifer, who had such high thoughts about himself. I saw another example of that in John chapter 7. We read in John 7, verse 50.

You know, John 7 is the chapter where Jesus preached some great sermons. It says about, verse 37, In the last day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink, and out of his innermost being flow rivers of living water. So, I mean, what you read here is, His sermons in a nutshell, I'm sure he spoke for about half an hour on that.

And he preached wonderful sermons. And then we read, At the end of the day, It's an amazing statement. Remember, Jesus' home was in Capernaum, many hundred kilometers away.

And he's now in Jerusalem. It's not his hometown. And here's this visiting preacher, who has come to Jerusalem, preached this wonderful sermon.

And at the end of that, it says in verse 53, Everybody went to their own home. And nobody bothered to ask Jesus, Where are you going to stay tonight? Imagine that. It's never happened to me.

Where I go to some strange place, and they never try to find out where are you sleeping tonight. Imagine, Jesus, they didn't bother to find out where he's sleeping tonight. Nobody invited him and say, Hey, why don't you come and stay with us? This is not your hometown.

So, what does he do? It says in the next verse, He went to the Mount of Olives. He slept under the trees that night. And he comes back early the next morning, verse 2. And again he began to preach, sat down and taught the people.

And he doesn't say, Hey, none of you fellows inquired, where did I sleep last night? Or, you know how indirectly we can give hints to people. You know, last night I was sleeping under the trees in Mount Olives. We are so clever at giving hints to people about the inconveniences we go through.

No, not an ounce of self-pity. Zero. Father, I thank you the weather was clear last night.

I didn't get wet. I could sleep under the trees. And it is wonderful to sleep under the sky and think of you, Father.

Not a smell of any complaint that somebody didn't think of me. Oh, the number of complaints that husbands and wives have about each other. You were not thoughtful about me.

Do wives talk like that? You were not thoughtful about me. Husband, you didn't think about me and my problems. You know what the solution for it is? Don't try to change your husband and wife.

Just look at Jesus. He is the answer to every single problem in life. You'll never be in a bad mood.

You'll never be gloomy. You'll never be discouraged. You'll never be depressed.

I say that, it's changed my life. I used to be such a discouraged, depressed person in my early Christian life till I really saw Jesus. You know that prayer we sang, Open the eyes of my heart, Lord.

I want to see you. We sing it, sing it. I really wanted it.

And I saw. The Holy Spirit showed me Jesus. And He continues to show me Jesus even now.

That's what's made my life supremely happy. I can tell you honestly. That's how it is with me.

24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I'm supremely happy because I've seen Jesus. And I continue to see Him.

And in little examples like this. How He never had a demand on anybody. He never made His needs known to anyone.

If He was in financial need, He would tell His Father. Any type of need. Okay.

Somebody didn't invite me home. I'll go and sleep under the trees. What's that? Perfectly okay.

He never, never had a demand on anyone. Never had a complaint about anyone. Because He knew that His Father cared for Him.

Even if everybody left Him. See what He says in John 16. John 16.

Verse 32. This is just before He went to the cross. He said an hour is coming.

And it's already come. You'll all go to your own home. And you'll leave me alone.

But I am not alone. My Father is with me. He doesn't hang on to them and say, Hey, fellas, I hope you won't leave me.

No, I know you're going to leave me. You'll all run to your own home because you're afraid you'll get caught. You may get crucified because you're my followers.

Go, please go. You remember in Gethsemane when the people came to capture Him. He said, Whom do you seek? They said, We're seeking Jesus of Nazareth.

Okay, I'm Jesus of Nazareth. You take me, let these fellas go. Don't disturb them.

He was concerned that His disciples shouldn't get caught there. He never had a desire that, Oh, let them also stand with me and suffer with me. Not at all.

I say, Lord, make me like that. This is true Christianity. Where I don't want anybody else to suffer with me.

Okay, because my Father is with me. That's the only thing that matters. That really challenged me that it doesn't matter if everybody leaves me.

My Father is with me. What more do you want? If Almighty God is with you, tell me honestly, do you want anybody else? You really don't need anybody else. And the reason why you try to find some security in human beings is because God is not with you.

Let's face it. We think God is with us. He is not with us.

That's why we want some man to come and support us and encourage us. I don't want any man to support me and encourage me. I don't want anybody to accept me or think highly of me.

He doesn't want because I've got God. Almighty God is with me. Why in the world do I want created human beings? You know, we fool ourselves sometimes thinking God is with us.

I am with God and all. No. Really seek to have God with you and God will always be with you.

If you have one attitude in your heart. Let me show you Isaiah 57. It's a great verse.

Isaiah 57 and verse 15 You must remember this verse. Isaiah 57 and verse 15 Isaiah chapter 57 and verse 15 See it says here that says the high and exalted one who lives forever whose name is holy 57.15 I dwell in two places I first of all dwell in the high and holy place that's in heaven We're not there But I also dwell with the contrite and lowly of spirit to revive the spirit of the lowly to revive the heart of the contrite So, God dwells in two places He doesn't dwell with every human being Let me tell you that He does not dwell with every human being He does not even dwell with every Christian Do you believe that every Christian is contrite and lowly of spirit?

No The vast majority of Christians I've met are pretty proud God doesn't dwell with them They can imagine God is with them but He's not He says, I dwell with the contrite and lowly of spirit to revive them and you know a lot of people talk about revival If God is with me, I'm in a constant state of revival all the time Because He says there I'm dwelling with Him to revive His spirit and to revive His heart I don't need any external stirring to get revival, I don't need to go to a meeting to be revived No, if somebody locks me in a

prison for 20 years, I can have revival there every single day of those 20 years without attending any meetings without singing any songs We must develop a life where I don't need to come to a meeting to get revived I don't need to listen to stirring music in order to be moved It's all superficial and emotional Look at all these people who go to churches where they stir people with emotional music It's only temporary Look at these fellows on Monday They're depressed again They need to wait till next Sunday comes along I say this is like the drunkards who you know They go on the weekends to drink with their friends and they forget all their earthly problems They say what a wonderful time Two hours with our friends getting drunk and we forget about our earthly sorrows and they go home and no problems are solved Problems are still there And what are they longing for?

The next weekend when they can get drunk again with their friends So Christians have what I call a praising saloon On Sunday morning they say great we spent two hours today praising and singing and having a wonderful time with my friends and they go home, none of their problems are solved, they still fight and quarrel and yell and scream and what are they longing for? Next Sunday when we can come together with all our friends and have a wonderful time of singing Life never changes and the devil is quite happy with these people who never change But It's not like that When God is the contrite and the lowly If God can succeed in humbling us and breaking us, I'll tell you this He'll be with you all the time and you'll never be discouraged You'll never be depressed because God Himself is going to revive your spirit all the time In Isaiah 53 there's a Let me show you first Isaiah Okay, Isaiah 53 It says about, this is a wonderful chapter It's not all about the crucifixion There's a part about the crucifixion of Christ here like He bore our sins, that part we can't follow Him, He died alone for the sins of the world, but there are a lot of other things written in this chapter where we can follow Jesus, for example Verse 2 He grew up before His Father like a tender shoot, like a root out of parched ground Jesus grew up in Nazareth before the face of His Father And that's how we can grow up Wherever we are, in our home saying God I want to live before You Everything I do, I want to live before You and I want You I want to live as if You are there in front of me I try to practice this when I preach I say Lord I want to be more conscious that You're here listening to what I'm saying than all these people Otherwise I'll try to impress people to grow up before Him and He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him Do you wish that you had an appearance that would attract people?

Do you sisters look at a pretty girl and say, boy I wish I was pretty like that or do you look at a handsome man and say, boy I wish I was a handsome person like that I'll tell you what, you need to become a Christian That's my advice to you You need to become a real Christian and see Jesus who had no appearance that we should be attracted to Him Who are the prettiest and the most handsome people in the world? Film stars Number one servants of the devil Don't you believe that with all the movies they produce?

Destroying pure people and corrupting them Agents of Satan Very attractive You go to any real good church and look around and see how many pretty good looking people there are, very few I'll tell you I've seen around the world, why didn't God make all His children very attractive, do you think it was difficult for God? Why is it the devil's got all the pretty handsome people? Jesus had no appearance that we should be attracted What I'm saying is this is a neutral thing, whether the color of your skin is white or black whether you are good looking or ugly makes no difference to God Because man looks on the outward appearance but God looks at the heart And the more we become like God the more we look at people's hearts not at their faces And we value character more than appearance.

If you value appearance more than character, you're a baby and that is natural when we are babies we've got the wrong values, I mean little children value toys and worthless things So if you're a baby you value worthless things like appearance and all that type of stuff But when you're grown up you value the things that are really valuable And one mark that is spiritually grown up is that you value character and more than you value appearance Ya, there's no beauty that He was despised and forsaken by men That also happens when we follow Jesus We may be despised by others and even forsaken It's ok It doesn't disturb us And you know it goes on to say about Him in verse 10 It pleased the Lord to crush Him It's an amazing word Which father is delighted to see his child being crushed Would you like to see your children being crushed?

It says please the father to crush him Because as a human being you know one of the greatest dangers we face as human beings we think it is sickness, it's not It's not the swine flu or any other flu we are in danger of We are in danger of pride Every human being We are in danger of becoming proud It's pride that causes conflict in homes It's pride that prevents a church from becoming a body Now here a number of you are sitting here and if you are regularly coming to this church Shall I tell you what is God's will for this church?

That it should become one body Function Exactly like the human body functions Without a conflict Imagine my left hand and my right hand have never had a fight for 71 years Can you believe it? Never They have been such good friends for 71 years And not only my two hands my ears, my legs We have never kicked each other My right leg never kicked my left leg in anger, not even once Can you see a church like that? Where if my left hand is injured the right hand immediately goes to help it If my right, for example if I fractured my right hand and it's a muck blaster What does my left hand say? Ahh This right hand has always been doing the important job like signing cheques and I never got a chance to do it.

Now is my chance But you know if I sign a cheque with my left hand the bank won't accept it They can't recognize that signature So what does the left hand do? He does everything possible to restore the right hand to health quickly so it can do the job Zero jealousy That's the body of Christ I want to tell you that is God's will for this fellowship If you are moving in that direction you are moving in the right direction If you are just having meetings and singing nice songs and listening to nice messages Even the Buddhists do that and the Muslims do that The Muslims are some of the most prayerful people on the planet They are not ashamed I remember traveling in a train once in India, crowded train and there was this Muslim man who put his mat down on the ground at 6 o'clock in the evening and turned towards Mecca and started praying Boy!

I was ashamed of myself This guy is not ashamed in the presence of all these people to bow down with his head to the ground and face Mecca and pray I said how many Christians have you seen kneeling down in a train and praying to Jesus No Those are not the marks of You know there are many people who are religious I said Jesus has come to make us a body where we love one another just like the different members of His body care for one another and if that has to happen God has to crush us Crush this self-centered self-seeking life that we all have inherited from Adam which the Bible calls the flesh and the Holy Spirit is against the flesh And in order to live this life if you want to consistently live this life Let me show you a little secret of Jesus' life from Isaiah 50 Isaiah 50 and verse 4 It says in the middle of that verse The Lord God wakens me up morning by morning and wakens my ear to listen as a disciple Every morning the Father woke up Jesus to speak to Him The first thing Jesus thought of when He woke up in the morning was Father, what are you saying?

And I say, Lord I want to be like that As soon as I wake up in my bed I want to think Father, what are you trying to tell me? Even if it's only for one minute I say, what are you trying to tell me? I want to hear you something from you You don't even have to open your Bible Jesus never had a Bible at home But He listened to the Father So the whole secret of Jesus' life was He listened to His Father and He doesn't mean that He just kept His ear open for two minutes in the morning and then went about His business His ear was opened in the morning and it remained open throughout the day He was always listening In the middle of His work, He was listening The Father would speak to Him at different times in the middle of His carpentry or some problem came, whatever came He listened to His Father It was the secret of His life I love that story where the Pharisees came to kill a woman caught in adultery and it says Jesus was just scribbling on the ground What do you think He was doing?

He was listening Just scribbling on the ground saying, Father, what shall I say to these people? I know the law of Moses says you've got to stone a woman caught in adultery but what shall I tell them? Shall I tell them to disobey the law of Moses? No And then He heard a word Tell them He who is without sin throw the first stone No big sermon He got up and said He who is without sin, throw the first stone Problem solved with one sentence I said, Lord, this is amazing I want to be like that Luke 21 verse 15 says I will give you a mouth and a wisdom that none of your enemies will be able to resist It's a fantastic promise I've claimed it many times I said, Lord, please help me to have such a mouth and a wisdom that I can put an end to an argument or something without a big sermon I was once in the United States in the midst of an Amish community I don't know whether you know of the Amish community It's a sort of a group that came from Europe In the early days they were really God-fearing people but now it's just tradition They have traditions like all the men have beards So I was in this church and I was sitting at lunch time It was a full day session and I was sitting with all these people with beards and I was the only one clean-shaven there and that was part of that teaching that everybody must have a beard So this guy sitting opposite me asked me Brother Zach, did God make a mistake in giving you hair on your face or did you make a mistake in shaving it off?

I said, Lord, you've got to give me a word now I don't want to hurt him but what shall I say to that? And I got a word I said, Brother, did God make a mistake in giving you nails or did you make a mistake in cutting it off?

He was silenced immediately and then you know I didn't want to embarrass him further so I changed the subject I don't like to win an argument and embarrass somebody so I changed the subject immediately to something else so that he doesn't feel embarrassed But I saw in instances like that, you know, where the Lord would just give me one sentence and I saw that I could be like Jesus that I could have a if I listened to just listen to the Father say, Lord, not be quick in my response but say, Father just give me a word now I remember I was in America with in one church where they were having a disagreement with me in the matter of prophecy I mean they were always talking about predictive prophecy, predictive prophecy and I said, that's one type of prophecy there's another type of prophecy

too which is like it says in 1 Corinthians 14 3 where you speak to people to edify and build up and encourage and challenge and comfort and it went on for one hour all those pastors were all ganged up against me and I said Lord, I don't want to win this argument I'm not interested in winning any argument with anybody but I want to pursue peace and so I don't want to end this discussion as if I won, I mean I don't mind losing but how shall I, and I said, Lord, give me a word and I said, ok brothers, I've got one more thing to say and I read from 1 Corinthians 13 and I said we know in part and we prophesy in part but when he comes, then we shall see face to face and then we shall know as we really should know till then

love is the greatest let us pursue after love everybody was quiet after

that the discussion ended what can you say when you read God's word, now the reason I say that is I learnt it from Jesus I looked at Jesus and I saw sometimes he had just had one word you know some people would ask him some tough question and he'd say ok let me ask you another thing the baptism of John, was it from heaven or was it from men and they began to dispute if I say it's from heaven they'll say why don't you believe and if I say it's from men people will get upset because they consider John was a prophet and it's wonderful to just see Jesus the way he lived he was always listening and it says in Isaiah 50 and when he listened, it wasn't an easy life the Lord God opened my ear, verse 5 that means he made him obedient, I was not disobedient Isaiah 50 verse 5, I didn't turn back and

what did he have to go through I gave my back to those who strike me and my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard I didn't cover my face from humiliation and spitting you know when you listen to Jesus when you listen to God you may have a tough life, people spit on you they pull out your beard they pull out your hair they strike you on the back but you don't react you say father forgive them because the Lord God helps me therefore I'm not disgraced therefore I've set my face like a flint that I will not sin and I will not be ashamed because the one who vindicates me, verse 8, that's my father is near so I don't have to fight with these people because verse 9, the Lord helps me who can condemn me so if there's any among you, verse 10, who fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant

and you walk in darkness and you have no light, trust in the Lord so I see there that when you listen to the Lord he crushes you, he crushes all your feeling of self importance and makes you a nobody and that's when you'll find the presence of the Lord constantly with you and you can live a triumphant life this for our good and the Lord says oh that my people would realize that everything I tell them and all that I take them through is to humble them and crush them so that the radiance of Christ the aroma of Christ can go through them to other people Amen, God bless you all

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